

The Appearance of Śukadeva Gosvāmī



While returning home, the King [Mahārāja Parīkṣit] felt that the act he had committed against the faultless and powerful brāhmaṇa was heinous and uncivilized. Consequently he was distressed. While the King was thus repenting, he received news of his imminent death, which would be due to the bite of a snake-bird, occasioned by the curse spoken by the sage's son. The King accepted this as good news, for it

would be the cause of his indifference toward worldly things.

Mahārāja Parīkṣit sat down firmly on the banks of the Ganges to concentrate his mind in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, rejecting all other practices of self-realization, because transcendental loving service to Kṛṣṇa is the greatest achievement, superseding all other methods. So, freeing himself from all kinds of associations and attachments, he accepted the vows of a sage.

At that time all the great minds and thinkers, accompanied by their disciples, and sages who could verily sanctify a place of pilgrimage just by their presence, arrived there on the plea of making a pilgrim's journey. There were also many other saintly

demigods, kings and special royal orders called aruṇādayas [a special rank of rājarṣis] from different dynasties of sages. When they all assembled together to meet the Emperor [Parīkṣit], he received them properly and bowed his head to the ground.

After all the ṛṣis and others had seated themselves comfortably, the King, humbly standing before them with folded hands, told them of his decision to fast until death. He said -

O brāhmaṇas, just accept me as a completely surrendered soul, and let mother Ganges, the representative of the Lord, also accept me in that way, for I have already taken the lotus feet of the Lord into my heart. Let the snake-bird — or whatever magical thing the brāhmaṇa created — bite me at once. I only

desire that you all continue singing the deeds of Lord Viṣṇu.

All the great sages who were assembled there praised the decision of Mahārāja Parīkṣit, and they expressed their approval by saying “Very good.”

The King said: O great sages, you have all very kindly assembled here, having come from all parts of the universe. You are all as good as supreme knowledge personified, who resides in the planet above the three worlds [Satyaloka]. Consequently you are naturally inclined to do good to others, and but for this you have no interest, either in this life or in the next. O trustworthy brāhmaṇas, I now ask you about my immediate duty. Please, after proper deliberation, tell me of the unalloyed duty of everyone in all

circumstances, and specifically of those who are just about to die.

At that moment there appeared the powerful son of Vyāsadeva, who traveled over the earth disinterested and satisfied with himself. He did not manifest any symptoms of belonging to any social order or status of life. He was surrounded with women and children, and he dressed as if others had neglected him.