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## Sadhu-sanga

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**APPEARANCE OF FOUR KUMARAS  
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While the citizens were praying to the most powerful King Prithu, the four Kumaras, who were as bright as the sun, descended from the sky. By seeing the glowing effulgence of the four Kumaras, the masters of all mystic power, the King and his associates could immediately recognize them. Upon the arrival of the four Kumaras, Prithu Maharaja was greatly anxious to receive them. Therefore the King, with all his officers, very hastily got up, just as a conditioned soul whose senses are spontaneously attracted by the sense objects. When the great sages accepted the reception offered according to the instructions of the *sāstras*, and then took their seats offered by the King, the King, influenced by the glories of the sages, immediately bowed down. Thus he worshiped the four Kumaras. After this, the King took the water which had washed the lotus feet of the Kumaras and sprinkled it over his hair. By such respectful actions, the King, as an exemplary personality, showed how to receive a spiritually advanced personality.

The four great sages were elder to Lord Shiva, and when they were seated on the golden throne, they appeared just like fire blazing on an altar. Maharaja Prithu, out of his great gentleness and respect for them, began to speak with great restraint as follows: My dear great sages, auspiciousness personified, it is very difficult for even the mystic yogis to see you. Indeed, you are very rarely seen. I do not know

nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā

what kind of pious activity I performed for you to grace me by appearing before me without difficulty.

*kiṁ tasya durlabhataram  
iha loka paratra ca  
yasya viprāḥ prasīdanti  
śivo viṣṇuś ca sānuḡaḥ*

Any person upon whom the *brāhmaṇas* and *vaiṣṇavas* are pleased can achieve anything which is very rare to obtain in this world as well as after death. Not only that, but one also receives the favor of the auspicious Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu, who accompany the *brāhmaṇas* and *vaiṣṇavas*.

Although you are traveling in all planetary systems, people cannot know you, just as they cannot know the Supersoul, although He is within everyone's heart as the witness of everything. Even Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva cannot understand the Supersoul. A person who is not very rich and is attached to family life becomes highly glorified when saintly persons are present in his home. The master and servants who are engaged in offering the exalted visitors water, a sitting place and paraphernalia for reception are glorified, and the home itself is also glorified. On the contrary, even though full of all opulence and material prosperity, any householder's house where the devotees of the Lord are never allowed to come in, and where there is no water for washing their feet, is to be considered a tree in which all venomous serpents live.

*svāgatāṁ vo dvija-śreṣṭhā  
yad-vratāni mumukṣavaḥ  
caranti śraddhayā dhūrā  
bālā eva brhanti ca*

Maharaja Prithu offered his welcome to the four Kumaras, addressing them as the best of the *brāhmaṇas*. He welcomed them, saying: From the beginning of your birth you strictly observed the vows of celibacy, and although you are experienced in the path of liberation, you are keeping yourselves just like small children. Prithu Maharaja inquired from the sages about persons entangled in this dangerous material existence because of their previous actions. Could such persons, whose only aim is sense gratification, be blessed with any good fortune? My dear sirs, there is no need to ask about your good and bad fortune because you are always absorbed in spiritual bliss. The mental concoction of the auspicious and inauspicious does not exist in you. I am completely assured that personalities like you are the only friends for persons who are blazing in the fire of material existence. I therefore ask you how in this material world we can very soon achieve the ultimate goal of life. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is always anxious to elevate the conditioned living entities, who are His parts and parcels, and for



their special benefit the Lord travels all over the world in the form of self-realized persons like you. Thus Sanat-kumara, the best of the celibates, after hearing the speech of Prithu Maharaja, which was meaningful, appropriate, full of precise words and very sweet to hear, smiled with full satisfaction and began to speak as follows.

**Sanat-kumara said:** My dear King Prithu, You have asked very appropriate questions. Such questions are beneficial for all living entities which is why they are raised by you, who are always thinking of the good of others. Although you know everything, you ask such questions because that is the behavior of saintly persons. Such intelligence is befitting your position. When there is a congregation of devotees, their discussions, questions and answers become conclusive to both the speaker and the audience. Thus such a meeting is beneficial for everyone's real happiness.

*asty eva rājan bhavato madhudviṣaḥ  
pādāravindasya guṇānuvādane  
ratir durāpā vidhumoti naiṣṭhikī  
kāmaṁ kaṣāyaṁ malam antar-ātmanaḥ*

My dear King, you already have an inclination to glorify the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Such attachment is very difficult to achieve, but when one has attained such unflinching faith in the Lord, it automatically cleanses lusty desires from the core of the heart.

It has been conclusively decided in the scriptures, after due consideration, that the ultimate goal for the welfare of human society is detachment from the bodily concept of life and increased and steadfast attachment for the Supreme Lord, who is transcendental, beyond the modes of material nature. Attachment for the Supreme can be increased by practicing devotional service, inquiring about the Supreme Personality of Godhead, applying *bhakti-yoga* in life, worshiping the Yogesvara, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and by hearing and chanting about the glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. These actions are pious in themselves.

One has to make progress in spiritual life by not associating with persons who are simply interested in sense gratification and making money. Not only such persons, but one who associates with such persons should be avoided. One should mold his life in such a way that he cannot live in peace without drinking the nectar of the glorification of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari. One can be thus elevated by being disgusted with the taste for sense enjoyment. A candidate for spiritual advancement must be nonviolent, must follow in the footsteps of great *ācāryas*, must always remember the nectar of the pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, must follow the regulative principles without material desire and, while following the regulative principles, should not blaspheme others. Such a person should lead a very simple life and not be disturbed by the duality of opposing elements. He

should learn to tolerate them. Thus devoted to the Supreme Lord he should gradually increase the culture of devotional service by constant hearing of the transcendental qualities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. These pastimes are like ornamental decorations on the ears of devotees. By rendering devotional service and transcending the material qualities, one can easily be fixed in transcendence in the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Upon becoming fixed in his attachment to the Supreme Personality of Godhead by the grace of the spiritual master and by awakening knowledge and detachment, the living entity, situated within the heart of the body and covered by the five elements, burns up his material surroundings exactly as fire, arising from wood, burns the wood itself.

When a person becomes devoid of all material desires and liberated from all material qualities, he transcends distinctions between actions executed externally and internally. At that time the difference between the soul and the Supersoul, which was existing before self-realization, is annihilated. When a dream is over, there is no longer a distinction between the dream and the dreamer. When the soul exists for sense gratification, he creates different desires, and for that reason he becomes subjected to designations. But when one is in the transcendental position, he is no longer interested in anything except fulfilling the desires of the Lord. Only because of different causes does a person see a difference between himself and others, just as one sees the reflection of a body appearing differently manifested on water, on oil or in a mirror. When one's mind and senses are attracted to sense objects for enjoyment, the mind becomes agitated. As a result of continually thinking of sense objects, one's real consciousness almost becomes lost, like the water in a lake that is gradually sucked up by the big grass straws on its bank. When one deviates from his original consciousness, he loses the capacity to remember his previous position or recognize his present one. When remembrance is lost, all knowledge acquired is based on a false foundation. When this occurs, learned scholars consider that the soul is lost. There is no stronger obstruction to one's self-interest than thinking other subject matters to be more pleasing than one's self-realization. For human society, constantly thinking of how to earn money and apply it for sense gratification brings about the destruction of everyone's interests. When one becomes devoid of knowledge and devotional service, he enters into species of life like those of trees and stones.

Those who seriously desire to cross the ocean of nescience must not associate with the modes of ignorance, for hedonistic activities are the greatest obstructions to realization of religious principles, economic development, regulated sense gratification and, at last, liberation. Out of the four principles — namely religion, economic development, sense gratification and liberation — liberation has to be taken very seriously. The other three are subject to destruction by the stringent law of nature — death.

We accept as blessings different states of higher life,



Prithu and Four Kumaras, Artists: Jadurani Dasi

distinguishing them from lower states of life, but we should know that such distinctions exist only in relation to the interchange of the modes of material nature. Actually these states of life have no permanent existence, for all of them will be destroyed by the supreme controller.

Therefore, my dear King Prithu, try to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is living within everyone's heart along with the individual soul, in each and every body, either moving or not moving. The individual souls are fully covered by the gross material body and subtle body made of the life air and intelligence. The Supreme Personality of Godhead manifests Himself as one with the cause and effect within this body. One who has transcended the illusory energy by deliberate consideration - which clears the misconception of a snake for a rope- can understand that the Paramatma is eternally transcendental to the material creation and situated in pure internal energy. Thus the Lord is transcendental to all material contamination. Unto Him only must one surrender. The devotees, who are always engaged in the service of the toes of the lotus feet of the Lord, can very easily overcome hard-knotted desires for fruitive activities. Because this is very difficult, the nondevotees — the *jñānīs* and *yogī*— although trying to stop the waves of sense gratification, cannot do so. Therefore you are advised to engage in the devotional service of Krishna, the son of Vasudeva. The ocean of nescience is very difficult to cross because it is infested with many dangerous sharks. Although those who are non-devotees undergo severe austerities and penances to cross that ocean, we recommend that you simply take shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord, which are like boats for crossing the ocean. Although the ocean is difficult to cross, by taking shelter of His lotus feet you will overcome all dangers.

Being thus enlightened in complete spiritual knowledge by the son of Brahma — one of the Kumaras, who was complete in spiritual knowledge — the King worshiped them all in the following words: O *brāhmaṇa*, O powerful one, formerly Lord Vishnu showed me His causeless mercy, indicating that you would come to my house, and to confirm that blessing, you have all come. My dear *brāhmaṇa*, you have carried out the order thoroughly because you are as compassionate as the Lord. It is my duty, therefore, to offer you something, but all I possess are but remnants of food taken by great saintly persons. What shall I give? Therefore, my dear *brāhmaṇas*, my life, wife, children, home, furniture and household paraphernalia, my kingdom, strength, land and especially my treasury are all offered unto you. Since only a person who is completely educated according to the principles of Vedic knowledge deserves to be commander-in-chief, ruler of the state, the first to chastise or the proprietor of the whole planet, Prithu Maharaja offered everything to the Kumaras. The *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and *śūdras* eat their food by virtue of the *brāhmaṇas*' mercy. It is the *brāhmaṇas* who enjoy their own property, clothe themselves with their own property and give charity with their own property.

How can such persons, who have rendered unlimited service by explaining the path of self-realization in relation to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and whose explanations are given for our enlightenment with complete conviction and Vedic evidence, be repaid except by folded palms containing water for their satisfaction? Such great personalities can be satisfied only by their own activities, which are displayed to all parts of human society out of their unlimited mercy. Being thus worshiped by Maharaja Prithu, the four Kumaras, who were masters of devotional service, became very pleased. Indeed, they appeared in the sky and praised the character of the King, and everyone observed them. Amongst great personalities, Maharaja Prithu was the chief by virtue of his fixed position in relation to spiritual enlightenment. He remained satisfied as one who has achieved all success in spiritual understanding. Being self-satisfied, Maharaja Prithu executed his duties as perfectly as possible according to the time and his situation, strength and financial position. His only aim in all his activities was to satisfy the Absolute Truth. In this way, he dutifully acted. Maharaja Prithu completely designated himself as an eternal servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, transcendental to material nature. Consequently all the fruits of his activities were dedicated to the Lord, and he always thought of himself as the servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the proprietor of everything.

Maharaja Prithu, who was very opulent due to the prosperity of his entire empire, remained at home as a householder. Since he was never inclined to utilize his opulence for the gratification of his senses, he remained unattached, exactly like the sun, which is unaffected in all circumstances. Being situated in the liberated position of devotional service, Prithu Maharaja not only performed



all fruitive activities but also begot five sons by his wife, Arci. Indeed, all his sons were begotten according to his own desire. After begetting five sons, named Vijitasva, Dhumrakesa, Haryaksa, Dravina and Vrka, Prithu Maharaja continued to rule the planet. He accepted all the qualities of the deities who governed all other planets. Since Maharaja Prithu was a perfect devotee of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he wanted to protect the Lord's creation by pleasing the various citizens according to their various desires. Therefore Prithu Maharaja used to please them in all respects by his words, mentality, works and gentle behavior. Maharaja Prithu became as celebrated a king as *soma-rāja*, the king of the moon. He was also powerful and exacting, just like the sun-god, who distributes heat and light and at the same time exacts all the planetary waters. Maharaja Prithu was so strong and powerful that no one could disobey his orders, any more than one could conquer fire itself. He was so strong that he was compared to Indra, the King of heaven, whose power is insuperable.

On the other hand, Maharaja Prithu was also as tolerant as the earth, and in fulfilling various desires of human society, he was like heaven itself. Just as rainfall satisfies everyone's desires, Maharaja Prithu used to satisfy everyone. He was like the sea in that no one could understand his depths, and he was like Meru, the king of hills, in the fixity of his purpose. Maharaja Prithu's intelligence and education were exactly like that of Yamaraja, the superintendent of death. His opulence was comparable to the Himalaya Mountains, where all valuable jewels and metals are stored. He possessed great riches like Kuvera, the treasurer of the heavenly planets, and no one could ever know his confidential matters, for they were like the demigod Varuna's. In his bodily strength and in the strength of his senses, Maharaja Prithu was as strong as the wind, which can go anywhere and everywhere. As far as his intolerance was concerned, he was just like the all-powerful Rudra expansion of Lord Shiva, or Sada Shiva. In his bodily beauty he was just like Cupid, and in his thoughtfulness he was like a lion. In his affection he was just like Svayambhuva Manu, and in his ability to control he was like Lord Brahma. In his personal behavior, Prithu Maharaja exhibited all good qualities, and in spiritual knowledge he was exactly like Brhaspati. In self-control he was like the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself. As far as his devotional service was concerned, he was a great follower of devotees who were attached to cow protection and the rendering of all service to the spiritual master and the *brāhmaṇas*. He was perfect in his shyness and in his gentle behavior, and when he engaged in some philanthropic activity, he worked as if he were working for his own self. Throughout the whole universe — in the higher, lower and middle planetary systems — Prithu Maharaja's reputation was loudly declared, and all ladies and saintly persons heard his glories, which were as sweet as the glories of Lord Ramacandra.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa) » Canto 4: The Creation of the Fourth Order » SB 4.22: Pṛthu Mahārāja's Meeting with the Four Kumāras; Verse: 1-63.* ❀

## HOW TO RECEIVE A SAINTLY PERSON?

*His Divine Grace*

*A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada*

Materially if a man is not very rich, he is not glorious, and spiritually if a man is too attached to family life, he is also not glorious. But saintly persons are quite ready to visit the house of a poor man or a man who is attached to material family life. When this happens, the owner of the house and his servants are glorified because they offer water for washing his feet, sitting places and other things to receive him. The conclusion is that if a saintly person goes to the house of even an unimportant man, such a person becomes glorious by his blessings. It is therefore the Vedic system that a householder invite a saintly person to his home in order to receive his blessings. This system is still current in India, and therefore saintly persons, wherever they go, are hosted by the householders, who in turn get an opportunity to receive transcendental knowledge. It is the duty of a *sannyāsī*, therefore, to travel everywhere just to favor the householders, who are generally ignorant of the values of spiritual life.

It may be argued that all householders are not very rich and that one cannot receive great saintly persons or preachers because they are always accompanied by their disciples. If a householder is to receive a saintly person, he has to receive his entourage also. It is said in the *sāstras* that Durvasa Muni was always accompanied by sixty thousand disciples and that if there was a little discrepancy in their reception, he would be very angry and would sometimes curse the host. The fact is that every householder, regardless of his position or economic condition, can at least receive saintly guests with great devotion and offer them drinking water, for drinking water is always available. In India the custom is that even an ordinary person is offered a glass of water if he suddenly visits and one cannot offer him foodstuff. If there is no water, then one can offer a sitting place, even if it is on straw mats. And if one has no straw mat, he can immediately cleanse the ground and ask the guest to sit there. Supposing that a householder cannot even do that, then with folded hands he can simply receive the guest, saying, "Welcome." And if he cannot do that, then he should feel very sorry for his poor condition and shed tears and simply offer obeisances with his whole family, wife and children. In this way he can satisfy any guest, even if the guest is a saintly

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa) » Canto 4: The Creation of the Fourth Order » Chapter 22: Pṛthu Mahārāja's Meeting with the Four Kumāras » Verse: 10.* ❀

**SĀDHU-SAṄGA**

*Srila Bhaktivinod Thakura*

**When does a living entity develop a desire for associating with saintly persons?**



“As a result of heaps of pious activities and due to the mercy of the Lord, a living entity’s desire for material existence becomes weak. Then he automatically develops a desire for *sādhu-saṅga*. By discussing the topics of Krishna in the association of the devotees one develops faith, and when one gradually cultivates Krishna consciousness with more determination then one develops 'greed' for attaining Krishna. On such a platform one learns the art of performing bhajana by taking shelter at the lotus feet of a bonafide pure spiritual master.”

—Sajjana Toṣaṇī 11/5

### What is the necessity for *sādhu-saṅga*?

“One should follow the characteristics of the *sādhus* and learn the scriptural conclusions from them.”

—Sajjana Toṣaṇī 11/6

### What is taking shelter at the lotus feet of a spiritual master?

“Associating with an intimate devotee of the Lord is taking shelter at the lotus feet of a spiritual master.”

—Sajjana Toṣaṇī 2/1

### Do the *sādhus* ever become selfish?

“The demigods may become selfish but the devotees never become selfish. Therefore persons who desire their own benefit should eagerly hanker after wherever there is a person desiring pure love, wherever there is a discussion of Krishna’s topics, wherever there is *hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana*, wherever there is a desire for hearing the glories of Krishna, and wherever there is a glorification of Krishna and the *Vaiṣṇavas*.”

—Commentary on *Bhajanāmṛtaṁ*

### Whose association is desirable? By whose association can one make advancement on the path of spiritual life?

“One who has awakened pure devotional service in his heart is an unalloyed devotee of Krishna. His association is most desirable. The association of *madhyama-adhikārī* is also suitable. A practitioner of devotional service should always take shelter of devotees who are superior to him. In this way he can make advancement on the spiritual path.”

—Commentary on *Bhajanāmṛtaṁ*

### Does one waste time by simply sitting near a *Vaiṣṇava*?

“The foremost instruction of Sri Ramanujacarya is this: “If you cannot purify yourself by any endeavor whatsoever, then just go sit with the *Vaiṣṇavas* and you will achieve all auspiciousness.”

—Sajjana Toṣaṇī 11/11

### Is there any direct proof of auspiciousness attained due to the association with the *Vaiṣṇavas*?

“By observing the pure characteristics of a devotee, in a

### nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā

very short time a person’s mind is changed, his attachment for sense enjoyment decreases, and the seedling of bhakti sprouts in the heart. One even gradually develops a taste for the *vaiṣṇavas*; food and behavior. We have seen how by associating with *vaiṣṇavas*, people have given up many *anarthas*—taste for associating with women, thirst for wealth, desire for sense enjoyment and liberation, inclination for *karma* and *jñāna*, eating meat and fish, drinking wine, smoking tobacco, and the desire to chew pan. By observing a *vaiṣṇava*’s quality of not uselessly wasting time, many people have easily given up *anarthas* such as laziness, oversleeping, useless talk, urge of speech, etc. We have also seen that by associating with *vaiṣṇavas* for some period of time, someone’s cheating propensity and desire for fame have been destroyed. We have seen with our own eyes that by associating with *vaiṣṇavas* with a little affection, all other association, such as attachment for prejudices, has been vanquished. Those who are attached to winning fights, those who are expert at attaining dominion, those who are eager to accumulate great wealth—all such types of people have attained devotional service by being purified in the association of *vaiṣṇavas*. Even the hearts of persons who think, “I will defeat the world by my arguments and attain supremacy,” have been pacified. Without the association of *vaiṣṇavas* there is no alternative for rectifying the attachment for prejudices and false thinking.”

—Sajjana Toṣaṇī 11/11

### What does a *sādhu* do?

“The *sādhus* award divine eyes to our hearts.”

—*Bhāgavatārka Maricimālā* 15/17

### What is the nature of a *sādhu*?

“A *sādhu* never find faults in others. He respects whatever good qualities they have- be they minute or great. ”

### Is it proper to try to ascertain the difference between a pure *vaiṣṇava* and a cheater?

“In order to illustrate pure devotional service and the pure devotees Sri Krishnadas Kaviraja Goswami has discussed the method for ascertaining the level of a devotees. According to that method even today we can distinguish between the pure *vaiṣṇavas* and the cheaters. No compromise should be made in this regard. There is no possibility for the living entities to achieve auspiciousness without *sādhu-saṅga*. Therefore the pure *vaiṣṇavas* should certainly be properly identified.”

—Sajjana Toṣaṇī 10/5

### What is the piety that awards one devotional service?

“Associating with the devotees is the only piety that awards one devotional service.”

—*Jaiva Dharma, Chapter -17*

### What is the result of pretentious *sādhu-saṅga*?

“ Many people think that by serving the lotus feet of a *sādhu*, by offering obeisances to him, by drinking the water



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that has washed his feet, by honoring his remnants and by giving him some donation they can get the advantage of *sādhu-saṅga*. Although by such activities one can respect a *sādhu* and gain something, this is not actual *sādhu-saṅga*. If one carefully searches for the pure characteristics and nature of the pure devotees and then emulates them without duplicity, he can attain pure devotional service to Krishna.

A materialist approaches a *sādhu*, offers obeisances, and prays as follows—‘Oh merciful one! Please be kind to me, I am very poor and fallen therefore how will my attachment for material existence be destroyed?’ These words of the materialists are simply cheating. The materialists consider that accumulating wealth and collecting material objects are the chief goals of life. Their hearts are always filled with pride due to their possessing material opulence. Thus they artificially make a show of humility and devotion with a fear that by the curse of the *sādhus* their desire for obtaining name, fame and sense gratification may be destroyed. If a *sādhu* blesses them by saying ‘O dear! may your material desires, wealth and followers be destroyed’. Then the materialists quickly say ‘O *Sādhu Mahārāja* ! please do not give us such a benediction. Such a benediction is simply a curse, and always yields inauspiciousness’. Such behavior of the materialists towards the *sādhu* is only cheating.

In the course of our life we may meet with many *sādhus* but due to our artificial behavior we do not gain anything from their association. Therefore if we can always carefully pattern oneself upon the pure characteristics of the saintly persons, with spontaneous faith, then we can certainly make advancement by their association. We should always remember this while approaching a *sādhu* and try our level best to realize the pure nature and character of the *sādhus* and build our own character like them. This is the teachings of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.”

### What kind of *vaiṣṇava* should one associate with?

“One should associate with a *vaiṣṇava* who is superior to oneself.”

—*Śrī Manaḥ Śikṣā, Verse 10*

### Should one indulge in gossiping with a *Sādhu*? What is actual *Sādhu Sanga*?

“If one approaches a *sādhu* and converse with him like a mundane man, saying banal things like ‘It is very hot today; I feel healthier in other places; that man is very nice; this year we will make a profit from harvesting paddy and wheat,’ then he is not gaining any thing from such supposed *sādhu-saṅga*. Being absorbed in his own ecstasy a *sādhu* may reply to one or two questions of this nature, but this does not award the person devotion to Krishna which is the real benefit of *sādhu-saṅga*. One should approach a *sādhu* with love and devotion and discuss with him the topics of the Supreme Lord. Then one can attain devotional service.”

—*Sajjana Toṣaṇī 10/4*

—Taken from *Bhaktivinoda Vānī Vaiḥāva* Published by *Īṣvara dāsa*.

The four Kumars were very satisfied with Maharaja Prithu’s reception, and so with great pleasure they ascended into the sky to praise his character within everyone’s hearing. After the departure of the Kumars, Maharaja Prithu continued to rule his kingdom, his only aim being to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead. King Prithu begot five sons by his wife Arci, named Vijitasva, Dhurakesha, Haryaksa, Dravina and Vrka.

Maharaja Prithu was as strong as Indra, the King of heaven, and at the same time he was as tolerant as the earth. Just as rainfall satisfies everyone’s desires, Maharaja Prithu distributed his mercy to all, and while engaged in executing some philanthropic work, he endeavored just as he were working for his own self. He was like the sea in that no one could understand his depths and like Mount Meru he was fixed in his purpose. Maharaja Prithu’s opulence was compared with the Himalayan Mountains, where all kinds of valuable metals and jewels are stocked. Like the wind, his influence was felt everywhere. In terms of bodily beauty, he was just like Cupid, in thoughtfulness he was like a lion, and in terms of self control he seemed to rival the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Maharaja Prithu’s reputation was loudly declared throughout the entire universe, and the ladies and devotees who heard about him found his character and activities as pleasing as Lord Ramchandra’s.

Finally when Maharaja Prithu saw that he was getting old, he divided his wealth by giving pensions to all kinds of public servants, and then he handed over the rule of the earth to his sons. While surrounded by the citizens, who were shedding tears of grief due to this impending separation, King Prithu departed from his palace and proceeded to the forest, along with his wife, to perform austerities. While living in the forest, King Prithu sometimes ate the roots of trees, and sometimes ate fruit and dry leaves. Sometimes, for weeks altogether, he would only drink water, and at last, he subsisted by simply breathing air. During the summer, King Prithu sat under the hot sun while keeping himself surrounded on all four sides with blazing fires. During the rainy season he exposed himself to the harsh weather, and in the winter he entered the river and stood with water up to his neck. The king would lie down on the bare floor at night; he completely refrained from discharging semen, and he performed many other austerities meant for controlling the senses and life-air.

Because it was Satya-yug, Maharaja Prithu practiced *aṣṭāṅga-yog* as a means for performing devotional service, and as a result, he developed unflinching love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. By constantly thinking of the lotus feet of the Lord, King Prithu became completely detached from the material conception of life, and thus was released from the clutches of false ego. At that time he could directly see the Lord as Paramatma, seated within his heart.



Arci and Prithu, Artists: Puskar Dasa

Due to having attained the perfect platform of being able to receive instructions directly from the Supreme Lord, King Prithu gave up the mechanical practice of *yoga*.

Finally, desiring to give up his body without waiting for a natural death, Maharaja Prithu sat down in a particular yoga posture which began with he blocking his anus with his ankles. By utilizing the knowledge of *yoga* that he had formerly acquired, the king gradually raised his life-air up to the navel, then the heart, the throat, and then to a position between the eyebrows. From there, Maharaja Prithu raised his life-air to the skull's *brahma-randhra* point, at which time he began amalgamating the various elements within his body into the totality of those elements. This is accomplished by meditating inversely upon the creative process, step by step, up to the point of amalgamating the false ego with *mahat-tattva*. By this method, Maharaja Prithu gave up his material body and then mounted the chariot that had come before him to take him back to Vaikuntha.

Queen Arci had followed her husband in his life of austerity, although her body was very delicate.. She was not at all accustomed to the hardships of forest life, and so because of lying on the bare ground and eating only fruits, flowers and leaves, she became very lean and weak. Still, because of the pleasure that she derived from serving her husband, she did not feel even the slightest difficulty.

When Queen Arci could perceive that her husband's body no longer showed any sign of life, she lamented for only a little while, for she was a great wife of an exalted personality. Without further ado, she built a funeral pyre on top of a hill and then placed her husband's body upon it so that it could be consumed by the blazing fire. Thereafter, Queen Arci executed all of the necessary religious rituals and while bathing in the river, she offered oblations of water, as was customary. Finally, after offering her obeisances unto the

nityam bhāgavata-sevayā

demigods, Queen Arci circumambulated King Prithu's body and then entered the funeral fire while thinking of her husband's lotus feet.

After observing this brave act, thousands of demigods and their wives who were seated on top of Mount Mandara showed flowers upon the funeral pyre as a token of honor. With great satisfaction the wives of demigods glorified Queen Arci by talking among themselves as follows: "All glories to the wife of King Prithu, for she always served Lord Vishnu. Just see how the chaste Queen Arci is still following her husband upwards, as far as we can see. Although the lifespan of human beings is very short, they can easily go back to Godhead by engaging in the devotional service of the Lord. Therefore, anyone who has attained the rare human birth and yet misuses the opportunity by laboring hard in performing fruitive activities must be considered as cheated and envious of his own self."

While the wives of the demigods were talking among themselves in this way, the airplane carrying Queen Arci reached the Vaikuntha planet that her husband had attained. Anyone who reads, hears or describes the wonderful characteristics of Maharaja Prithu with faith and determination will also go to Vaikuntha. Anyone who hears this narration with great respect will become the father of many children if he is without any, and the richest of men if he has no money.

"Whoever hears this narration three times will become very reputed within society, and even if he is illiterate, he will become a great scholar. In other words, hearing about Maharaja Prithu is so auspicious that it drives away all kinds of bad luck. Even if a pure devotee is situated in the transcendental position due to being completely absorbed in Krishna consciousness, it is his duty to hear and induce others to hear about the character and life of King Prithu. Whoever regularly reads this great history will certainly increase his faith and attraction for the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord, which are the boat whereby one can cross over the ocean of nescience."

— Adapted from the book "Śrīmad Bhagavatam in condensed form" by Purnaprajna das. ❁

!! Sri Sri Nitai Gaurchandra Jayati !!

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