



तव कथामृतं तसजीवनम्

tava kathāmr̥tam̄ tapta-jīvanam̄

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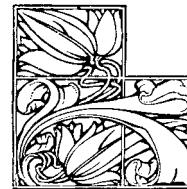
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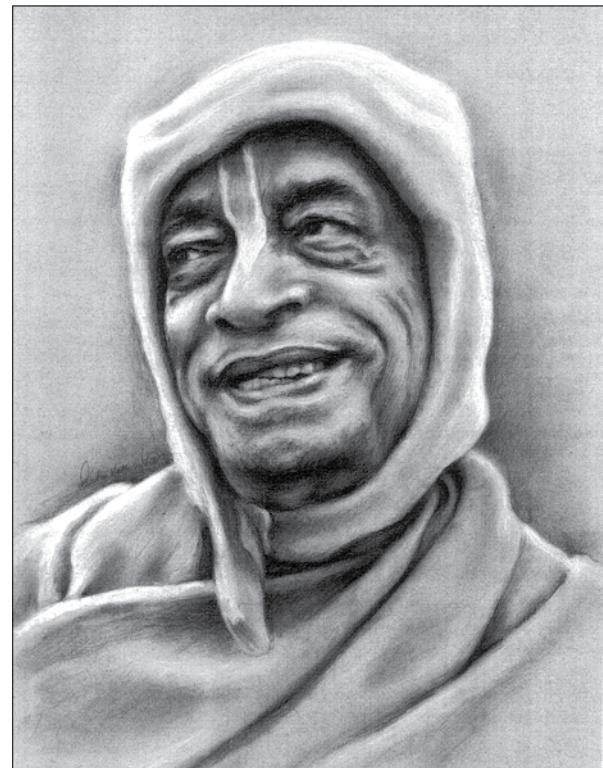
HARE KRISHNA FESTIVALS

*His Divine Grace A. C.
Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada*

Regarding festivals in Boston, you may hold as many as possible. If you can hold such festivals daily, that is also nice. Our movement is for *ānanda*, simply bliss, and the method of pushing this movement is chanting, dancing, feasting and philosophizing. In our almanac there are many festivals in every month. I am enclosing some festivals which were already held in Los Angeles, and if you perform them I will give you a long list of others. But don't embarrass yourself at present with greater plans than you can handle. The more you will get devotees the more you will be able to perform nice festivals. (Letter to Jadurani, 15 July 1969.)

I am so glad to note that you are planning a Hare Krishna festival in Detroit, on the order of the ones we held in India (Bombay and Calcutta). We had a very large tent, displayed our literatures, had *kīrtanas* and *āratī* ceremony for Radha and Krishna, spoke some on *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, and distributed *prasādam* sumptuously, to not less than 20,000, and as many as 40,000 people came daily to participate; it was so successful. And our magic was simply this chanting and dancing; that's all. You can do likewise in Detroit as far as possible and it will be a great event. Perhaps soon we can have such big festival in all the big cities in your country also. (Letter to Batu Gopal, 8 July 1971.)

It is very nice that you are holding festivals in the San Diego center. We are finding these festivals very successful for attracting the citizens to our activities.



Painting by Drdha Vrata Das

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

More and more these festivals may be held, at least one very large festival in a year, simply for glorifying Krishna in public places. It is not that a specific holiday or theme has to be chosen. We are simply calling our Indian programs "A Hare Krishna Festival". But if there are some holidays you specifically like, you plan them together with Karandhara by adjusting to the local taste. (Letter to Bhakta Das, 20 November 1971.)

In Bombay we have just celebrated our second Hare Krishna Festival and it has come out very successful.

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More than 20,000 people attended last evening's program. A special feature was the "Question and Answer" booth where 24 hours, day and night, one of our *sannyāsīs* answered all philosophy questions. So the people were impressed that we are not sentimentalists as it seemed but have substantial philosophical footing. (Letter to Karandhar, 26 January 1973.)

Concerning the festivals, it is a very good idea to have festivals on the major celebrations, at least four to five each year. (Letter to Jayapataka Swami, 6 June 1976.)

So far the speaking engagements are concerned, they must be well organized and sponsored so that there will be enough publicity and many people will come. We are not cheap — we want to speak something — but there must be good accommodations provided. There must be good sound system, and there must be good publicity beforehand so that many may know of us and come. (Letter to Uddhav and Chidanand, 26 February 1968.)

DECEIVING THE GURU

From the Mahābhārata, Śānti-parva

When the great war had ended and appropriate libations had been offered to all those who had been killed, the Pandavas, Vidura, Dhritarashtra, and all ladies from the royal palace stayed outside the city for a month on the banks of the Ganges for the purpose of self-purification.

At that time, many saints, ascetics and perfected souls approached King Yudhisthir. They included Vyasa Dev, Narada, Devala, Devasthana, and Kanva along with their respective disciples. Besides these sages, many other *brāhmaṇas* who were knowers of the Veda had also arrived along with other devoted householders and graduated students.

Yudhisthir offered worship to all of them according to their seniority. Thereafter, the sages were offered opulent seats to sit upon. After accepting worship from Yudhisthir on the banks of the Ganga, those thousands of sages tried to console him.

Sri Narada Muni, after conversing with other sages like Vyasa, etc., asked Yudhisthir as follows, "O King! By your strength and the mercy of Lord Krishna, you have won over the earth in a religious way. How fortunate it is that you have escaped alive from this war! You are dedicated to following *kṣatriya-dharma*. Are you happy now, O King? After earning much wealth, does your mind trouble you in any way?"

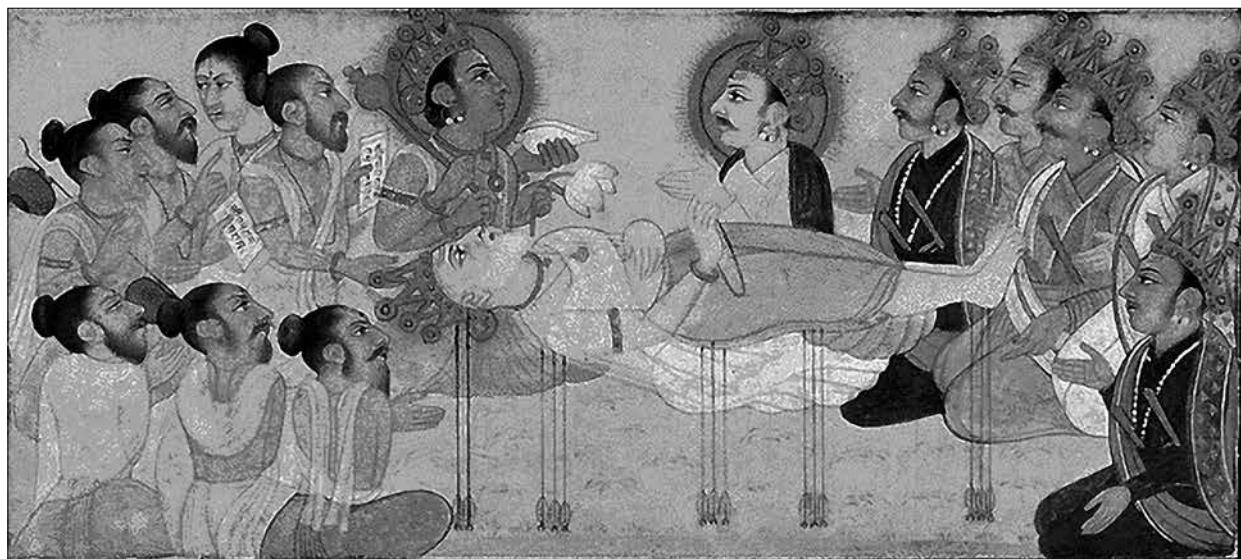
Yudhisthir replied, "O best amongst the sages! Due to being sheltered by Krishna, due to the blessings of the *brāhmaṇas*, and due to the strength of Bhima and Arjuna, I won over this planet. However, my heart is always afflicted with pain for I destroyed my dynasty simply due to my greed. After losing Subhadra's son, Abhimanyu, and the sons of Draupadi, this victory appears as good as defeat to me."

"Draupadi is always engaged in our welfare. Her sons and brothers were all slaughtered in the war. O sage! Now it greatly pains me whenever I look at her. And if this was not enough, my mother Kunti has put me in greater distress by hiding the fact that Karna was our brother. Karna — who had the strength of ten thousand elephants, who had no other warrior equal to his strength, who was extremely intelligent, charitable, merciful, and the upholder of vows, who had complete confidence in his strength, who was swift in delivering weapon attacks and fighting in unique and surprising ways, whose valor was exquisite — was our brother who was secretly bought into this world by Mother Kunti. He was our brother! Mother Kunti told us all this while we were offering libations for him."

"She also said that he was born from the sun god. When Karna was born, Mother Kunti, who was unmarried, put him in a box out of fear of public opinion and cast away the box in the flow of the Ganga. Thus, Karna, who was considered by the entire world as the son of a servant lady named Radha, was actually our brother and the eldest son of Kunti."

"Not knowing this, I killed him due to my greed. Thinking about this, my body feels a burning sensation. None of us five brothers knew about his real identity. He knew that he was the son of Mother Kunti, for she had once approached him and told him the truth. Yet he did not agree to a truce. Back then, he told Mother Kunti that he was unable to leave Duryodhan, for if he would leave Duryodhan then he would become infamous as a lowly, ungrateful soul. Many would have said that Karna, being afraid of Arjuna, had declared a truce. Therefore Karna told Mother Kunti that he would seek a truce only after winning over Arjuna in battle."

"Hearing this, Mother Kunti had requested him with a trembling voice to spare the remaining four brothers. He assured Mother Kunti that even if any of the other four brothers were trapped by his arrows, he wouldn't kill any of them. If he would be killed,



Unknown artist.

Bhishmadev on the bed of arrows speaking to Yudhisthir

Arjuna would live, and if Arjuna would die, he would live. In this way he assured Mother Kunti that in either case she would still have five sons.

“This was kept a secret by Karna as well as by Mother Kunti. Hence our own brother was killed by our hands! If Karna and Arjuna would have been with me I could have defeated even Indra. When the ill-minded sons of Dhritarashtra were giving so much trouble to Draupadi in the assembly during the dice game, the harsh words of Karna certainly caused a great deal of anxiety for me. However, my anger against him diminished when I looked at his feet because they resembled the feet of Mother Kunti.

“My mind would never become too angry at him, but I never knew why. O sage! Can you please tell me why Karna’s chariot was caught by the force of the earth, and what caused all this misfortune to fall on him? Kindly tell me all this, for you are the knower of past, present and future.”

Hearing this, Sri Narada replied, “Although this is a secret known only to the demigods, I am revealing it to you, O Yudhisthir. The demigods were thinking of a way to rid the earth of its burden in the form of the *kṣatriyas* by having them all slaughtered, and thus purified by weapons they would attain heaven. In order to achieve this, they arranged for the effulgent Karna to be born from the maiden Kunti. His nature from birth created envy in his mind towards the strength of Bhima, the agility of Arjuna, your intelligence, and the good conduct of Nakul and Sahadev. Seeing that the general populace loved you

very much, he would burn with anxiety. Therefore, he made friends with Duryodhan from his very youth.

“Seeing Arjuna’s excellence in archery, he once approached Dronacharya and requested him in a lonely place — ‘Gurudev! I would like to learn the art of throwing and retracting a *brahmāstra*.’

Dronacharya knew of the rivalry between Karna and Arjuna. Dronacharya also knew of Karna’s malicious nature. He therefore told Karna, ‘Only a *brāhmaṇa*-born or *kṣatriya*-born who has properly followed all his vows is eligible to learn this science.’

“Hearing this, Karna humbly said, ‘Very well,’ and taking permission from Dronacharya he immediately left that place. He then approached Sri Parshuram and falsely introduced himself as a *brāhmaṇa* from the lineage of Bhrigu. He offered obeisances to Sri Parshuram and became his disciple. Sri Parshuram welcomed him, saying, ‘Welcome son! Stay here happily.’

Karna then stayed peacefully at Mahendra Hill, the residence of Sri Parshuram. There he began the study of the science of throwing and retracting the *brahmāstra*. There he got the opportunity to meet many demigods, heavenly singers, and other denizens of heaven.

“One day, as he was walking alone near the residence of Parshuram near the ocean, with a sword and a bow in his hand, a cow belonging to a Vedic reciter suddenly approached him. The sages did not come to bring her back for they were busy in their daily fire sacrifices.

“By the arrangement of providence, Karna mistook the cow to be a violent animal and chopped off her head with his sword. When he realized what had happened,

he went to the *brāhmaṇa* who owned her and confessed his sin. The *brāhmaṇa*, being angry at Karna, cursed him, saying, ‘You sinner! You are destined to be slaughtered yourself. When your end approaches near, the earth will firmly grab the wheels of your chariot and your head will be chopped off from your body.’

“Karna tried to please the *brāhmaṇa* by giving many cows and other valuables in charity to him, but the *brāhmaṇa* said that the curse could not be retracted. Lowering his head with anxiety, Karna returned back to Sri Parshuram.

“Parshuram was extremely pleased on seeing Karna’s strength, affection, service attitude, and self-control. He taught all sciences related to the discharge and retraction of the *brahmāstra* to Karna.

“One day, when Sri Parshuram experienced some fatigue due to fasting, he thought of taking rest. Out of affection, he took rest in Karna’s lap. At that time, a deadly stinging carnivorous insect who would feed on the blood and flesh of others climbed onto the lap of Karna and pierced the leg of Karna with his stinger. Due to the wound caused by the sting, Karna’s leg started slowly bleeding. Karna did not move even a bit, although he was in much pain, for he did not want to wake up his guru. When the blood dripped on Sri Parshuram’s body, he woke up and said to Karna, ‘Hey! You’ve become impure. What happened? Please tell me without fear.’

श्री कृष्णकथामृत बिन्दु

“Karna told of the insect’s sting. As soon as Sri Parshuram saw the insect, he killed it with his mere glance. A surprising event then occurred. A fearsome demon became visible in the sky. The demon folded his hands in front of Sri Parshuram, and said, ‘O greatest amongst sages! Thank you for relieving me of the hellish situation of life that I was suffering in. Now I will return back to the place that I had come from.’

“Sri Parshuram asked the demon, ‘Who are you and how did you fall into such a dreadful condition of life?’

“The demon replied, ‘O Lord! In *satya-yuga* I was the demon named Damsha. I forcibly tried to kidnap the wife of the sage Bhrigu. I was cursed in turn by him to fall into a hellish condition of life as a carnivorous insect. Upon my begging forgiveness from him, he blessed me by saying that the duration of the condition of being in that insect body would end by the glance of Sri Parshuram, who would be born in his dynasty. Now that I’ve met you, my punishment is over.’ Saying this, he left that place after paying obeisances to Sri Parshuram.

“Parshuram then angrily asked Karna, ‘O fool! The pain of the sting of that kind of insect is something that a *brāhmaṇa* can never tolerate. Your tolerance of pain is like that of a *kṣatriya*. Tell me actually who you are.’

“Afraid of the consequences, Karna fell on the ground and revealed his identity by saying, ‘O Lord! I am born in a caste named *sūta* which is distinct from a *brāhmaṇa* and a *sūdra*. People address me as Radheya, the son of Radha. Being greedy to learn the science of the *brahmāstra*, I lied to you. Since the guru who guides us is as good as our father, I had uttered the name of your lineage when you asked me mine.’

“Saying this, Karna trembled and fell on the ground while folding his hands. Sri Parshuram laughed sarcastically, and said, ‘O fool! By speaking lies to me you have cheated me. Therefore, when your death will be near and you’ll most desperately need this *brahmāstra*, you’ll forget all about invoking it. However, in all other times of war you will remain unmatched.’ Saying this, Sri Parshuram left.’

Sri Narada concluded, “All these factors, including the fact that Karna’s divine armor and earrings were taken away by Indra, contributed to his death. Therefore, O Yudhisthir, do not lament the death of Karna, knowing it to be a pre-destined event.”

— Translated from Hindi by Hari Parshad Das. *Samkṣipta Mahābhārata*, Volume 2. Edited by Jaydayal Goyandka. Gita Press, Gorakhpur.

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 c/o Sri Krishna Balarama Mandir
 National Highway No. 5, IRC Village
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 Phone: (0674) 2553250, 2557026
 Email: katha@gopaljiu.org
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 Subscriptions: minimag@gopaljiu.org

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