

Śrī Kamada Ekadāsī

Issue no:83

27th March 2018

# FOLLOWING GREAT PERSONALITIES

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### THE SUBTERRANEAN HEAVENLY PLANETS

*Srila Sukadeva Goswami*

Some historians, who are the speakers of the *Purānas*, say that 10,000 *yojanas* [128 748 km] below the sun is the planet known as Rahu, which moves like one of the stars. The presiding deity of that planet, who is the son of Śimhika, is the most abominable of all *asuras*. Although he is completely unfit to assume the position of a demigod or planetary deity, he has achieved that position by the grace of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Later I shall speak further about him. The sun globe, which is a source of heat, extends for 10,000 *yojanas* [128748 km]. The moon extends for 20,000 *yojanas* [257495 km], and Rahu extends for 30,000 *yojanas* [386242 km]. Formerly, when the ambrosial nectar was being distributed, Rahu tried to create dissension between the sun and moon by interposing himself between them. Rahu is inimical toward both the sun and the moon, and therefore he always tries to cover the rays of the sun and moon on the dark-moon day and full-moon night. After hearing from the sun and moon demigods about Rahu's attack, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vishnu, uses His disc, known as the Sudarsana cakra, to protect them. The Sudarsana cakra is the Lord's most beloved

devotee and is always favored by the Lord. The intense heat of its effulgence, meant for killing those opposed to the Lord, is unbearable to Rahu, and he therefore flees in fear of it. During the time Rahu disturbs the sun or moon, there occurs what is commonly known as an eclipse.

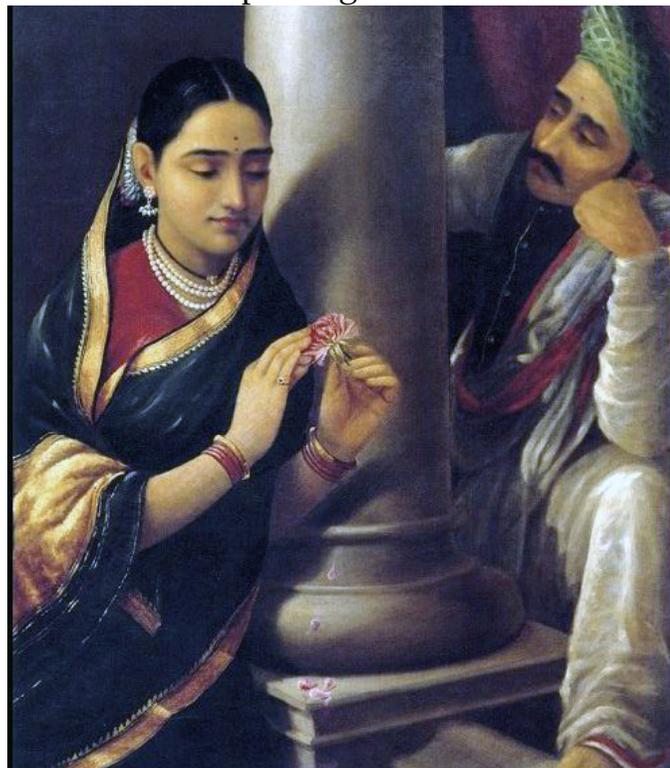
Below Rahu by 10,000 *yojanas* [128748 km] are the planets known as Siddhaloka, Caranaloka and Vidyadhara-loka. Beneath Vidyadhara-loka, Caranaloka and Siddhaloka, in the sky called *antarikṣa*, are the places of enjoyment for the Yaksas, Raksasas, Pishacas, ghosts and so on. *Antarikṣa* extends as far as the wind blows and the clouds float in the sky. Above this there is no more air. Below the abodes of the Yaksas and Raksasas by a distance of 100 *yojanas* [1 287 km] is the planet earth. Its upper limits extend as high as swans, hawks, eagles and similar large birds can fly. Beneath this earth are seven other planets, known as Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Talatala, Mahatala, Rasatala and Patala. I have already explained the situation of the planetary systems of earth. The width and length of the seven lower planetary systems are calculated to be exactly the same as those of the earth. In these seven planetary systems, which are also known as the subterranean heavens [*bilāsvarga*], there are very beautiful houses, gardens and places of sense enjoyment, which are even

more opulent than those in the higher planets because the demons have a very high standard of sensual pleasure, wealth and influence. Most of the residents of these planets, who are known as *Daityas*, *Dānavas* and *Nāgas*, live as householders. Their wives, children, friends and society are all fully absorbed in pursuing illusory material happiness. The sense enjoyment of the demigods is sometimes disturbed, but the residents of these planets enjoy their lives without disturbances. Thus they are understood to be very attached to illusory happiness.

In the replica heavens known as *bila-svarga* there is a great demon named Maya Danava, who is an expert artist and architect. He has constructed many brilliantly decorated cities. There are many wonderful houses, walls, gates, assembly houses, temples, yards and temple compounds, as well as many lodging houses serving as residential quarters for visitors. The residences of the leaders of these planets are studded with the most valuable jewels, and they are always filled with living entities known as *Nāgas* and *Asuras*. They are made pleasant by the presence of many pigeons, parrots and similar birds. All in all, these facsimile heavenly cities are beautifully arranged and attractively decorated. The parks and gardens in the artificial heavens surpass the beauty of those in the original heavenly planets. The trees in those gardens, embraced by creepers, bend with a heavy burden fruits and flowers, and therefore they appear extraordinarily beautiful. Their beauty would attract anyone and make his mind fully blossom in the pleasure of sensory satisfaction. There are many lakes and reservoirs with clear, transparent water, rippled by jumping fish and decorated with many flowers such as lilies, kuvalayas, kahlaras and blue and red lotuses. Pairs of cakravakas and many other water birds nest in the lakes and always frolic in a happy mood, making sweet, pleasing vibrations that are very placating and conducive to further enjoyment. Since there is no sunshine in those subterranean planets, time is not divided into day and night, consequently fear resulting from the passing of time does not exist. Many great serpents with gems on their hoods reside there, and the effulgence of these gems dissipates the darkness of all directions. Since the residents of these planets both drink and bathe in juices and elixirs made from wonderful herbs, they are freed from all anxiety and physical disease. They have no experience of grey hair, wrinkled skin or invalidity; their bodily luster does not fade, their perspiration does not cause a bad smell, and they are not troubled by fatigue or by lack of energy or enthusiasm due to old age. They live very auspiciously and do not fear death from anything

but death's established agent of time, which is the effulgence of the Sudarsana cakra of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. When the Sudarśana disc enters those provinces, the pregnant wives of the demons all have miscarriages due to fear of its effulgence.

I shall now describe to you the lower planetary systems, in order, beginning from Atala. In Atala there is a demon, the son of Maya *Dānava* named Bala, who created ninety-six kinds of mystic power. Some so-called *yogīs* and *svāmīs* take advantage of this mystic power to cheat people even today. Simply by yawning, the demon Bala created three kinds of women, known as *svairiṇī*, *kāmiṇī* and *pumścalī*. The *svairiṇī* women marry men from their own group, the *kāmiṇīs* marry men from any group, and the *pumścalīs* change husbands repeatedly. If a man comes to the planet of Atala, these women immediately capture him and induce him to drink an intoxicating beverage made with a drug known as *hātaka* [cannabis indica]. This intoxicant endows the man with great sexual prowess, which the women take advantage for enjoyment. A woman will enchant the man with attractive glances, intimate words, smiles of love and then embraces. In this way she induces him to enjoy sexual intercourse to her full satisfaction. Because of his increased sexual power, the man thinks himself stronger than ten thousand elephants and considers himself as god-like. Indeed, deluded and intoxicated by false pride, he thinks himself as good as God, and is oblivious to impending death.





The planet below Atala is Vitala, wherein Lord Shiva- who is also known as the master of gold mines- lives with his personal associates, the ghosts and similar living entities. Lord Shiva, as the progenitor, engages in sexual activity with Bhavānī, the progenitress, and they produce living entities., From the mixture of their vital fluids the river named Hataki is generated. When fire, enblazened by the wind, contacts water of this river and then splutters and spits it out, it produces gold called Hataka. The demons who with their wives live on that planet decorate themselves with various ornaments made from that gold, and thus they remain there very happily.

Below the planet Vitala is another planet known as Sutala. There the great son of Maharaja Virocana, Bali Maharaja, who is celebrated as the most pious king, resides until today. For the welfare of Indra, the King of heaven, Lord Vishnu appeared as the son of Aditi in the form of a dwarf *brahmacārī* and tricked Bali Maharaja by begging for only three paces of land but eventually took the entire three worlds. Being very pleased with Bali Maharaja for donating all his possessions, the Lord returned his kingdom and made him more wealthy than the opulent King Indra. Even now, Bali Maharaja performs devotional service by worshiping the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the planet of Sutala. Although Bali Maharaja donated all his possessions to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vamanadeva, one should certainly not conclude that he achieved great worldly opulence in as a result of his charitable disposition. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the source of life for all living entities, resides within every being as the friendly Supersoul. Under His direction a living entity enjoys or suffers in the material world. Due to greatly appreciating the transcendental qualities of the Lord, Bali Maharaja offered everything at His lotus feet. His purpose, however, was not to gain anything material, but to become a pure devotee of the Lord. For a pure devotee, the door to liberation's realm is automatically opened. One should not mistakenly think that Bali Maharaja was given so much material opulence merely because of his charity. When one becomes a pure devotee, full in love for the Lord, he may also be blessed with a good material position by His supreme will. However, one should not erroneously think that the material opulence of a devotee is the intended effect of his devotional service. The real result of devotional service is the awakening of pure love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Such love never falters under any circumstance.

Bhāgavata Mahāvidyālaya



Embarrassed by hunger falling or stumblings, one who chants the holy name of the Lord even once- either willingly or unwillingly- is immediately freed from the reactions of his past deeds. *Karmīs* entangled in material activities face many challenges in the practice of mystic yoga and other such endeavors to achieve that same liberation. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is situated in everyone's heart as the Supersoul, gives Himself to His pure devotees such as Nārada Muni. In other words, the Lord both bestows pure love to such devotees and then gives Himself to those who love Him purely. Elavated, self-realized mystic *yogīs* such as the four Kumaras also derive great transcendental bliss in experiencing the Supersoul within themselves. The Supreme Personality of Godhead did not award His real mercy to Bali Maharaja by giving him material happiness and opulence; for these make one forget His loving service. The result of material opulence is that one cannot fix his mind on the Supreme Personality of Godhead. When the Supreme Personality of Godhead could see no other means of taking everything away from Bali Maharaja, He adopted the trick of asking charity from him and thus took away the three worlds. Thus only his very body remained, but the Lord was still not satisfied. He arrested Bali Maharaja, bound him with the ropes of Varuṇa and threw him into a mountain cave. Nevertheless, although all his property was taken and he was imprisoned in a cave, Bali Maharaja was such a great devotee that he expressed his feelings as follows.

"Alas, how pitiable it is for Indra, the King



of heaven, that although he is very learned and powerful and although he chose Brhaspati as his prime minister to advise and instruct him, he is completely ignorant concerning spiritual advancement. Brhaspati is also unintelligent because he did not instruct his disciple Indra properly. Though Lord Vamanadeva was standing at Indra's door, instead of begging Him for an opportunity to render transcendental loving service, King Indra engaged Him in asking alms from me in order that he would gain the three worlds for his sense gratification. Sovereignty over the three worlds is actually very insignificant because whatever material opulence one may possess lasts only for the life of Manu, which is but a tiny fraction of endless time."

Bali Maharaja continued, "My grandfather Prahlada Maharaja is the only person who truly understood his self-interest." Upon the death of his father, Hiranyakashipu, Lord Nrsimhadeva wanted to offer Prahlada his father's kingdom and even wanted to grant him liberation from material bondage. However Prahlada accepted neither. He understood that liberation and material opulence, are obstacles to devotional service, and therefore such gifts from the Supreme Personality of Godhead are not His actual mercy. Consequently, instead of accepting the results of *karma* and *jñāna*, Prahlada Maharaja simply begged the Lord for engagement in the service of His servant. Bali Maharaja said: "Persons like us, who remain attached to material enjoyment, who are contaminated by the modes of material nature and who lack the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, cannot follow the glorious example of the exalted devotee of the Lord Prahlada Maharaja."

Sukadeva Goswami continued: "My dear King, how can I sufficiently glorify the character of Bali Maharaja? The Supreme Personality of Godhead, the master of the three worlds, who is most compassionate to His devotees, stands with club in hand at Bali Maharaja's door. When Ravana, the powerful demon, came to gain victory over Bali Maharaja, Vamanadeva effortlessly kicked him eighty thousand miles away with His big toe. Later I shall explain the character and activities of Bali Maharaja. Beneath the planet known as Sutala is another planet, called Talatala, which is ruled by the *Dānava* demon named Maya. Maya is known as the *ācārya* [master] of all the *māyāvis*, who can invoke the powers of sorcery. For the benefit of the three worlds, Lord Shiva, who is known as *Tripurāri*, once set fire to the three kingdoms of Maya, but later, he returned his kingdom after being appeased by him. Since that time, Maya *Dānava* has remained protected

by Lord Shiva, and therefore he foolishly thinks that he need not fear the Sudarsana cakra of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The planetary system below Talatala is known as Mahatala. It is the abode of many-hooded snakes, descendants of Kadru, who are always very angry. The greatest of these snakes are Kuhaka, Taksaka, Kaliya and Susena. The snakes in Mahatala are always fearful of Garuda, the carrier of Lord Vishnu. Although they are perpetually anxious, some of them nevertheless sport with their wives, children, friends and relatives. Beneath Mahatala is the planetary system known as Rasatala, which is the abode of the demoniac sons of Diti and Danu. They are called Panis, Nivata-kavacas, Kaleyas and Hiranya-puravasis. They are all enemies of the demigods, and they reside in holes like snakes. From birth they are extremely powerful and cruel. Although they are proud of their strength, they are always defeated by the Sudarsana cakra of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who rules over all the planetary systems. When a Indra's female messenger named Sarama chants a particular malefic *mantra*, the serpentine demons of Mahatala become very afraid of him. Beneath Rasatala is another planetary system, known as Patala or Nagaloka, where there are many demoniac serpents. The masters of Nagaloka, are Shankha, Kulika, Mahashankha, Shveta, Dhananjaya, Dhrtarastra, Śankhacuda, Kambala, Ashvatara and Devadatta. The chief among them all is Vasuki. Extremely angry by nature, they have many, many hoods—some snakes have five hoods, some seven, some ten, others a hundred and others a thousand. These hoods are bedecked with valuable gem stones, and the light emanating from these gems illuminates the entire planetary system of *bilāsvarga*.

— Srimad-Bhāgavatam » Canto 5: » Chapter 24: The Subterranean Heavenly Planets, Verses 1-31.

#### FOLLOWING GREAT PERSONALITIES

His Divine Grace A.C.

Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

It is said, that for spiritual realization one must follow great personalities like Lord Brahma, Devarshi Narada, Lord Shiva and Prahlada Maharaja. The path of *bhakti* is not difficult if we follow in the footsteps of previous *ācāryas* and authorities. However, those who are too influenced by the modes of material nature cannot follow them. Although Bali Maharaja was actually following the path of his grandfather, due to his great humility he felt thought that he was not doing so. Advanced Vaishnavas following



the principles of *bhakti* characteristically think of themselves as ordinary human beings. This is not an artificial exhibition of humility; a Vaishnavasincerely thinks this way and therefore he never acknowledges his exalted position.

— *Srīmad-Bhāgavatam* » Canto 5 » Chapter 24: The Subterranean Heavenly Planets Verse: 26, Purport.

### RESPONSIBILITIES ENTRUSTED TO OUR PREVIOUS ĀCĀRYAS Srīla Bhaktivinoda Thakura

**What preaching responsibility did Sri Gaurasundara entrust upon Sri Nityananda, Sri Advaita, Sri Rupa, Sri Sanatana, Sri Jiva Goswami, and others?**

Srīman Mahāprabhu empowered and ordered Sri Nityananda Prabhu and Sri Advaita Prabhu to preach the glories of the Lord's holy name. He empowered and ordered Sri Rupa Goswami to reveal the science of the mellows of devotional service. He ordered Sri Sanatana Goswami to preach about *vaidhī-bhakti* and its relationship with *rāgānuga-bhakti*. He also ordered Sri Sanatana Goswami to reveal the relationship between the manifest and un-manifest pastimes of Gokula. He empowered Sri Jiva Goswami through Sri Nityananda Prabhu and Sri Sanatana to reveal the science of *sambandha*, *abhidheya*, and *prayojana*.

— *Jaiva Dharma*, Chapter 39

**What responsibility was entrusted to Sri Svarupa Damodara Goswami?**

Srīman Mahāprabhu ordered Sri Svarupa Damodara to teach the worship of the Lord through loving devotional service. According to the Lord's order, Sri Svarupa Damodara composed his *kadacā* (text) in two parts. In the first part he described worship of the Lord endowed with transcendental mellows by the internal method; and in the second part he described such worship by the external method. He imparted knowledge of the internal method to Sri Raghunatha dasa Goswami, who propagated that through his writings; and he imparted the external method to Srīmad Vakreshvara Goswami.

— *Jaiva Dharma*, Chapter 39

**Sri Raya Ramananda was entrusted with spreading the science of the mellows of devotional service. Who completed that responsibility?**



The responsibility of preaching the science of the mellows of devotional service, which Srīman Mahāprabhu entrusted to Sri Raya Ramananda, was completed by Sri Rupa Goswami.

— *Jaiva Dharma*, Chapter 39

**What responsibility did Mahāprabhu entrust to Sri Raghunatha Bhatta Goswami?**

Sri Raghunatha Bhatta Goswami was entrusted with preaching the glories of *Srīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

— *Jaiva Dharma*, Chapter 39



**What was the responsibility of Sri Gopala Bhatta Goswami?**

His responsibility was to prevent anyone from disregarding the process of *vaidhī-bhakti* and distorting the truth of the mellows of pure devotional service (*bhakti rasa tattva*.)

— *Jaiva Dharma*, Chapter 39

**What responsibility was entrusted to Srīla Prabhodananda Sarasvati?**

His responsibility was to preach to the world



that to worship on the path of *rāga*, in accordance with the moods of the Vrajavasis, is the highest form of all worship.

—Jaiva Dharma, Chapter 39

### What was Sarvabhauma's responsibility?

Lord Caitanya entrusted Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya to spread knowledge of the Absolute Truth. Through one of his disciples Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya imparted this knowledge to Sri Jiva Goswami.

—Jaiva Dharma, Chapter 39

### What was the responsibility entrusted to the Gaudiya Vaishnavas?

The Gaudiya Vaishnavas were instructed to reveal to the living entities the truth about Sri Gaura and to awaken their faith in Kṛṣṇa. The Lord also ordered some great devotees to themselves perform, and engage others in performing ecstatic *kīrtana*, glorifying the pastimes of the Lord.

### WHAT DETERMINATION IS REQUIRED TO SERVE THE SPIRITUAL MASTER'S LOTUS FEET?

*Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura*

A real disciple accepts his spiritual master as the servitor God, most dear to Him. He never considers his spiritual master as inferior to the Lord in any way. A sincere disciple serves and

worships his spiritual master as if he were God. Those who do not follow this principle fall from their position as disciples. Until we see the spiritual master as a manifestation of and non-different from the Supreme Lord, we will not be able to chant the Lord's name purely. A genuine disciple must possess firm determination and faith in his spiritual master, thinking, "I will serve my spiritual master and Lord Gaurāṅga with utmost simplicity. I will follow my spiritual master's instructions, which have come down from the Supreme Lord. I will never disobey my spiritual master's orders under the influence of anyone in this world. If following my spiritual master means I must become proud or an animal or go to hell forever, still I will never hesitate. I will not follow anyone other than my spiritual master. I will destroy the flowing current of mundane thought by the strength of his instructions. If my spiritual master showers even a particle of pollen from his lotus feet upon the world, then millions of people will be delivered. There is no knowledge or proper code of conduct in the fourteen worlds that outweighs a particle of dust from the lotus feet of my spiritual master."

—*Amyta Vani: Nectar of Instructions of Immortality* by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Compiled by Sripada Bhakti Mayukha BhāgavatMahārāja. Adapted and Published by Īsvaraḍāsa Translated from Bengali by Bhumipatidāsa.



!! Sri Sri Nitai Gaurchandra Jayati !!

### Bhāgavata Mahāvidyālaya

is a branch of

**International Society for Krishna Consciousness**

Founder-Acārya: His Divine Grace

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Our heart felt thanks to Isha Prakash Das for helping as Copy Editor, Vrajsevika Devi Dasi for her *Sanskrit* and Bengali Translations, Rasa Manjari Devi Dasi for her assistance.

Quotations from the books, letters, and lectures of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

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