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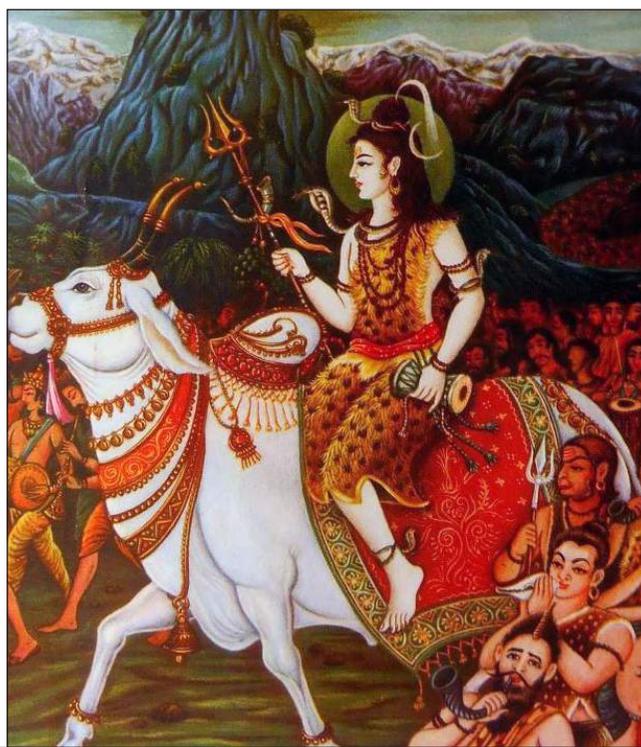
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RESULT OF ASSOCIATION WITH LORD SHIVA

Maitreya Ṛṣi

Vidura inquired from Maitreya: O *brāhmaṇa*, formerly you spoke about the sons of Pracinarbarhi who satisfied the Supreme Personality of Godhead by chanting a song composed by Lord Shiva. What did they achieve by this? My dear Barhaspatya, what did the sons of King Barhiṣat - the Pracetas - obtain after meeting Lord Shiva, who is very dear to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the bestower of liberation? It is certain that they were transferred to the spiritual world. However, apart from that, what did they obtain in this world, either in this life or in the next?

The great sage Maitreya said: To carry out the order of their father, the Pracetas underwent severe austerities in the ocean. By chanting and repeating the *mantras* given by Lord Shiva, they were able to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Vishnu. At the end of their ten thousand years of severe austerities, to reward them, the Supreme Personality of Godhead appeared in a very pleasing form. Seeing this wonderful form of the Lord, the Pracetas felt very satisfied, forgetting the hardship of their austerities. The Personality of Godhead, appearing on the shoulder of Garuda, seemed like a cloud resting on the summit of the mount Meru. His transcendental body was covered by attractive yellow garments, and His neck was decorated with the *kaustubha-maṇi* gem. The bodily effulgence of the Lord dissipated the darkness of the universe. The Lord's face was very beautiful. His head was decorated with a dazzling helmet and golden ornaments. The Lord had eight arms, each of which held a specific weapon. The Lord was surrounded by demigods, great sages and other associates who were serving Him. Garuda, the carrier of the Lord, who appeared to be an

inhabitant of Kinnaraloka, glorified the Lord with Vedic hymns by the flapping of his wings. The Lord wore a flower garland around his neck that reached His knees. His eight powerful long arms were decorated with that garland, which challenged the beauty of the goddess of fortune. With a merciful glance and a voice like thunder, the Lord addressed Pracetas, who were fully surrendered unto Him.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: My dear sons of the King, I am very much pleased by the friendly relationship between you. All of you co-operatively perform a single activity devotional service to Myself, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. I am very pleased with your mutual friendship so I wish all good fortune unto you. Now I wish to offer benedictions to you. Those who remember you every evening will become friendly with not only their brothers but with all living entities. I will certainly bless those who, in the morning and evening offer Me the prayers composed by Lord Shiva. In this way they will attain good intelligence and have all their desires fulfilled. You have with pleasure accepted within your hearts the orders of your father and executed them very faithfully; because of that your glories will be celebrated all over the universe. You will also have a very qualified, who will be as great as Lord Brahma. Consequently, he will be very famous all over the universe, and his sons and grandsons will spread throughout the three worlds.

SUPREME LORD ADVICES TO MARRY

O sons of King Pracinarbarhisat, through the coupling of the sage Kandu and heavenly society girl named Pramloca a daughter was born. Pramloca left her lotus eyed daughter in the care of the trees and returned to the heavenly planets. Soon after this child, began to cry in hunger. At that time the moon god, king of all forests, felt compassion



for the abandoned child placed his nectar producing finger, in the child's mouth. Thus the child was raised by the mercy of the moon god. Since all of you have been very obedient to My orders, I ask you to immediately marry that girl, who is well qualified and with beautiful. Following the order of your father, create progeny with her. Being My devotees and obedient sons of your father all of you have the same nature. That girl also has the same nature and will be very dedicated to all of you. Thus both the girl and you, are similarly inclined to work towards a common goal. My dear princes, by My mercy you will enjoy all the facilities of this world as well as those of the heavenly world. Indeed, you can enjoy all of this without hindrance and with full strength for one million celestial years. Thereafter you will develop unadulterated devotional service unto Me and be freed from all material contamination. At that time, due to being completely unattached to material enjoyment either in heaven or the nether regions, you will return home, back to Godhead.

CHARACTERISTIC OF THE BRAHMA-BHŪTA PLATFORM

Those who are engaged in the all-auspicious activities of devotional service certainly understand that the ultimate enjoyer and beneficiary of all activities is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Thus in whatever he does, he offers the results to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. At the same time he also always hears and speaks or sings the topics of the Lord. Even though such a person may be participating in family life, he is not affected by karmic repercussions. By always performing devotional service, devotees feel ever increasingly energetic and inspired in their lives. The all knowing Supersoul within their hearts makes everything increasingly fresh. Thus they attain what is known as the Brahman position by the advocates of the Absolute Truth. In such a liberated stage [*brahma-bhūta*], one is never bewildered. Nor does one lament or become unnecessarily jubilant. This mental stability is characteristic of the *brahma-bhūta* platform.

PRACETAS OFFER PRAYERS

The great sage Maitreya said: After hearing the words of the Personality of Godhead, the Pracetas began to offer Him prayers. It is well known that the Lord is the one who bestows all successes in life. He is the supreme benefactor. He is also the supreme friend who takes away all miserable conditions experienced by a devotee. In a voice faltering due to ecstasy, the Pracetas began to offer prayers by dint of being purified by the presence of the Lord, who was standing before.

The Pracetas prayed: Dear Lord, You take away all varieties of material distress. Your magnanimous transcendental qualities and holy name are all-auspicious. These are established facts. . You can move faster than the speed of mind. You cannot be perceived by material senses or described by material words. We therefore respectfully prostrate ourselves before again and again. Dear Lord, we beg to offer our obeisance unto You. When the mind is fixed upon You, this world of duality, although a place

for material enjoyment, appears meaningless. Your form is transcendental and full of bliss. We therefore offer our respects unto You. Your appearance within this cosmic manifestation as Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva are meant for the purpose of creating, maintaining and annihilating it.. Dear Lord, we offer respectful obeisance unto You because Your existence is completely independent of all material influences. Your Lordship always takes away the devotee's miserable conditions, for it is Your nature to do so. You live everywhere as Paramatma; therefore You are known as Vāsudeva. You also accept Vasudeva as Your father, and You are celebrated by the name Krishna. You are so affectionate to Your devotees that You always increase their influence. Dear Lord, we offer our respectful obeisance unto You because from Your abdomen sprouts the lotus flower, the origin of all living entities. You are always decorated with a lotus garland, and Your feet resemble the lotus flower including its pleasant fragrance. Your eyes are also like the petals of a lotus flower. Therefore we always offer our respectful obeisance unto You. Dear Lord, Your garment is yellowish in color, like the saffron of a lotus flower, but it is not made of anything material. Since You live in everyone's heart, You are the direct witness of all the activities of every living entity. We offer our respectful obeisance unto You again and again.

Dear Lord, we conditioned souls are always covered by the ignorance of the bodily conception of life. To deliver us from these miserable conditions, You have come before us in this transcendental form. This is evidence of Your causeless mercy upon we who suffer here. Then what can be said of the mercy You bestow upon Your devotees to whom You are always so favourably disposed? Dear Lord, You are the destroyer of all inauspicious things. In Your expansion as the *arcā-vigraha* you show compassion on Your devotees. Please thus think of us as Your eternal servants. When the Lord, out of His natural compassion, thinks of His devotee, by that alone all desires of the neophyte devotee are fulfilled. The Lord is situated in every living entity's heart, including those who are very insignificant. The Lord knows everything about the living entity, including all his desires. Although we are very insignificant, why would the Lord not know our desires? O Lord of the universe, You are the actual teacher of the science of devotional service. We are very glad that Your Lordship is the ultimate goal of our life, and we pray that You will be satisfied with us. That is our preferred benediction. We do not desire anything other than Your satisfaction. Dear Lord, we therefore pray for Your benediction because You are the Supreme, the limit of transcendence, and there is no end to Your opulence. Consequently, You are celebrated by the name Ananta.

IMPORTANCE OF ASSOCIATION WITH PURE DEVOTEES

Dear Lord, when the bee approaches the celestial parijata tree, it remains there because all its desires are fulfilled. Similarly, when we have approached Your lotus feet and taken shelter of them, what further benediction could we ask of You? Dear Lord, as long as we have to remain within



this material world due to our material contamination and continue to wander from one body to another and from one planet to another, we pray that we may associate with those devotees who are always discussing Your pastimes. We pray for this benediction life after life, in different bodily forms and on different planets. Even a moment's association with a pure devotee cannot be compared to being transferred to the heavenly planets or even merging into the Brahman effulgence in complete liberation. For living entities who are destined to give up the body and die, association with pure devotees is the highest benediction.

*yatreḍyante kathā mṛṣṭās
tṛṣṇāvāḥ praśamo yataḥ
nirvairam yatra bhūteṣu
nodvego yatra kaścana*

Whenever pure topics of the transcendental world are discussed, the members of the audience forget all kinds of material hankerings, at least for the time being. Not only that, but they are no longer envious of one another, nor do they suffer from anxiety or fear.

The Supreme Lord, Narayana, is present in that place where the devotees are hearing and chanting of His holy name. Lord Narayana is the ultimate goal of those in the renounced order of life. He is perfectly worshiped by those who are liberated from material contamination through the saṅkīrtana movement. Indeed, they recite the holy name again and again. Dear Lord, Your personal associates – Your devotees- wander around the world to purify even the holy places of pilgrimage. Is not such activity pleasing to those who are actually afraid of material existence?

A MOMENT OF ASSOCIATION WITH LORD SHIVA

Dear Lord, by virtue of a moment's association with most intimate friend Lord Shiva, we were fortunate to attain audience with You. You are the most expert physician, capable of treating the incurable disease of material existence. On account of our great fortune, we have been able to take shelter at Your lotus feet. Dear Lord, we have studied the Vedas, accepted an authentic spiritual master and offered respect to *brāhmaṇas*, advanced devotees and aged personalities who are spiritually advanced. We have offered our respects to them, and we have not been envious of anyone - brother, friend or other. We have also undergone severe austerities within the water and have refrained from eating for a very long time. We now offer all the spiritual credit accrued by this simply offered for Your satisfaction. We pray only for this benediction - nothing more. Dear Lord, even great *yogīs* and mystics who are very advanced by virtue of austerities and knowledge and who have completely situated themselves in pure existence, as well as great personalities like Manu, Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva, cannot fully understand Your glories and potencies. Nonetheless they have offered prayers according to their capacities. In the same way, we, although much lower than them, also offer prayers according to our capability. Dear Lord, You have no enemies or friends and are thus equal to

nityam bhāgavata-sevayā

everyone. Your transcendental form is always beyond the material creation and You cannot be contaminated by sinful activities. You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead because You remain everywhere within the material and spiritual realms., and thus You are known as Vāsudeva. We offer You respectful obeisance.

UNHAPPINESS OF PRACETAS

My dear Vidura, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the protector of surrendered souls, being thus addressed and worshiped by the Pracetas, replied, "Let your prayers be fulfilled." After saying this, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose prowess is never defeated, returned to His abode. The Pracetas were unhappy to be separated from Him because they had not seen Him to their full satisfaction. Thereafter they came out from the water of the sea and stood on the land. They then saw that all the trees had grown very tall, as if to obstruct the path to the heavenly planets. These trees covered the entire surface of the world. Seeing this, the Pracetas became very angry. At the time of devastation, in anger Lord Shiva exhales fire and hot air from his mouth. To rid the earth of the excess proliferation of trees, the Pracetas also exhaled fire and air from their mouths. Seeing all the trees on the surface of the earth being burned to ashes, Lord Brahma immediately came to the sons of King Barhisman and pacified them with sound advice. The remaining trees, were very fearful of the Pracetas, and immediately presented their daughter Marisa on the advice of Lord Brahma. Following the order of Lord Brahma, the Pracetas accepted her as their wife. From her womb, the son of Lord Brahma named Daksa took birth. Daksa had to take birth from the womb of Marisa due to his disobeying and disrespecting Lord Mahadeva [Shiva]. Consequently he had to give up his body twice. His previous body had been destroyed, but he, the same Daksa, inspired by the supreme will, created all the desired living entities in the Caksusa manvantara. After being born, Daksa, by his superlative bodily luster, dimmed all others' bodily opulence. Because he was very expert in performing fruitive activity, he was called by the name Daksa, meaning "the very expert." Lord Brahma therefore engaged Daksa in the work of generating living entities and maintaining them. In due course of time, Daksa also engaged other Prajapatis [progenitors] in the process of generation and maintenance.

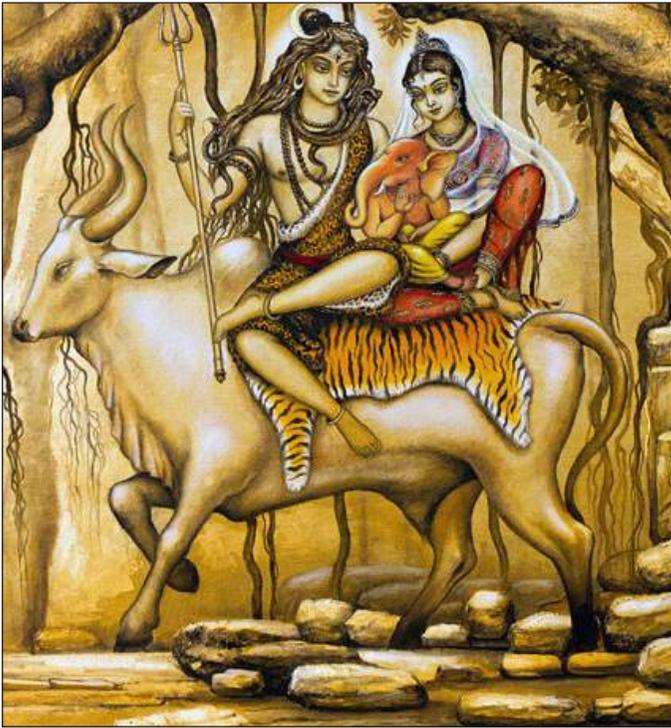
— Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (BhāgavataPurāṇa) » Canto 4: The Creation of the Fourth Order » SB 4.30: The Activities of the Pracetas » Verses:1-51.

DOES LORD SHIVA DECEIVE HIS DEVOTEES ?

His Divine Grace

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

It has been said: *harim vinā na mṛtim taranti*. Without taking shelter of the lotus feet of the Personality of Godhead, one cannot attain relief from the clutches of maya, symptomised by the repetition of birth, old age, disease and death. The Pracetas attained the shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead by the grace of Lord



Shiva. Lord Shiva is the greatest devotee of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. *Vaiṣṇavānām yathā śambhuḥ*: the most exalted Vaishnava is Lord Shiva. Those who are actually devotees of Lord Shiva follow Lord Shiva's advice and take shelter at the lotus feet of Lord Vishnu. The so-called devotees of Lord Shiva, who are simply after material prosperity, are in a way deceived by Lord Shiva. He does not actually deceive them, because Lord Shiva has no business deceiving people, but because his so-called devotees want to be deceived, Lord Shiva, who is very easily pleased, allots them all kinds of material benedictions. These benedictions might ironically result in the destruction of the so-called devotees.

For instance, Ravana took many material benedictions from Lord Shiva, but the result was that he was ultimately destroyed along with his family, kingdom and everything else. This was because he misused Lord Shiva's benediction. Because of his material power, he became so proud that he dared kidnap the wife of Lord Ramacandra. In this way he was ruined. To get material benedictions from Lord Shiva is not difficult, but actually these are not real benedictions. The Pracetas received a benediction from Lord Shiva, and as a result they attained the shelter of the lotus feet of Lord Vishnu. This is real benediction. The gopis also worshiped Lord Shiva in Vrindavana, and the lord is still staying there as Gopishvara. The gopis, however, prayed that Lord Shiva bless them by giving them Lord Krishna as their husband. There is no harm in worshiping the demigods, provided that one's aim is to return home, back to Godhead. However generally people go to the demigods for material benefit, as indicated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.20):

*kāmaistairhṛta-jṣānāḥ
prapadyante 'nya-devatāḥ
taritamniyamamāsthāya
prakṛtyāniyatāḥsvayā*

"Those whose minds are distorted by material desires surrender unto demigods and follow the particular rules and regulations of worship according to their own natures."

One enamored by material benefits is called *hṛta jñāna* ("one who has lost his intelligence"). In this connection it is to be noted that sometimes in revealed scriptures Lord Shiva is described as being non-different from the Supreme Personality of Godhead Lord Vishnu. The point is that Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu are so intimately connected that there is no difference in opinion. The actual fact is, *ekale īśvara kṛṣṇa, āra saba bhṛtya*: "The only supreme master is Krishna, and all others are His devotees or servants." (Cc. Ādi 5.142) This is the truth, and there is no difference of opinion between Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu in this connection. Nowhere in revealed scripture does Lord Shiva claim to be equal to Lord Vishnu. This is simply the creation of the so-called devotees of Lord Shiva, who claim that Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu are one. This is strictly forbidden in the *Vaiṣṇava-tantra*: *yastu Narayanam devam* [Cc. Madhya 18.116]. Lord Vishnu, Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma are intimately connected as master and servants. *Śiva-viriñci-nutam* [SB 11.5.33]. Vishnu is honored and offered obeisance by Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma. To consider that they are all equal is a great offense. They are all equal in the sense that Lord Vishnu is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and all others are His eternal servants.

— *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (BhāgavataPurāṇa) » Canto 4: The Creation of the Fourth Order » SB 4.30: The Activities of the Pracetas » Verses:38.

THE FUNCTION OF THE DEMIGODS

Srila Haridas Thakura

"Lord Vishnu is the supreme principle, and is not subject to the duality of the material world. He has a form full of consciousness and knowledge and, although He is the absolute controller of the material world He eternally exists beyond the modes of material nature. Sri Krishna in Goloka is the original and supreme Vishnu form, by dint of His being ornamented with sixty-four transcendental qualities which enhance His blissful activities. The *puruṣa-avatāras* and other plenary avatāras all possess only sixty qualities by which They carry out their respective functions.

"Krishna expands as two types of conscious particles. The first is the ordinary jiva, who has fifty qualities to a limited degree. The second type is the demigods, who have the same fifty qualities but to a greater degree. In addition, Shiva possesses five more qualities. Vishnu has all these qualities plus five more which are not found in other living entities. In this way we can see that Vishnu or Narayana, with sixty qualities, is the Lord, and Shiva and the demigods are His servants. Greater than the ordinary jīvas are the demigods and Shiva, and greater than Shiva is Vishnu, who is the Lord of the jīvas and the Lord of the demigods. Therefore, whoever considers Vishnu on the same level as the demigods is very ignorant.



Some people claim that the Brahman without qualities takes on qualities when it expands as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. However, the conclusion of scripture is that Narayana is supreme, and is the cause of Brahma and Shiva. Whoever rejects Vishnu as the supreme controller and takes to worship of demigods, falls into the world of illusion.

"Other people claim that since Vishnu pervades the entire universe and is present in the demigods as well, one can worship Vishnu by worshiping all the demigods. But this is not the ruling in the scriptures. Rather, this type of activity is forbidden. By worshiping Vishnu all other worship is perfected. Just as by giving water to the root of a tree the branches become satisfied; by worshiping Vishnu exclusively, all worship is perfectly performed. This is the Vedic conclusion, but unfortunately, fools reject this precept. Under the influence of mayavadi philosophy, the living entities of Kali-yuga put Vishnu on the same level as the demigods. In truth, however, worship of the demigods gives only limited results, whereas worship of Vishnu yields all results. If the materialists can understand this truth, they would take to Vishnu worship and have all their desires fulfilled.

"How should a householder in the *varṇāśrama* system act? Generally he should give up worrying about inferior obligations and simply worship Krishna. In other words, in all the *saṁskāras* from insemination to funeral rites, Krishna should be worshiped, using appropriate mantras from the Vedas. One should worship the Vaishnavas and Vishnu directly and worship the forefathers by giving them the *prasāda* of Lord Vishnu. To directly worship the demigods as the mayavadis do will only shorten one's life. To think that the demigods are independent of Vishnu is an offense. Since the demigods owe their existence to Lord Vishnu, in them one cannot find full perfection. Even the controlling powers of Brahma, Ganesha and Surya all come from Lord Vishnu or Krishna. They do not have independent power. Therefore the *grhastha* Vaishnava should recognize one supreme Lord Vishnu, and regard the demigods as His dependent energies. Thus the *grhastha*, though following the rules and customs prescribed in his caste, will give up all those rules which include demigod worship, aimed at sense gratification, and hold firmly to the path of bhakti, worshiping Him alone in all cases where worship is prescribed.

"In this way the *grhastha*, with his mind fixed on devotion to Krishna, performs the *saṁskāras* of his caste, satisfies the ancestors by Vishnu *prasāda* offerings, and offers oblations to the demigods by recognizing them as the devotees of Krishna. He then accepts that *prasāda* himself. He knows that by worshiping Krishna and the Vaishnava all duties are met and all benefits attained. Thus he always chants the holy name, being careful to avoid offenses such as the second *aparādha*.

"The question may arise as to why one should follow the *varṇāśrama* system. The answer is that everyone who has taken a human birth must follow this system. By this scientific arrangement of society, the general mass of people can actualise their full capacity according to their individual

nature and gradually attain devotion to Krishna. Those outside the *varṇāśrama* system should be made to give up all bad habits and begin practicing as *sūdras*. This must be the path for civilized society to carry on life.

"The worship of Krishna is an essential part of the *varṇāśrama* system. If the four *varṇas* carry out life according to the rules of their particular caste but do not worship Krishna, then they simply go to hell. Particularly the *grhastha* must follow the rules of his *varṇa* in performing his worldly activities of raising a family and relating with the rest of society. At the same time, according to his means, he must worship Krishna. And he must respect and follow these rules as long as he has not come to the platform where the rules hamper his progress in worshiping Krishna. This is the platform technically known as *bhāva*. In that state the jiva develops *sādhana bhakti*, in which the inspiration to perform devotional activities comes directly from the taste experienced by the pure jiva. This goal will eventually be achieved by the *grhastha* Vaishnava who accepts Vishnu as supreme.

There is one other offense derived from not accepting Vishnu as the supreme, one without a second, or *advaya-tattva*. Being the *advaya-tattva*, Vishnu, by His inconceivable energies, inherently possesses name, form and qualities which cannot be considered separate from Him. To consider the name, etc. as different from the Lord is to consider the Lord and the name in a material way. This concept of duality is offensive. At the stage of *nāmābhāsa* one may hold this conception unconsciously from lack of knowledge or faith, but it is impossible to hold this conception at the stage of *prema*. This *anartha* can be removed by the mercy of the bona fide guru who will guide the practitioner in *sādhana bhakti* so that the *śuddha-nāma*, the pure name, is revealed.

By material speculation one can bring about this concept of duality in the Lord, and it can become a serious offense which is difficult to remove. Thus, in the case of the mayavadis, holding to this concept is an *aparādha*. The mayavadis claim that the impersonal Brahman is the supreme truth, without variety, character or energies, without form or beauty, without change or activity, simply pure existence. For them, the name and form of Vishnu are creations of maya, the material energy of illusion. They say that when a person can overcome illusion, then Vishnu simply merges into the impersonal Brahman, losing individual identity. This is all simply bad logic, based on atheism. To claim that the Supreme Truth is without inconceivable transcendental energies, or is unable to possess character, is sheer madness. There may be some confusion of what to call the Supreme Truth—Brahman or Vishnu—but in either case, the highest realization must be God with energies and personality. That is the Vedic conclusion.

Actually Vishnu has both features in Himself: *nirviśeṣa* and *saviśeṣa*, without variety and with variety. This is possible by the inconceivable power of God, the Supreme Powerful. All opposites are assimilated without difficulty. By this inconceivable power the Supreme One can exist with variety, beauty and *līlā*.



“Of course, the jiva, being naturally of small intelligence as a mere particle of God, cannot fully understand the nature of the Lord's inconceivable power. In the attempt to establish a concept of the Supreme Truth by his own intelligence, the jiva takes shelter of material logic and accepts the secondary feature of the Lord, or impersonal Brahman, which is a state of unity and peace, as supreme. By rejecting the lotus feet of Vishnu, who is worshiped by the higher beings or demigods, and by then being bound up in a state of Brahman, he cannot distinguish what is good or bad for his own welfare.

“But a person who can understand that the Absolute Truth can exist with form and variety in a pure transcendental state, can properly see that Vishnu, His name and qualities are all one and inseparable from Him. This concept of Krishna with personality is actual knowledge. With this understanding one can take to chanting the holy name, knowing that it is Krishna Himself.

Thus one must avoid the offense of material thinking and considering that Vishnu and His name, form, etc. are different, and of thinking that other living entities, such as the demigods, have an existence separate from Vishnu.

To summarize, whoever is solely devoted to Krishna simply worships Krishna and gives up all other worship. He does not criticize the demigods or the scriptures which support the worship of the demigods, but respects the demigods as the servants of Krishna. Some scriptures may establish demigods as supreme to establish belief in different categories of human beings, in order to raise them through regulation to the point of coming to faith in Krishna and *bhakti*. The true Vaishnava will see the function of the demigods and their respective scriptures in proper perspective. Criticism of Krishna's servants, the demigods, is also offensive.

Since it is obligatory for the householder to worship the demigods according to his caste, he will worship the demigods and forefathers by offering them the remnants from their Lord, Krishna. Similarly, when the devotee sees the *mūrti* of a demigod, he will pay respects to the demigod, seeing the demigod as a Vaishnava. However the devotee will not accept the prasāda remnants of an offering that a mayavadi has made to Vishnu. Because the mayavadi's chanting and worship are both offensive, the Lord never accepts his offering. Also to accept offerings made directly to the demigods is an offense to Vishnu and obstructs the path of pure devotional service. But by worshipping Krishna, the real devotee will give the demigods the Lord's *prasāda* out of respect. Such worship, and receiving such *prasāda*, is not offensive. In this way, the devotee avoids the second offense in chanting the name, and by continuing this process correctly, he achieves love of God.

If by accident, one should happen to turn from accepting Vishnu as supreme, one should be repentant and take shelter of Vishnu. He should be careful not to commit the offense again. By remembering Krishna, by remembering His name and chanting His name, the offense will disappear. According to the Vedic literature, there is no *prāyaścitta*

(reformatory process or atonement) more effective than this. This is because the Lord is an ocean of mercy and an ocean of forgiveness. Similarly, the devotee also forgives past faults.”

One should avoid association with those who worship demigods as supreme and rather worship the Vaishnavas, who take Krishna as the supreme.

—*Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi* » *Worshipping the Demigods as Independent of Kṛṣṇa*
» *Translation by Bhanu Swami.*

WHEN BHĠGUMUNI TESTED BRAHMA, SHIVA AND VISHNU *Srila Vrindvana Das Thakura*

Long, long ago, many great sages assembled on the bank of the river Sarasvati to perform sacrifices and hear from the *Purānas*. Those sages were all learned in the *śāstra* and accustomed to perform austerities. In this particular meeting they began to discuss the Absolute Truth and the following question was raised: Amongst the three predominating deities of this material world; namely, Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva, who is the Supreme?

Someone said that Brahma is the greatest, someone said that Shiva is the greatest, and someone said that Vishnu is the greatest of all. Even in the *Purānas* different statements are given; somewhere it is said Shiva is the greatest and somewhere it is said Narayana is.

Then all the sages requested Bhṛgu to test all three predominating deities and report to the assembly as to who is the greatest: They told him, “You are the mind-born son of Lord Brahma. You are senior to us in every respect, and you are the best of the knowers of the Truth. Thus it is fitting that You go and determine who is the greatest, then return and destroy our doubts; whatever you say we will accept.

Hearing this, the great sage Bhṛgumuni first of all went to his father's residence in Brahmāloka. Bhṛgumuni went to the assembly of his father, Lord Brahma, and he stood before him with a proud attitude. Seeing his son, Brahma became satisfied and inquired about Bhṛgu's welfare. Because Bhṛgu wanted to test whether Brahma had the quality of goodness, Bhṛgu purposely did not offer his respects to his father, either by listening attentively, offering obeisance, or by offering prayers. He neglected whatever behavior is expected of a son or a disciple before his father or spiritual master.

Seeing the disrespectful behavior of his son, Lord Brahma became very angry and he appeared like an incarnation of Agni. When Bhṛgu saw the angry mood of his father, he ran away fearing he would be cursed and turned to ashes.

Everyone present held the feet of Lord Brahma and pacified him saying, “Please don't be so cruel to your son.” Then due to affection for his son, Lord Brahma controlled his anger just as fire is extinguished with water.

After testing Lord Brahma, Bhṛgumuni went directly to Kailasa, where Lord Shiva resides. Seeing Bhṛgumuni, Lord Shiva and Parvati happily got up with due respect.



As the elder brother of Bhrgu, three-eyed Lord Shiva personally rose to embrace Bhrgu. But when Lord Shiva approached, Bhrgumuni refused to embrace him. "My dear Mahesha," he said, "Please do not touch me. You associate with all kinds of *pāṣaṇḍīs* and you always keep *Bhūtas*, *Pretas*, *Piśācas*, and other untouchables around you. Your behavior is full of contradictions. What scripture says that you can wear bones and ashes? If you touch me, I will have to bathe, therefore please keep your distance from me, O king of the *Bhūtas*."

Bhrgumuni spoke like this in order to test Lord Shiva, otherwise he never criticizes Shiva. When Shiva heard Bhrgu's insult, three-eyed Lord Shiva became angry and at once picked up his trident. Lord Shiva gave up all compassion or concession that an man gives to his younger brother, and assumed a devastating form. As Shiva took up his trident to kill Bhrgumuni, Parvati came and caught hold of Lord Shiva's hand. Clutching the feet of her husband, Goddess Parvati pleaded, "O Lord should you become so angry at your younger brother?"

Hearing Parvati's words, Lord Shiva felt embarrassed and checked his anger. Bhrgumuni then went to Vaikuntha, the abode of Lord Narayana. The Lord was lying on a jeweled bed, and the goddess of fortune Laksmi, was massaging His lotus feet. At that time Bhrgu came forward and kicked the Lord's chest with his foot.

Seeing Bhrgumuni, the Lord immediately arose from His resting place and offered respectful obeisance to the *brāhmaṇa*. Then the Lord, along with Laksmi, washed Bhrgumuni's feet, and offered him an excellent sitting place. With His own hand the Lord then smeared sandalwood pulp on Bhrgu's body.

The Lord begged forgiveness from Bhrgu as if He Himself were an offender, "I am very sorry that when you first entered I could not receive you properly. It was a great offense on My part, and I beg you to pardon Me. This water which was used to wash your feet is so pure it can sanctify the places of pilgrimage. All the Brahmanḍas situated within Me as well as the universal heads—all of us have been purified by this water which has washed your feet. Therefore let your character remain ever-glorious. The mark of your footprint, as well as the dust from your foot, I will eagerly keep on My chest. I have given you a place on My chest along with Laksmi. This will be called the mark of *Śrīvatsa* by all the Vedas."

Hearing the Lord's words and seeing His humble behavior, Bhrgumuni concluded that Lord Vishnu is certainly beyond the influence of lust, anger, greed, and illusion. Bhrgumuni was struck with wonder and he lowered his head in shame.

Whatever Bhrgumuni did was not done on his account, rather this was all arranged by providence. Bhrgumuni then regained his external consciousness and, after seeing the exhibition of the Lord's love and devotion, he was filled with devotional love and began to dance joyfully. The son of Brahma was absorbed in devotional sentiments and he exhibited the *sattvika-vikāras*, namely smiling, shivering, perspiring, loss of consciousness, hairs standing on end, and shouting loudly.

"Krishna is the Lord of all!" Declaring this truth, the

nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā

son of Brahma danced. After observing the humble and peaceful behavior of the Lord, Bhrgumuni concluded that such love and devotion is not possible in anyone else. Bhrgumuni's eyes became filled with tears of ecstasy. He became stunned with devotional ecstasy and was unable to speak. He thus fully surrendered to the Lord and then returned to the assembly of great sages.

Seeing Bhrgumuni, everyone became joyful and inquired, "What behavior have you seen? Whatever you say is conclusive for us." Then Bhrgumuni described his experience.

He explained in detail the different characteristics of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, and then he spoke the following words in conclusion. "Narayana, the Lord of Vaikuntha is the greatest of all. This is the truth, the truth, the truth. Krishna is the controller and father of all, even Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva work under His direction. Lord Narayana is the doer, creator, and protector. Therefore one should worship His lotus feet without doubt. Know for certain that religiosity, knowledge, pious activities, opulences, and renunciation, as well as one's exalted position and influence all emanate from Krishna. Therefore sing the glories of Krishna and worship Him." Lord Caitanya is that same Lord Krishna, and He has appeared to enjoy the pastimes of *saṅkīrtana*.

After hearing Bhrgumuni's statement with great attention, the sages became free from doubt and concluded Vishnu is the greatest. The sages then offered due respect to Bhrgumuni saying, "You have cleared our doubts and made our minds peaceful."

— *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata* » *Antya-khaṇḍa* » *Chapter Nine: The Glories of Advaita* » *With English Translation of the Gauḍīya-bhāṣya Commentary and Chapter Summaries of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thakura, Translated by Bhumiapati Dāsa.*



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