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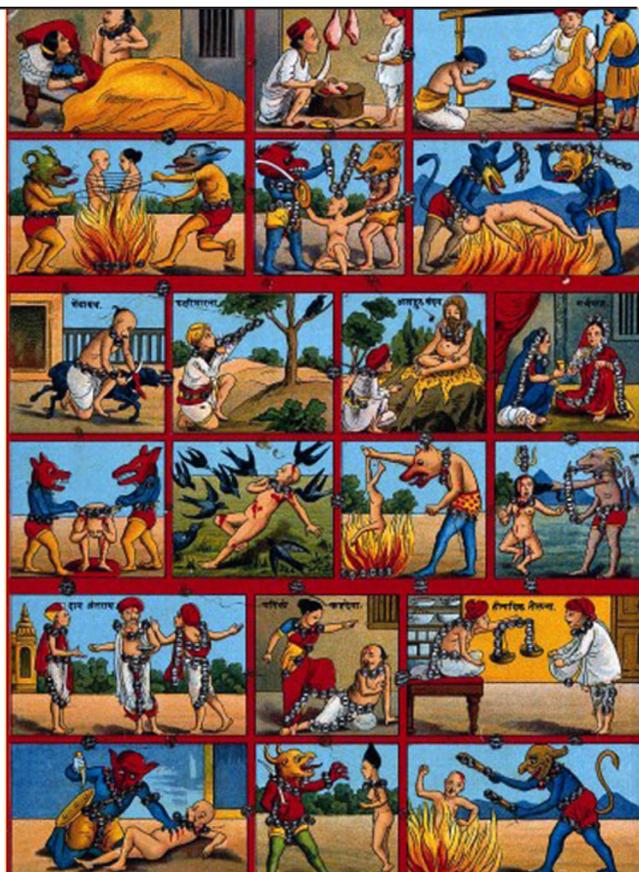
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## LIFE IN HELLISH PLANETS

Sriḷa Sukadeva Goswami

**King Parikṣit inquired from Sukadeva Goswami:** My dear sir, why are the living entities put into differing material conditions? Kindly explain this to me.

**The great sage Sukadeva Goswami said:** My dear King, in this material world there are three kinds of activities: those in the mode of goodness, the mode of passion and the mode of ignorance. Because all people are influenced by the three modes of material nature, the results of their activities are also in three categories. One who acts in the mode of goodness is religious and happy; one who acts in passion achieves mixed misery and happiness; and one who acts under the influence of ignorance is always unhappy and lives like an animal. Because of the varying degrees to which the living entities are influenced by the different modes of nature, their destinations are also different. Just as by executing different pious activities one achieves different positions in heavenly life, by acting impiously one achieves different positions in hellish life. Those who are activated by the material mode of ignorance engage in impious activities, and according to the extent of their ignorance, they are located in different levels of hellish life. If one acts in the mode of ignorance because of sheer madness, his resultant misery is the least severe. One who acts impiously though he knows the distinction between pious and impious activities is placed in a hell of intermediate severity. And for one who acts impiously and ignorantly because of wanton atheism, the resultant hellish life is the worst. Due to ignorance, every living entity cherishes various desires and because of them has been thrown into thousands of different hellish planets since time immemorial. I shall try to describe them as far as possible.

**King Parikṣit inquired from Sukadeva Goswami:** My dear lord, are the hellish regions outside the universe, within the universe, or in different places on this planet?

**The great sage Sukadeva Goswami answered:** All the hellish planets are situated in the space between the three worlds and the Garbhodaka

Ocean. They lie on the southern side of the universe, beneath Bhu-mandala, and slightly above the water of the Garbhodaka Ocean. Pitrloka is also located in this intermediary region between the Garbhodaka Ocean and the lower planetary systems. All the residents of Pitrloka, headed by Agnisvatta, meditate in great *samādhi* on the Supreme Personality of Godhead and always desire the well-being of their families.

The King of the *pitās* is Yamaraja, the very powerful son of the sun-god. He resides in Pitrloka with his personal assistants and in accordance with the specific codes and conventions established by the Supreme Lord, has his agents, the Yamadutas, bring all the sinful men to him immediately upon their death. After having them brought them within his jurisdiction, he properly judges their specific sinful activities and dispatches them to one of the many hellish planets for suitable punishment.

Some authorities say that there is a total of twenty-one hellish planets, and some say twenty-eight. I shall outline all of them according to their names, forms and symptoms. The names of the different hells are as follows: *Tāmisra*, *Andhatāmisra*, *Raurava*, *Mahāraurava*, *Kumbhīpāka*, *Kālasūtra*, *Asipatravana*, *Sūkaramukha*, *Andhakūpa*, *Kṛmibhojana*, *Sandamśa*, *Taptasūrmi*, *Vajrakantaka-śālmālī*, *Vaitaraṇī*, *Pūyoda*, *Prānarodha*, *Viśasana*, *Lālābhakṣa*, *Sārameyādana*, *Avīci*, *Ayahpāna*, *Kṣāarakardama*, *Rakṣogana-bhojana*, *Sūlaprota*, *Dandaśūka*, *Avata-nirodhana*, *Paryāvartana* and *Sūcīmukha*. All these planets are meant for punishing the errant living entities.

My dear King, a person who appropriates another's legitimate wife, children or money is arrested at the time of death by the fierce Yamadutas, who bind him with the ropes of time personified and forcibly throw him into the hellish planet known as *Tāmisra*. On this very dark planet, the sinful man is chastised by the Yamadutas, who beat and rebuke him. He is starved, and he is given no water to drink. Thus the wrathful assistants of Yamaraja cause him severe suffering, and sometimes he faints from their chastisement. The destination of a person

who slyly cheats another man and enjoys his wife and children is the hell known as *Andhatāmisra*. There his experience is precisely like that of a tree being chopped at its roots. Even before reaching *Andhatāmisra*, the sinful living being is subjected to various extreme miseries. These afflictions are so severe that he loses his intelligence and sight. It is for this reason that learned sages call this hell *Andhatāmisra*.

A person who accepts his body as his self, characteristically works very hard day and night to earn money for maintaining his body and the bodies of his wife and children. While working to maintain himself and his family, he may very well commit violence towards other living entities. Such a person is forced to give up his body and his family at the time of death, whereupon he suffers the reaction for his malice towards other creatures by being thrown into the hell called *Raurava*. In this life, an cruel person commits violent acts towards many living entities. Therefore, after his death, when he is taken to hell by Yamaraja, those very living entities whom he previously hurt appear as animals called rurus to inflict very severe pain to him. Learned scholars call this hell *Raurava*. Not generally seen in this world, the ruru is more malevolent than a snake. Punishment in the hell called *Mahāraurava* is compulsory for a person who maintains his own body by hurting others. In this hell, ruru animals known as *kravyāda* torment him and eat his flesh.



For the maintenance of their bodies and the satisfaction of their tongues, cruel persons cook poor animals and birds alive. Such persons are condemned even by man-eaters. In their next lives they are carried by the Yamadutas to the hell known as *Kumbhīpāka*, where they are cooked in boiling oil. The killer of a *brāhmaṇa* is put into the hell known as *Kālasūtra*, which has a circumference of eighty thousand miles and which is made entirely of copper. Heated from below by fire and from above by the scorching sun, the copper surface of this planet is extremely hot. Thus the murderer of a *brāhmaṇa* suffers from being burned both internally and externally. Internally he is burning with hunger and thirst, and externally he is burning from the scorching heat of the sun and the fire beneath the copper surface. Therefore he sometimes lies down, sometimes sits, sometimes stands up and sometimes runs from here to there. He must suffer in this way for as many thousands of years as there are hairs on the body of an animal.

If a person deviates from the path of the Vedas in the absence of an emergency, the servants of Yamaraja put him into the hell called *Asipatravana*, where they beat him with whips. When he runs hither and thither, fleeing from the extreme pain, on all sides he bumps into palm trees with leaves like sharpened swords. Thus injured all over his body and fainting at every step, he cries out, "Oh, what shall I do now! How shall I be saved!" This is how one who deviates from the accepted religious principles suffers.

In his next life, a sinful king or governmental representative who punishes an innocent person, or who inflicts corporal punishment upon a *brāhmaṇa*, is taken by the Yamadutas to the hell named *Sūkaramukha*, where the most powerful assistants of Yamaraja crush him exactly as one crushes sugarcane to squeeze out its juice. The sinful living entity cries very pitifully and faints, just like an innocent man undergoing punishment. This is the result of punishing a faultless person.

By the arrangement of the Supreme Lord, low-grade living beings like bugs and mosquitoes suck the blood of human beings and other animals. Such insignificant creatures are unaware that their bites are painful to the human



being. However, first-class human beings *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas* are developed in consciousness, and therefore they know how painful it is to be killed. A human being endowed with knowledge certainly commits sin if he kills or torments insignificant creatures, who have no discrimination. The Supreme Lord punishes such a man by putting him into the hell known as *Andhakūpa*, where he is attacked by all the birds and beasts, reptiles, mosquitoes, lice, worms, flies, and any other creatures he tormented during his life. They attack him from all sides, robbing him of the pleasure of sleep. Unable to rest, he constantly wanders about in the darkness. Thus in *Andhakūpa* his suffering is just like that of a low grade creature.

A person is considered no better than a crow if after receiving some food, he does not divide it among guests, old men and children, but simply eats it himself, or eats it without performing the five kinds of sacrifice. After death he is put into the most abominable hell, known as *Kṛmibhojana*. In that hell is a lake 100,000 *yojanas* [1287475 kilometres] wide and filled with worms. He becomes a worm in that lake and feeds on the other worms there, who also feed on him. Unless he atones for his actions before his death, such a sinful man remains in the hellish lake of *Kṛmibhojana* for as many years as there are *yojanas* in the width of the lake. My dear King, a person who in the absence of an emergency, steal gems or gold from a *brāhmaṇa* or, indeed, anyone else is

Bhāgavata Mahāvidyālaya

put into a hell known as *Sandamśa*. There his skin is torn and separated from his body by red-hot iron balls and tongs. In this way, his entire body is cut to pieces. A man or woman who indulges in unsanctioned sexual intercourse with an inappropriate partner after death is punished by the assistants of Yamaraja in the hell known as *Taptasūrmī*. There such men and women are beaten with whips. The man is forced to embrace an iron form of a woman which is red hot, and the woman is forced to hold to chest a similar form of a man. Such is the punishment for illicit sexual acts. A person who indulges in sex indiscriminately - even with animals- is taken after death to the hell known as *Vajrakantaka-sālmali*. In this hell there is a silk-cotton tree full of thorns as hard and strong as thunderbolts. The agents of Yamaraja hang the sinful man on that tree and forcibly pull him down so that the thorns tear his body very severely. A person who is born into a responsible family such as a *kṣatriya*, a member of royalty or a government servant but who neglects to execute his prescribed religious duties, and who thus becomes degraded, falls down at the time of death into the river of hell known as *Vaitaraṇī*. This river, which is a moat surrounding hell, is full of ferocious aquatic animals. When a sinful man is thrown into the river *Vaitaraṇī*, the aquatic animals there immediately begin to eat him, but because of his extremely sinful life, he does not die. He constantly remembers his sinful activities and suffers terribly in that river, which is full of stool, urine, pus, blood, hair, nails, bones, marrow, flesh and fat. The shameless husbands of lowborn *sūdra* women live exactly like animals, and therefore they have no good behavior, cleanliness or regulated life. After death, such persons are thrown into the hell called *Pūyoda*, where they are put into an ocean filled with pus, stool, urine, mucus, saliva and similar things. *Sūdras* who did not improve themselves fall into that ocean and are forced to eat those disgusting things. If in this life a man of the higher classes [*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya* and *vaiśya*] is very fond of taking his pet dogs, mules or asses into the forest to hunt and kill animals unnecessarily, after death he is placed into the hell known as *Prānarodha*. There the assistants of Yamaraja make him their targets and pierce

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his body with arrows repeatedly.

A person who in this life is proud of his eminent position, and who heedlessly sacrifices animals to achieve material prestige, is put into the hell called *Viśasana* after death. There the assistants of Yamaraja perpetually kill him after giving him unlimited pain. If a foolish member of the twice-born classes [*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya* and *vaiśya*] forces his wife to drink his semen out of a desire to keep her under control, he is put after death into the hell known as *Lālābhakṣa*. There he is thrown into a flowing river of semen, which he is forced to drink. In this world, some persons are professional plunderers who set fire to others houses or administer poison to them. Also, members of the royalty or government officials sometimes plunder the wealth of mercantile men by forcing them to pay income tax or by other foul methods. After death such malefactors are put into the hell known as *Sārameyādana*. On that planet there are 720 dogs with teeth as strong as thunderbolts. Under the orders of the agents of Yamaraja, these dogs voraciously devour such sinful people. A person who in this life bears false witness or lies while transacting business or giving charity is severely punished after death by the agents of Yamaraja. Such a sinful man is taken to the top of a mountain 1200 kilometres high and thrown headfirst into the hell known as *Avīcimat*. This hell has no shelter and is made of strong stone resembling the waves of water. There is no water there, however, and thus it is called *Avīcimat* [waterless]. Although the sinful man is repeatedly thrown from the mountain and his body broken to tiny pieces, he still does not die but continuously suffers chastisement.

Any *brāhmaṇa* or *brāhmaṇa*'s wife who drinks liquor is taken by the agents of Yamaraja to the hell known as *Ayaḥpāna*. This hell also awaits any *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, or person observing a vow of penance, who in illusion drinks the celebrated soma-rasa. In *Ayaḥpāna*, the agents of Yamaraja stand on their chests and pour molten iron into their mouths. A lowborn and abominable person who in this life becomes falsely proud, thinking "I am great," and who thus fails to show proper respect to one more elevated than he by birth, austerity, education, behavior, caste or spiritual order, is like a dead man even in this lifetime.

After death he is thrown headfirst into the hell known as *Kṣārakardama*. There he must suffer great tribulation at the hands of the agents of Yamaraja.

There are men and women in this world who sacrifice human beings to Bhairava or Bhadra Kali and then eat their victims flesh. Those who perform such sacrifices are taken after death to the abode of Yamaraja, where their victims, having taken the form of *Rākṣasas*, cut them to pieces with sharpened swords. Just as in this world the man-eaters drank their victims blood, dancing and singing in jubilation, their victims now enjoy drinking the blood of the sacrificers and celebrating in the same way. In this life some people give shelter to animals and birds that come to them for protection in the village or forest, and after making them believe that they will be protected, such people spear them with lances or threads and play with them like toys, giving them great pain. After death such people are brought by the assistants of Yamaraja to the hell known as *Sūlaprota*, where their bodies are pierced with sharp, needlelike lances. They suffer from hunger and thirst, and sharp-beaked birds such as vultures and herons come at them from all sides to tear at their bodies. Tortured and suffering, they can then remember the sinful activities they committed in the past. Those who in this life are like envious serpents, always angry and giving pain to other living entities, fall after death into the hell known as *Dandaśūka*. My dear King, in this hell there are serpents with five or seven hoods. These serpents eat such sinful persons just as snakes eat mice. Those who in this life confine other living entities in dark wells, granaries or mountain caves are put after death into the hell known as *Avata-nirodhana*. There they themselves are pushed into dark wells, where poisonous fumes and smoke suffocate them and they suffer very severely. A householder who receives guests or visitors with cruel glances, as if to burn them to ashes, is put into the hell called *Paryāvartana*, where he is gazed at by angry-eyed vultures, herons, crows and similar birds, which suddenly swoop down and pluck out his eyes with great force.

One who in this world or this life is very proud of his wealth always thinks, "I am so rich. Who can



equal me?" His vision is twisted, and he is always afraid that someone will take his wealth. Indeed, he even suspects his superiors. His face and heart dry up at the thought of losing his wealth, and therefore he always looks like a wretched fiend. He is not able to obtain actual happiness in any way, and he does not know what it is to be free from anxiety. Because of the sinful things he does to earn money, augment his wealth and protect it, he is put into the hell called *Sūcīmukha*, where the officials of Yamaraja punish him by stitching thread through his entire body like weavers manufacturing cloth.

My dear King Parikṣit, in the province of Yamaraja there are hundreds and thousands of hellish planets. The impious people I have mentioned and also those I have not mentioned must all enter these various planets according to the degree of their impiety. Those who are pious, however, enter other planetary systems, namely the planets of the demigods. Nevertheless, both the pious and impious are again brought to earth after the results of their pious or impious acts are exhausted.

In the beginning [the second and third Cantos of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*] I have described how one can progress on the path of liberation. In the *Purāṇas* the vast universal existence, which is like an egg divided into fourteen parts, is described. This vast form is considered the external body of the Lord, created by His energy and qualities. It is generally called the *virāt-rūpa*. If one reads the description of this external form of the Lord with great faith, or if one hears about it or explains it to others to propagate *bhāgavata-dharma*, or Krishna consciousness, his faith and devotion in spiritual consciousness, Krishna consciousness, will gradually increase. Although developing this consciousness is very difficult, by this process one can purify himself and gradually come to an awareness of the Supreme Absolute Truth.

One who is interested in liberation, who accepts the path of liberation and is not attracted to the path of conditional life, is called yati, or a devotee. Such a person, after hearing of both forms should first control his mind by thinking of the *virāt-rūpa*, the gigantic universal form of the Lord, and then gradually think of the spiritual form of Krishna [*sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*]. Thus

one's mind is fixed in *samādhi*. By devotional service one can then realize the spiritual form of the Lord, which is the destination of devotees. Thus his life becomes successful. My dear King, I have now described for you this planet earth, other planetary systems, and their lands [varṣas], rivers and mountains. I have also described the sky, the oceans, the lower planetary systems, the directions, the hellish planetary systems and the stars. These constitute the *virāt-rūpa*, the gigantic material form of the Lord, on which all living entities repose. Thus I have explained the wonderful expanse of the external body of the Lord.

— *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (Bhāgavata Purāṇa) » Canto 5: The Creative Impetus » Chapter26: A Description of the Hellish Planets » Verses: 1-40.

### WHAT IS A SINFUL MENTALITY?

*Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura*

The sinful mentality declares that, "I am the enjoyer of this material world." This mentality brings about one's ruination. To conceive of oneself as a servant of the Supreme Lord is the proper mentality.

**Why do the living entities, who are meant to serve the Supreme Lord, proudly think themselves the doers?**

It is a fact that the living entity is neither the master nor the enjoyer, but because of forgetting Krishna, his false ego has become prominent and thus he thinks himself the master. The living entities are by nature the Lord's servants. As soon as they forget this, Maya captures and devours them. Unless one sees all objects in relation to the Lord, one cannot help but be misguided by the conception that he is the master. Then he suffers miseries as he busily serves matter. Devotees always serve the Supreme Lord. The conviction that they are the Lord's servant is prominent in their consciousness. Non-devotees pretending to be masters of the material energy suffer only anxiety. Only those whose knowledge of transcendence has not been awakened accept service as masters. Glorious are those who, rather than becoming masters, serve the Lord's devotees.

### How should we live in this world?

As one who is tied up and beaten feels pain even though he does not want to, we should accept our place in this material world, while condemning it.

### Is indulging in worldly talks inauspicious?

Indulgence in discussing worldly topics or the topics of material enjoyment increases our material existence, while participation in discussion of spiritual topics or topics related to Krishna's enjoyment awards us devotional service. If we are not thinking about Hari, we are certainly thinking about material enjoyment. People in this world are always and will always indulge in worldly topics. Instead of doing that we should chant Hari's name and remaining indifferent to such topics. Otherwise we will become just like the materialists. Mahaprabhu has warned us not to speak about or hear worldly topics.

### Why have we come here?

We have come here because we have forgotten Krishna. This planet suits our purposes. It is just the right distance from the sun; if we were not this exact distance, we would be burnt to death. But we are part and parcel of Krishna. To help us, the Lord mercifully assumes a form measuring three and half cubits\* of His own hands so that we may approach Him. [\* One cubit is equal to the measurement from the tip of the finger to the elbow]

We have to adjust ourselves to His desires. Otherwise, if we try to become God ourselves we will never achieve auspiciousness. If, instead of disturbing the Lord we can properly adjust ourselves to Him and favorably cultivate Krishna consciousness, then we will be able to attain His mercy.

*Karmīs* and *jñānīs* have a strong attachment to intellectualism. They think *karma* and *jñāna* are important, but the Lord has a different perspective. Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līla 20.117) states:

*kṛṣṇa bhulī' sei jīva anādi-bahirmukha  
ataeva māyā tāre deya saṁsāra-duḥkha*

Forgetting Krishna, the living entity has been attracted by the external feature from time immemorial. Therefore, the illusory energy [Maya] gives him all kinds of misery in his material existence.

### Are fruitive activities and the cultivation of knowledge constitutional duties of the spirit soul?

Both *karma* and *jñāna* are the activities of conditioned souls. *Karma* awards temporary material results; and *jñāna* allows one to become proud of his dry renunciation and invites him to experience self-destruction by cultivating meditation on the impersonal Brahman under the shelter of monism. Both sense enjoyers and dry renunciants are mistaken and misguided. Both are ultimately cheaters of themselves. One should free oneself from the influence of these two paths.

— Amṛta Vāṇī: Nectar of Instructions of Immortality: Srila Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura. Published by Ishvara Das, Touchstone Media.

### IS YAMRAJA A FICTITIOUS OR MYTHOLOGICAL CHARACTER?

*His Divine Grace*

*A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.*

Yamaraja is not a fictitious personality or mythological character; he has his own abode, Pitṛloka, of which he is king. Agnostics may not believe in hell, but Sukadeva Goswami affirms the existence of the Naraka planets, which lie between the Garbhodaka Ocean and Patalaloka. Yamaraja is appointed by the Supreme Personality of Godhead to see that the human beings do not violate His injunctions. As confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.17):

*karmaṇo hy api boddhavyam  
boddhavyam ca vikarmaṇaḥ  
akarmaṇas ca boddhavyam  
gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ*

"The intricacies of action are very hard to understand. Therefore one should know properly what proper action is, what forbidden action is, and what inaction is. "



One should understand the nature of *karma*, *vikarma* and *akarma*, and one must act accordingly. This is the ruling of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The conditioned souls, who have come to this material world for sense gratification, are allowed to enjoy their senses under certain regulative principles. If they violate these regulations, they are judged and punished by Yamaraja. He brings them to the hellish planets and properly chastises them to bring them back to Krishna consciousness. By the influence of *maya*, however, the conditioned souls remain infatuated with the mode of ignorance. Thus in spite of repeated punishment by Yamaraja, they do not come to their senses, but continue to live in material conditional life, committing sinful activities again and again.

—Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa) » Canto 5: The Creative Impetus  
» SB 5.26: A Description of the Hellish Planets » Verse: 6.

### TIME WASTED IN KARMA Sri Bhaktivinoda Thakura

*ore mana karmera kuhare gelo kāla  
svargādi sukhera āse porilāma karma-phāṅse  
ūrṇanābhi-sama karma-jāla*

Oh my dear mind! What shall I say to you now? All my time has been spent within the deep pit of fruitive activities. With high hopes of future happiness in the heavenly planets, I have fallen into the trap of fruitive actions and reactions, which is just like the entangling web of a spider.

*upabāsa-brata dhoṛi' nānā kāya-kleśa kori'  
bhasme ghr̥ta ḍāliya apāra  
marilāma nija doṣe jarā-maraṇera phāṅse  
hoibāre nārinu uddhāra*

Observing many different types of austere vows and fasting to achieve some future heavenly goal, I thus performed such useless physical labor for no tangible result. This was just like pouring oblations of ghee onto dead ashes (rather than a living fire). Now I am being strangled by the noose of my *karma*, being destroyed by my own foolish nonsense. And the net result is that I have not been able to deliver myself from this perilous

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material predicament.

*varṇāśrama-dharma yaji' nānā deba-debī bhaji'  
mada-garbe kātāinu jibana  
sthīra nā hoilo mana nā labhinu śānti-dhana  
na bhajinu śrī-kṛṣṇa-carāṇa*

I conducted many sacrifices in honor of many different demigods and goddesses, as is recommended for householders within the *varṇāśrama-dharma* system. However by doing this I only became proud, and so I wasted my whole life in such deliriousness. I never got any peace of mind by doing so, for I completely missed out on the golden treasure of spiritual satisfaction. So much trouble I underwent because I never worshiped the beautiful lotus feet of Sri Krishna!

*dhik mora e jivana dhik mora dhana-jane  
dhik mora barṇa-abhimāna  
dhik mora kula-māne dhik śāstra-adhyāyane  
hari-bhakti nā pāilo sthāna*

Therefore to hell with my entire life! To hell with all my wealth and followers! To hell with my caste-pride! To hell with all my so-called dignity of family prestige! To hell with my studies of the *karma-kanda* scriptures, for because of all these I have not become fixed in pure devotion to Lord Hari!

—Kalyāna Kalpataru » First Branch: Spiritual Advice (Upadeśa) » Introductory Prayer » Part 1: Anutapa-laksana-upalabdhi » Translated by Dasaratha-suta dasa.

!! Sri Sri Nitai Gaurchandra Jayati !!

### Bhāgavata Mahāvīdyālaya

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