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The Life of King Vena

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KING ANGA QUILTS HIS KINGDOM

Sriman Purnaprajna Dasa

From his very birth, Dhruva's son, Utkala, was a liberated soul. He was equipoised when confronted by material dualities, for he could see everything resting in the Supreme Soul and the Supreme Soul resting within everyone's heart. To avoid material entanglement, Utkala remained as an urchin - foolish, deaf, dumb and blind. He was like a flameless fire covered by ashes. Not seeing past his pretense, the elderly family members and ministers considered Utkala to be stupid and mad, so they coronated his younger brother Vatsara.

In the fifth generation after Dhruva, Chaksusha appeared. He became the sixth Manu. Chaksusha begot twelve sons and the youngest of them, Ulmuka, begot six sons, the eldest of whom was named Anga. Once this King Anga performed an *asvamedha* sacrifice. Even though the *brāhmaṇas* performing the sacrifice were properly qualified and knew how to invite the demigods, surprisingly none of them appeared. The priests then informed King Anga, "O King, although we have properly offered the ghee in sacrifice, the demigods are not accepting it. We know that you collected all the sacrificial paraphernalia with great care and certainly we are chanting the Vedic *mantras* without any fault. Therefore, we cannot understand why the demigods should feel insulted or neglected and thus refuse to accept their sacrificial shares."

Upon hearing this King Anga became aggrieved and took permission to break his silence. He inquired, "My dear *brāhmaṇas*, kindly tell me what offence I committed so that the demigods refuse to come here and accept their shares of the sacrificial offerings". The head priest replied, "O King, in this life you have not been the least bit sinful or offensive - even in your mind. However, in your previous life you performed sinful activities that have now rendered you sonless, in spite of your being otherwise qualified. To remedy this, you should pray to the Supreme Lord for a son and perform a sacrifice specifically for this purpose. In this way, your desire will be fulfilled. When Lord Hari, who is the supreme enjoyer of all sacrifices, comes here to bless you, then all the demigods who are His servants will accompany Him to accept their shares".

Following the wise counsel of the *brāhmaṇas*, King Anga performed that very sacrifice. Whilst oblations were being offered to Lord Vishnu, a

nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā

divine personality appeared from the sacrificial fire. He was dressed in white garments and carried a golden pot filled with sweet rice. After taking permission from the *brāhmaṇas*, King Anga very respectfully received that pot of sweet rice in his joined hands. After smelling it, the King offered a portion to his wife, Sunitha. Eating that food, which had the potency to bring forth a male child, the Queen was impregnated by the King. In due course of time, Sunitha gave birth to a son named Vena. Since Sunitha was the daughter of death personified, her child was expected to be partially in the dynasty of irreligion.

It is said that a daughter generally takes after her father and a son takes after his mother. Therefore, Vena took after his maternal grandfather, and so he grew up to be very irreligious. These circumstances are certainly very unusual, but the fact is that sometimes the Lord arranges an unfortunate wife or bad child for His devotee so that he can become more easily detached from material life.

As a boy, Vena used to go to the forest and unnecessarily kill innocent deer with his bow and arrows. Indeed, his very appearance was frightening to everyone and as soon as they would see him, they would cry out, "Here comes cruel Vena!" The young Vena was so malicious that while playing with boys his age, he would mercilessly kill them as if they were animals meant for slaughter. King Anga used to punish his son in various ways, hoping to reform him, but in spite of all endeavors he was unable to bring Vena to the path of righteousness.

While grieving over his failure to reform his son, King Anga thought, "Persons that have no son are certainly very fortunate. They must have worshiped the Supreme Lord in previous lives so that now they do not have to suffer the unbearable misery of having a bad son. Of course, in another sense, a bad son is better than a good one, for he makes one's life at home intolerable and thus does not allow attachment for house and family to develop the way a good son does. Indeed, a bad son makes the home so hellish that any intelligent man very easily becomes detached from his family life."

King Anga passed sleepless nights while absorbed in such thoughts, and in this way he gradually became completely indifferent to household life. At last, very late one night, he silently got up from bed, leaving his wife who was sleeping soundly. Indeed unseen by others, he left his opulent palace and proceeded to the forest.



The next morning, when it was understood that the King had left, his priests, ministers, friends and relatives, as well as the ordinary citizens, became very alarmed. The people began to search for Anga everywhere, just as unqualified yogis endeavor to find the Supreme Soul within. Finally, after failing to find their ruler even though they had searched everywhere, the disappointed citizens returned home.

Upon hearing of the emergency caused by the King's absence, the great sages headed by Brigu assembled at the capital city. Knowing the sages to be compassionate and thoughtful of the welfare of the people, the citizens informed them of their plight. These sages knew that in the absence of a king there would be no one to guide and protect the citizens, and they would soon become unregulated and subject to exploitation. After sufficient deliberations, the sages called for Queen Sunitha. With her permission, they installed Vena upon the royal throne, in spite of the ministers' disapproval. It was well known that Vena was very harsh and cruel by nature. When all the thieves and rogues within the kingdom heard of his coronation, they fearfully hid like rats that conceal themselves from snakes.

After ascending to the throne, Vena became even more proud. Completely deluded, he began to think himself to be the greatest of all. Mounting his chariot, King Vena traveled throughout his kingdom

and forbade the *brāhmaṇas* to perform sacrifices or give charity. After being ordered to refrain from performing all kinds of religious activities, the sages once again assembled, for they were very concerned about the great catastrophe that was certainly awaiting them all.

Deliberating amongst themselves, the sages spoke as follows: "Like ants caught in the middle of a log that is burning from both ends, the citizens are in danger due to an irresponsible king on one side and rogues and thieves on the other. Although we had made the unqualified Vena the king during a political crisis, the people are now being threatened with an even greater disaster, for he has blocked their path to spiritual elevation."

—Adopted from the book "Srimad Bhagavatam in story form" by Purnaprajna Das. ॐ

THE SAGES KILL KING VENA Sri Maitreya R̥ṣi

The sages began to think within themselves: King Vena was born as the son of Sunitha and so he is by nature very wicked. Supporting such a king is like feeding a snake with milk. Now he has become a source of all kinds of problems. We appointed Vena as king to protect the citizens, but now he has become their enemy. Despite this failing, we should at once try to pacify him. By doing so, we may be free from the sinful reactions caused by his wrong-doings. We



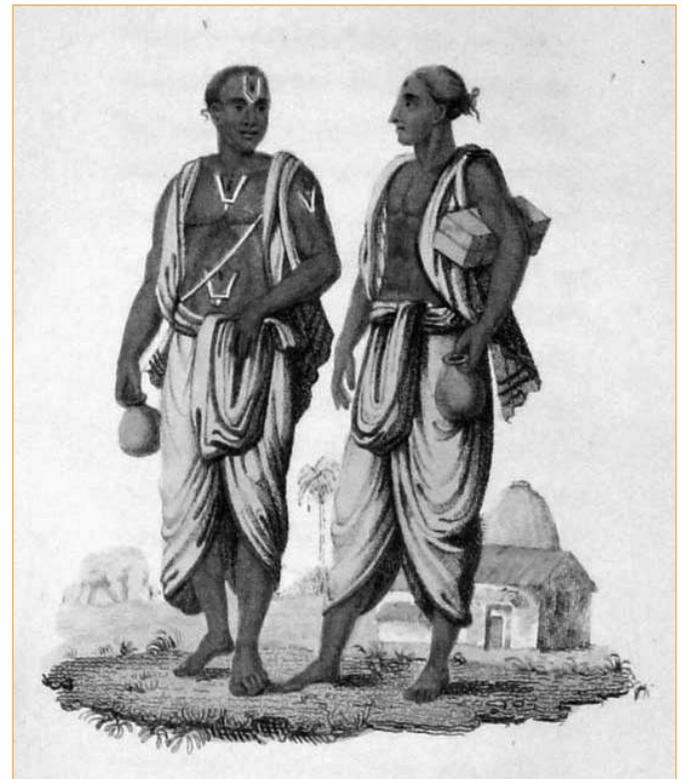
King Vena

were completely aware of his malicious nature, yet we enthroned him. If we cannot persuade King Vena to accept our advice, he will be condemned by the citizens, as we now wish to do. In this case, by our prowess we shall burn him to ashes. The great sages, having thus decided, approached King Vena. Subduing their anger, they pacified him with sweet words and then spoke as follows.

The great sages said: "Dear King, we have come here to give you good advice. Kindly hear us with great attention. By doing so, your duration of life, opulence, strength and reputation will increase. Those who live a religious life and follow religious principles by words, mind, body and intelligence are elevated to the heavenly kingdom, a place devoid of miseries. Being thus rid of the material influence, they achieve unlimited happiness in life. O great hero, for this reason you should not be the cause of spoiling the spiritual life of the general populace. If their spiritual life is spoiled because of your activities, you will certainly fall down from your opulent and royal position.

When the king protects the citizens from the disturbances of corrupt ministers as well as from thieves and rogues, by virtue of such pious activities, the king has the right to accept taxes given by his subjects. Such a pious king can certainly enjoy himself in this world as well as the next. The king is pious in whose state and cities, the general populace strictly follow the system of *varṇa* and *āśrama* (eight social orders) and where all citizens engage in worshipping the Supreme Personality of Godhead in that way. O noble one, if the king sees that the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the original cause of the cosmic manifestation and the Super-soul within everyone, is worshiped, the Lord will be satisfied. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is worshiped by the great demigods, controllers of universal affairs. When He is satisfied, nothing is impossible to achieve. For this reason, all the demigods, the presiding deities of different planets, as well as the inhabitants of those planets, take great pleasure in offering all kinds of paraphernalia for His worship.

Dear King, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, along with the predominating deities, is the enjoyer of the results of all sacrifices in all planets. The Supreme Lord is the sum total of the three Vedas, the owner of everything, and the ultimate goal of all austerity. Therefore, your countrymen should engage in performing various sacrifices for your elevation. Indeed, you should always direct them towards



the offering of sacrifices. When all the *brāhmaṇas* engage in performing sacrifices in your kingdom, all the demigods, who are plenary expansions of the Lord, will be very much satisfied by their activities and will give you your desired result. Therefore, O hero, do not stop the sacrificial performances. If you stop them, you will disrespect the demigods."

King Vena replied: "You are not speaking wisely. It is very much regrettable that you are accepting something which is not religious as religious. Indeed, I think you are giving up your real husband, who maintains you, and are searching after some paramour to worship. Those who, out of gross ignorance, do not worship the king, who is actually the Supreme Personality of Godhead, experience happiness neither in this world nor in the world after death. You are so much devoted to the demigods, but who are they? Indeed, your affection for these demigods is exactly like the affection of an unchaste woman who neglects her married life and gives all attention to her paramour.

Lord Vishnu; Lord Brahma; Lord Shiva; Lord Indra; Vayu, the master of air; Yama, the superintendent of death; the sun-god; the director of rainfall; Kuvera, the treasurer; the moon-god; the predominating deity of the earth; Agni, the fire-god; Varuna, the lord of waters, and all others who are great and competent to bestow benedictions or to curse, all reside in the body of the king. For this reason, the king is known as the reservoir of all demigods, who are simply parts and parcels of the king's body. For this reason, O *brāhmaṇas*, you should give up your envy towards me, and, by your ritualistic activities, you should worship me and offer me all paraphernalia. If you are intelligent, you should know that there is no personality superior to me, who can accept the first oblations of all sacrifices."

Thus the King, who lost his intelligent due to his sinful life and deviation from the right path, became bereft of all good fortune. He could not accept the requests of the great sages, which were put before him with respect. Therefore he was condemned. The foolish King, who thought himself very learned, thus insulted the great sages and being brokenhearted by the King's words, the sages became very angry at him.

All the great saintly sages immediately cried: "Kill him! Kill him! He is the most dreadful, sinful person. If he lives, he will certainly turn the whole world into ashes in no time. This impious, impudent man does not deserve to sit on the throne. He is so shameless that he even dared insult the Supreme

Personality of Godhead, Lord Vishnu. Beside this inauspicious King Vena, who would blaspheme the Supreme Personality of Godhead, by whose mercy one is awarded all kinds of fortune and opulence?"

The great sages, thus manifesting their covert anger, immediately decided to kill the King who was already as good as dead due to his blasphemy against the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Thus without using any weapons, the sages killed King Vena simply by powerful *mantras*. After all the sages returned to their respective hermitages, the mother of King Vena, Sunitha, became very aggrieved because of her son's death. She decided to preserve the dead body of her son by the application of certain herbs and by chanting *mantras*.

Later, the same saintly persons, after taking their bath in the River Sarasvati, began to perform their daily duties by offering oblations into the sacrificial fires. After this, sitting on the bank of the river, they discussed the transcendental person and His pastimes. In those days there were various disturbances in the country that were creating a panic in society. Therefore all the sages began to talk amongst themselves: Since the King is dead and there is no protector in the world, misfortune may befall the people in general on account of rogues and thieves. When the great sages were carrying on their discussion in this way, they saw a dust storm arising from all directions. This storm was caused by the running of thieves and rogues, who were engaged in plundering the citizens.

Seeing the dust storm, the saintly persons could understand that there were a great deal of irregularities due to the death of King Vena. Without government, the state was devoid of law and order, and consequently there was a great uprising of murderous thieves and rogues, who were plundering the riches of the people in general. Although the great sages could subdue the disturbance by their powers - just as they could kill the King - they considered it improper to do so. Thus they did not attempt to stop the disturbance. The great sages then began to think that although a *brāhmaṇa* is peaceful and impartial because he is equal to everyone, still he should not neglect distressed citizens. By such neglect, a *brāhmaṇa's* spiritual power diminishes, just as water kept in a cracked pot leaks out.

The sages decided that the family line of the saintly King Anga should not be stopped, for in this family the semen was very powerful and the children were inclined to become devotees of the Lord. After due deliberation, the saintly persons and sages churned

the thighs of the dead body of King Vena with great force and according to a specific method. As a result of this churning, a dwarf-like person was born from King Vena's body. This person was named Bahuka, and his complexion was as black as a crow. All his limbs were very short, his arms and legs were short, and his jaw was large. His nose was flat, his eyes reddish, and his hair copper-colored. He was very submissive and meek, and immediately after his birth he bowed down and inquired, "Sirs, what shall I do?" The great sages replied, "Please sit down (nisida)." Thus Nisada, the father of the Naisada race, was born. After his birth, he immediately took charge of all the resultant actions of King Vena's sinful activities. As such, this Naisada class are always engaged in sinful activities like stealing, plundering and hunting. Consequently, they are only allowed to live in the hills and forests.

—Srimad Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa) » Canto 4: The Creation of the Fourth Order » Chapter 14. The Story of King Vena » Verse: 10-49. ❧

WHY DID KING VENA FALL INTO HELL?

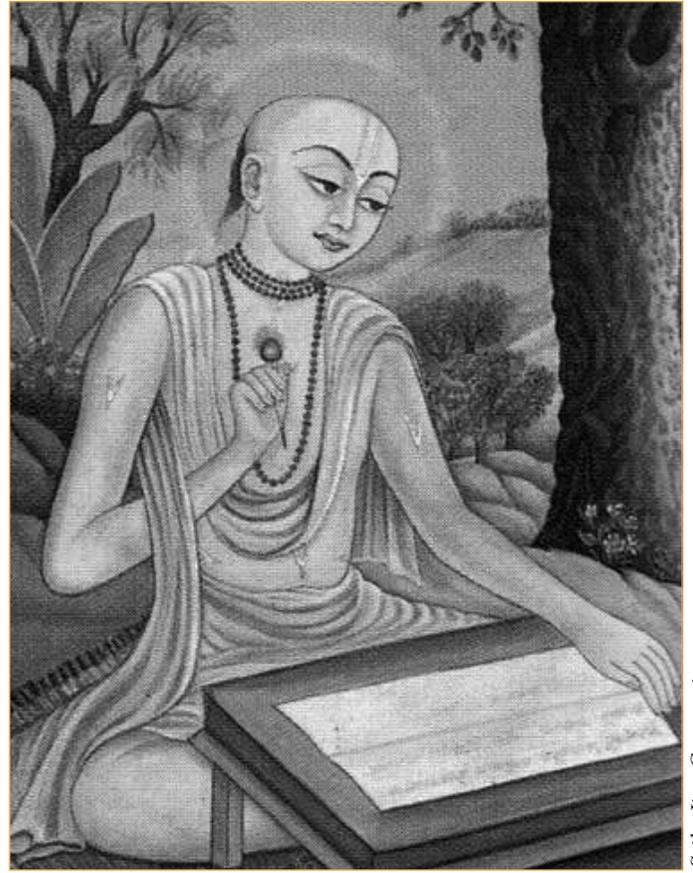
Srila Jiva Goswami

yadi dveṣeṇāpi siddhis tarhi venah kim iti narake pātita ity āśaṅkyāha -- katamo 'pi na venah syāt pañcānām puruṣam prati [Srimad Bhāgavatam 7.1.32]

puruṣam bhagavantam prati lakṣyīkṛtya pañcānām vairānubandhādīnām madhye venah katamo 'pi na syāt | tasya tam prati prāsaṅgika-nindā-mātrātmakam vairam na tu vairānubandhah | tatas tīvra-dhyānābhāvāt pāpam eva tatra pratiphalitam iti bhāvaḥ | tato śura-tulya-svabhāvair api tasmin sva-mokṣārtham vairabhāvānuṣṭhāna-sāhasam na kartavyam ity abhipretam | ataeva ye vai bhagavatā proktāḥ [Srimad Bhāgavatam 11.2.34] *ity āder apy ativyāptir vyāhanyate anabhipretatvenā- proktatvāt |*

If simply by hating the Supreme Lord one attains perfection, then why did King Vena fall into hell?

Fearing that someone would raise this objection, *Srimad Bhāgavatam* (7.1.32) explains: "Somehow or other one must consider the form of Krishna very seriously. Then, by one of the five different processes (by enmity, by devotional service, by fear, by affection or by lusty desire, by all of these or any one of them), one can return home, back to Godhead. Atheists like King Vena, however, being unable to think of Krishna's form in any of these five ways, cannot attain salvation."



Srila Jiva Goswami

The words, *katamo 'pi na venah syāt pañcānām puruṣam prati* means "Vena did not have one of the five relationships with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, relationships that begin with enmity." This means that Vena did not have a relationship of blaspheming and hating the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Vena's sins bore fruit because he did not engage in intense meditation on the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Even though he was a demon, he did not hatefully and violently attack the Supreme Personality of Godhead, an attack that would have brought him liberation. That is the meaning.

In *Srimad Bhāgavatam* (11.2.34) it is said: "Even ignorant living entities can very easily come to know the Supreme Lord if they adopt those means prescribed by the Supreme Lord Himself. The process recommended by the Lord is to be known as *bhāgavata-dharma*, or devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

In this way even very great sins perish. This is so even if one is ignorant.

—Amucchada 322, Sri Bhakti-sandarbha of Srila Jiva Goswami » Transaltion by Srila Bhanu Swami. ❧

HOW WAS KING VENA'S BODY PURIFIED?

His Divine Grace

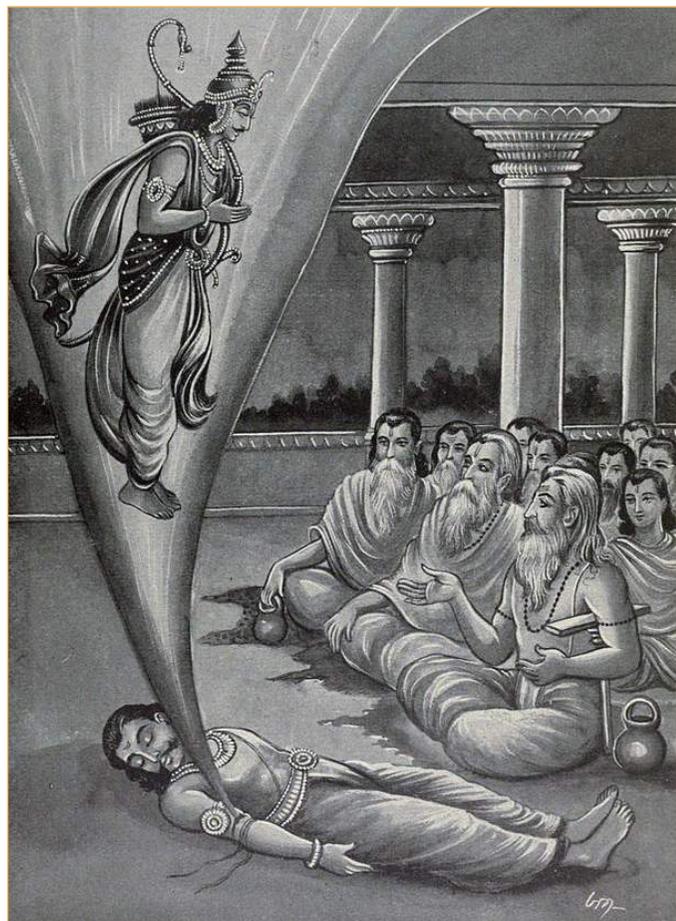
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

The fact that a person was born by the churning of the thighs of King Vena proves that the spirit soul is individual and separate from the body. The great sages and saintly persons could create another person from the body of the dead King Vena, but it was not possible for them to bring King Vena back to life. King Vena was gone and he had certainly taken another body. The saintly persons and sages were only concerned with the body of Vena because it was a result of the seminal succession in the family of Dhruva Maharaja.

The ingredients to create another body were there in the body of King Vena. By a certain prescribed process, when the thighs of the dead body were churned, another body was produced. Although dead, the body of King Vena was preserved by medicinal herbs, and the *mantras* chanted by King Vena's mother. In this way, all the ingredients for the creation of another body were there. When the body of the person named Bahuka came out of the dead body of King Vena, it was not very astonishing. It was simply a question of knowing how to do it.

From the semen of one body, another body is produced, and the life symptoms are visible due to the soul's taking shelter of this body. One should not think that it was impossible for another body to come out of the dead body of Maharaja Vena. The method adopted by the great sages and scholars, who were learned in Vedic knowledge, was perfect. They removed all the reactions of King Vena's sinful activities by seeing that King Vena first gave birth to Bahuka. After King Vena's body was thus purified, a male and female came out of it, and the great sages could understand that this was an expansion of Lord Vishnu. This expansion, of course, was not *viṣṇu-tattva* but a specifically empowered expansion of Lord Vishnu known as *āveśa*.

—*Srimad Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa) » Canto 4: The Creation of the Fourth Order » Chapter 14. The Story of King Vena» Verses: 43, Purport.* ❀



Prithu born from the dead body of King Vena

DEMIGODS WORSHIP MAHARAJA PRITHU

Srila Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakura

When the sages churned the two arms of the sonless King Vena, a couple appeared. Seeing the couple appear, the sages, knowledgeable of the Vedas, were highly satisfied, and understanding that a portion of the Lord had appeared, they spoke as follows.

The sages said: "This personality is an expansion of the Supreme Lord and the female beside him, maintainer of the world, is an expansion of Lakṣmī, inseparable from the Lord. The first among kings, the male will increase his fame. He will be a great King, widely known (*prthu-śravāḥ*), and thus will be named Prithu. The elegant, divine woman with fine teeth, who enhances all ornaments and good qualities, will be named Arci will accept Prithu as her husband."

The *brāhmaṇas* praised him, Gandharvas sang, Siddhas showered flowers and the women of *svarga* danced. Conches, trumpets, drums, and kettledrums sounded in the sky. All the groups of *devatās*, sages and *Pitṛs* went there. Brahma, the guru of the universe, also came, accompanied by *devatās*.

Seeing the mark of the club on Prithu's right hand



and the lotus on his two feet, as well as other lines on his body similar to those on the body of the Supreme Lord, Brahma understood that Prithu, was a portion of the Lord. The *brahmanas*, knowledgeable of the Vedas, arranged for his coronation. People from all over the world brought the ingredients for the bathing ceremony of Prithu. The rivers, oceans, mountains, snakes, cows, birds, animals, sky, earth and all living beings offered gifts.

Prithu, having been bathed, ornamented properly and dressed finely, together with his ornamented wife Arci, appeared like a second fire. Kuvera then offered a golden throne, and Varuna offered an umbrella brilliant as the moon, flowing with water. Vayu offered two *cāmaras*, Dharma offered a garland of fame, and Indra offered an excellent crown. Yama offered a punishing rod. Brahma offered armor made of the *Vedas*, and Sarasvati offered an excellent necklace. Lord Vishnu offered His chakra and Laksmi offered imperishable wealth. Shiva offered a sword with ten moons on the sheath and Durga offered a shield with a hundred moons. Soma offered horses of nectar and Vishvakarma offered a beautiful chariot.

Agni offered a bow made of goat and cow horn. The sun god offered arrows made of light rays. The earth offered shoes with magic power. The sky offered a stream of flowers daily. Those flying in the sky offered drama, singing, music and the power to disappear. The sages offered spiritual blessings. The ocean offered a conch born of himself. The seas, mountains and rivers gave paths for the chariot of Prithu. Bards approached him in order to offer praise. Seeing them praise him, powerful Prithu, son of Vena, smiled and spoke like thunder.

prthur uvāca

*bhoḥ sūta he māgadha saumya vandi!
loke 'dhuṅspaṣṭa-guṇasya me syāt
kim āśrayo me stava eṣa yojyatām
mā mayy abhūvan vitathā giro vaḥ*

Prithu said: O suta, magadha and vandi! How can these praises be directed to me, who have unproven qualities at this time? Those words cannot be applied to me but to others. You should not give false praise.

*tasmāt parokṣe 'smad-upaśrutāny alam
kariṣyatha stotram apīcya-vācaḥ
saty uttamaśloka-guṇāmvāde
jugupsitam na stavayanti sabhyāḥ*

In the future, when I am not present, you will be

nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā

able to praise me sufficiently. Skillful bards, it is the Supreme Lord's pastimes that should be sung. The assembly should not praise a low person like me.

*mahad-guṇān ātmani kartum īśaḥ
kaḥ stāvakaiḥ stāvayate 'sato 'pi
te 'syābhaviṣyann iti vipralabdho
janāvahāsam kumatir na veda*

How can a person who has the qualities of the Lord allow others to praise him? What to speak of someone who does not have His qualities? A fool does not understand that he is being ridiculous, mocked by the promise of having such qualities in the future.

*prabhavo hy ātmanaḥ stotram
jugupsanty api viśrutāḥ
hrīmantāḥ paramodārāḥ
pauruṣam vā vigarhitam*

Persons famous for good qualities, who are modest and generous, detest praise of themselves as if it were criticism of their abilities.

*vayam tv aviditā loke
sūtādyāpi varīmabhiḥ
karmabhiḥ katham ātmānam
gāpayiṣyāma bālavat*

O praisers, I am not yet famous for excellent activities in this world. How can I foolishly accept praise from others for things which I have not done?

— From *Sārārtha-darśinī* commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* » Canto 4: *The Creation of the Fourth Order* » Chapter: 15 King Prithu's Appearance and Coronation. Verses: 1-26

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His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

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