

The Story of King Vena



The great sage Maitreya said: My dear Vidura, when Mahārāja Dhruva departed for the forest, his son, Utkala, did not desire to accept the opulent throne of his father, which was meant for the ruler of all the lands of this planet. From his very birth, Utkala was fully satisfied and unattached to the world. He was

equipoised, for he could see everything resting in the Supersoul and the Supersoul present in everyone's heart.

Utkala appeared to the less intelligent persons on the road to be foolish, blind, dumb, deaf and mad, although actually he was not so. He remained like fire covered with ashes, without blazing flames. For this reason the ministers and all the elderly members of the family thought Utkala to be without intelligence and, in fact, mad. Thus his younger brother, named Vatsara, the son of Bhrami, was elevated to the royal throne, and he became king of the

world.

King Anga was one of the descendent in this lineage. The wife of Aṅga, Sunīthā, gave birth to a son named Vena, who was very crooked. The saintly King Aṅga was very disappointed with Vena's bad character, and he left home and kingdom and went out to the forest.

My dear Vidura, when great sages curse, their words are as invincible as a thunderbolt. Thus when they cursed King Vena out of anger, he died. After his death, since there was no king, all the rogues and thieves flourished, the kingdom became

unregulated, and all the citizens suffered greatly. On seeing this, the great sages took the right hand of Vena as a churning rod, and as a result of their churning, Lord Viṣṇu in His partial representation made His advent as King Pṛthu, the original emperor of the world.

Vidura inquired from the sage Maitreya: My dear brāhmaṇa, King Aṅga was very gentle. He had high character and was a saintly personality and lover of brahminical culture. How is it that such a great soul got a bad son like Vena, because of whom he became indifferent to his

kingdom and left it? How is it that the great sages, who were completely conversant with religious principles, desired to curse King Vena, who himself carried the rod of punishment, and thus awarded him the greatest punishment [brahma-śāpa]?

Śrī Maitreya replied: My dear Vidura, once the great King Aṅga arranged to perform the great sacrifice known as aśvamedha. All the expert brāhmaṇas present knew how to invite the demigods, but in spite of their efforts, no demigods participated or appeared in that sacrifice.

The priests engaged in the sacrifice then informed King Aṅga: O King, we are properly offering the clarified butter in the sacrifice, but despite all our efforts the demigods do not accept it. O King, we know that the paraphernalia to perform the sacrifice is well collected by you with great faith and care and is not polluted. Our chanting of the Vedic hymns is also not deficient in any way, for all the brāhmaṇas and priests present here are expert and are executing the performances properly.

Dear King, we do not find any reason that

the demigods should feel insulted or neglected in any way, but still the demigods who are witnesses for the sacrifice do not accept their shares. We do not know why this is so.

King Aṅga addressed the priestly order: My dear priests, kindly tell me what offense I have committed. Although invited, the demigods are neither taking part in the sacrifice nor accepting their shares.

The head priests said: O King, in this life we do not find any sinful activity, even within your mind, so you are not in the

least offensive. But we can see that in your previous life you performed sinful activities due to which, in spite of your having all qualifications, you have no son. O King, we wish all good fortune for you. You have no son, but if you pray at once to the Supreme Lord and ask for a son, and if you execute the sacrifice for that purpose, the enjoyer of the sacrifice, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, will fulfill your desire.

Thus for the sake of a son for King Aṅga, they decided to offer oblations to Lord Viṣṇu, who is situated in the hearts of all

living entities. As soon as the oblation was offered in the fire, a person appeared from the fire altar wearing a golden garland and a white dress. He was carrying a golden pot filled with rice boiled in milk. The King was very liberal, and after taking permission from the priests, he took the preparation in his joined palms, and after smelling it he offered a portion to his wife.

Although the Queen had no son, after eating that food, which had the power to produce a male child, she became pregnant by her husband, and in due course of time she gave birth to a son. That boy was born

partially in the dynasty of irreligion. His grandfather was death personified, and the boy grew up as his follower; he became a greatly irreligious person.

After fixing his bow and arrow, the cruel boy used to go to the forest and unnecessarily kill innocent deer, and as soon as he came all the people would cry, “Here comes cruel Vena! Here comes cruel Vena!” The boy was so cruel that while playing with young boys of his age he would kill them very mercilessly, as if they were animals meant for slaughter. After seeing the cruel and merciless

behavior of his son, Vena, King Aṅga punished him in different ways to reform him, but was unable to bring him to the path of gentleness. He thus became greatly aggrieved.

The King thought to himself: Persons who have no son are certainly fortunate. They must have worshiped the Lord in their previous lives so that they would not have to suffer the unbearable unhappiness caused by a bad son. A sinful son causes a person's reputation to vanish. His irreligious activities at home cause irreligion and quarrel among everyone, and

this creates only endless anxiety. Who, if he is considerate and intelligent, would desire such a worthless son? Such a son is nothing but a bond of illusion for the living entity, and he makes one's home miserable.

Then the King thought: A bad son is better than a good son because a good son creates an attachment for home, whereas a bad son does not. A bad son creates a hellish home from which an intelligent man naturally becomes very easily detached.

Thinking like that, King Aṅga could not sleep at night. He became completely

indifferent to household life. Once, therefore, in the dead of night, he got up from bed and left Vena's mother [his wife], who was sleeping deeply. He gave up all attraction for his greatly opulent kingdom, and, unseen by anyone, he very silently gave up his home and opulence and proceeded towards the forest.

When it was understood that the King had indifferently left home, all the citizens, priests, ministers, friends, and people in general were greatly aggrieved. They began to search for him all over the world, just as a less experienced mystic searches

out the Supersoul within himself. When the citizens could not find any trace of the King after searching for him everywhere, they were very disappointed, and they returned to the city, where all the great sages of the country assembled because of the King's absence. With tears in their eyes the citizens offered respectful obeisances and informed the sages in full detail that they were unable to find the King anywhere.

