

The Story of King Vena



The great sages, headed by Bhṛḡu, were always thinking of the welfare of the people in general. When they saw that in the absence of King Aṅga there was no one to protect the interests of the people, they understood that without a ruler the people would become independent and non regulated. The great sages then called for the Queen Mother, Sunīthā, and with her permission they installed Vena on the throne as master of the

world. All the ministers, however, disagreed with this. It was already known that Vena was very severe and cruel; therefore, as soon as all the thieves and rogues in the state heard of his ascendance to the royal throne, they became very much afraid of him. Indeed, they hid themselves here and there as rats hide themselves from snakes.

When the King ascended to the throne, he became all-powerful with eight kinds of opulences. Consequently he became too proud. By virtue of his false prestige, he considered himself to be greater than anyone. Thus he began to insult great personalities. When he became overly blind due to his opulences, King Vena

mounted a chariot and, like an uncontrolled elephant, began to travel through the kingdom, causing the sky and earth to tremble wherever he went. All the twice-born [brāhmaṇas] were forbidden henceforward to perform any sacrifice, and they were also forbidden to give charity or offer clarified butter. Thus King Vena sounded kettledrums throughout the countryside. In other words, he stopped all kinds of religious rituals. Therefore all the great sages assembled together and, after observing cruel Vena's atrocities, concluded that a great danger and catastrophe was approaching the people of the world. Thus out of compassion they began to talk amongst themselves, for they themselves were the performers of the sacrifices. When the great sages

consulted one another, they saw that the people were in a dangerous position from both directions. When a fire blazes on both ends of a log, the ants in the middle are in a very dangerous situation. Similarly, at that time the people in general were in a dangerous position due to an irresponsible king on one side and thieves and rogues on the other. Thinking to save the state from irregularity, the sages began to consider that it was due to a political crisis that they made Vena king although he was not qualified. But alas, now the people were being disturbed by the king himself. Under such circumstances, how could the people be happy? Because he was born from the womb of Sunīthā, King Vena is by nature very mischievous. Supporting this

mischievous king is exactly like maintaining a snake with milk. Now he has become a source of all difficulties. We appointed this Vena king of the state in order to give protection to the citizens, but now he has become the enemy of the citizens. Despite all these discrepancies, we should at once try to pacify him. By doing so, we may not be touched by the sinful results caused by him.

The great sages, having thus decided, approached King Vena. Concealing their real anger, they pacified him with sweet words and then spoke as follows. The great sages said: Dear King, we have come to give you good advice. Kindly hear us with great attention. By doing so, your duration of life and your opulence, strength and

reputation will increase. Those who live according to religious principles and who follow them by words, mind, body and intelligence are elevated to the heavenly kingdom, which is devoid of all miseries. Being thus rid of the material influence, they achieve unlimited happiness in life. O great hero, for this reason you should not be the cause of spoiling the spiritual life of the general populace. If their spiritual life is spoiled because of your activities, you will certainly fall down from your opulent and royal position. The saintly persons continued: When the king protects the citizens from the disturbances of mischievous ministers as well as from thieves and rogues, he can, by virtue of such pious activities, accept taxes given by his

subjects. Thus a pious king can certainly enjoy himself in this world as well as in the life after death. Dear King, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, along with the predominating deities, is the enjoyer of the results of all sacrifices in all planets. The Supreme Lord is the sum total of the three Vedas, the owner of everything, and the ultimate goal of all austerity. Therefore your countrymen should engage in performing various sacrifices for your elevation. Indeed, you should always direct them towards the offering of sacrifices. King Vena replied: You are not at all experienced. It is very much regrettable that you are maintaining something which is not religious and are accepting it as religious. Indeed, I think you are giving up your real husband, who

maintains you, and are searching after some paramour to worship. Those who, out of gross ignorance, do not worship the king, who is actually the Supreme Personality of Godhead, experience happiness neither in this world nor in the world after death. You are so much devoted to the demigods, but who are they? Indeed, your affection for these demigods is exactly like the affection of an unchaste woman who neglects her married life and gives all attention to her paramour. Lord Viṣṇu; Lord Brahmā; Lord Śiva; Lord Indra; Vāyu, the master of air; Yama, the superintendent of death; the sun-god; the director of rainfall; Kuvera, the treasurer; the moon-god; the predominating deity of the earth; Agni, the fire-god; Varuṇa, the lord of waters; and all

others who are great and competent to bestow benedictions or to curse — all abide in the body of the king. For this reason the king is known as the reservoir of all demigods, who are simply parts and parcels of the king's body.

King Vena continued: For this reason, O brāhmaṇas, you should abandon your envy of me, and by your ritualistic activities you should worship me and offer me all paraphernalia. If you are intelligent, you should know that there is no personality superior to me who can accept the first oblations of all sacrifices.

The great sage Maitreya continued: Thus the King, who became unintelligent due to his sinful life and deviation from the right path, became

actually bereft of all good fortune. He could not accept the requests of the great sages, which the sages put before him with great respect, and therefore he was condemned. The foolish King, who thought himself very learned, thus insulted the great sages, and the sages, being brokenhearted by the King's words, became very angry at him. All the great saintly sages immediately cried: Kill him! Kill him! He is the most dreadful, sinful person. If he lives, he will certainly turn the whole world into ashes in no time. The great sages, thus manifesting their covert anger, immediately decided to kill the King. King Vena was already as good as dead due to his blasphemy against the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Thus without using any

weapons, the sages killed King Vena simply by high-sounding words. After all the sages returned to their respective hermitages, the mother of King Vena, Sunīthā, became very much aggrieved because of her son's death. She decided to preserve the dead body of her son by the application of certain ingredients and by chanting mantras [mantra-yogena].

Once upon a time, the same saintly persons, after taking their bath in the river Sarasvatī, began to perform their daily duties by offering oblations into the sacrificial fires. After this, sitting on the bank of the river, they began to talk about the transcendental person and His pastimes. In those days there were various disturbances in the

country that were creating a panic in society. Therefore all the sages began to talk amongst themselves: Since the King is dead and there is no protector in the world, misfortune may befall the people in general on account of rogues and thieves. The great sages began to think that although a brāhmaṇa is peaceful and impartial because he is equal to everyone, it is still not his duty to neglect poor humans. By such neglect, a brāhmaṇa's spiritual power diminishes, just as water kept in a cracked pot leaks out. The sages decided that the descendants of the family of the saintly King Aṅga should not be stopped, for in this family the semen was very powerful and the children were prone to become devotees of the Lord.

After making a decision, the saintly persons and sages churned the thighs of the dead body of King Vena with great force and according to a specific method. As a result of this churning, a dwarflike person was born from King Vena's body. This person born from King Vena's thighs was named Bāhuka, and his complexion was as black as a crow's. All the limbs of his body were very short, his arms and legs were short, and his jaws were large. His nose was flat, his eyes were reddish, and his hair copper-colored. He was very submissive and meek, and immediately after his birth he bowed down and inquired, "Sirs, what shall I do?" The great sages replied, "Please sit down [niṣāda]." Thus Niṣāda, the father of the Naiṣāda race, was born. After his [Niṣāda's]

birth, he immediately took charge of all the resultant actions of King Vena's sinful activities. As such, this Naiṣāda class are always engaged in sinful activities like stealing, plundering and hunting. Consequently they are only allowed to live in the hills and forests.
