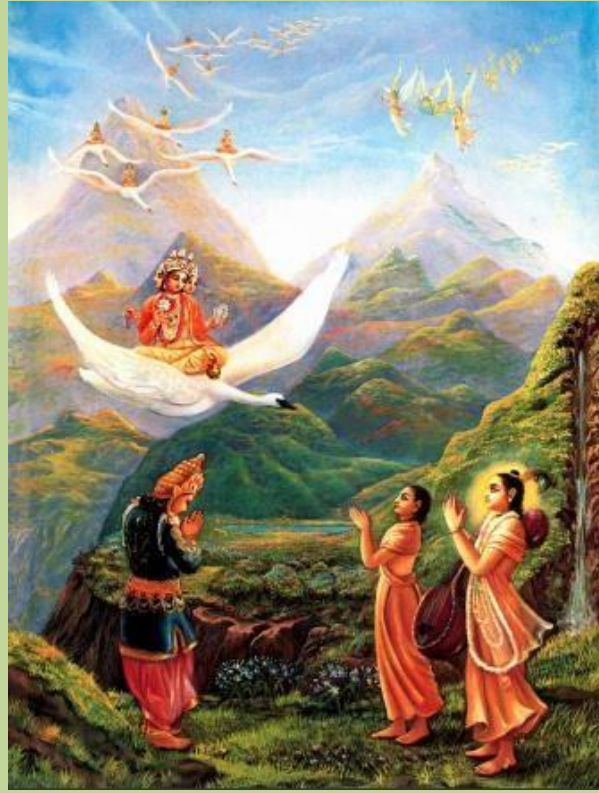


The Activities of Mahārāja Priyavrata



Parikshit Maharaj enquired from Śukadeva Gosvāmī: O great sage, why did King Priyavrata, the second son of Svāyambhuva Manu, who was a great, self-realized devotee of the Lord, remain in household life, which is the root cause of the bondage of karma [fruitive activities] and which defeats the

mission of human life?

Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: My dear King, Prince Priyavrata was a great devotee because he sought the lotus feet of Nārada, his spiritual master, and thus achieved the highest perfection in transcendental knowledge. With advanced knowledge, he always engaged in discussing spiritual subjects and did not divert his attention to anything else. The Prince's father then asked him to take charge of ruling the world. He tried to convince Priyavrata that this was his duty as indicated in the revealed scriptures. Prince Priyavrata, however, was continuously practicing bhakti-yoga by constantly remembering the Supreme

Personality of Godhead, thus engaging all his senses in the service of the Lord. Therefore, although the order of his father could not be rejected, the Prince did not welcome it. Thus he very conscientiously raised the question of whether he might be diverted from devotional service by accepting the responsibility of ruling over the world.

Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: The first created being and most powerful demigod in this universe Lord Brahmā, accompanied by his associates and the personified Vedas, left his own abode in the highest planetary system and descended to the place of Prince

Priyavrata's meditation.

My dear King Parīkṣit, because Lord Brahmā had finally descended from Satyaloka to Bhūloka, Nārada Muni, Prince Priyavrata and Svāyambhuva Manu came forward to offer him objects of worship and to praise him in highly qualified language, according to Vedic etiquette. At that time, Lord Brahmā, the original person of this universe, felt compassion for Priyavrata and, looking upon him with a smiling face, spoke to him as follows.

Lord Brahmā, the supreme person within this universe, said: My dear Priyavrata, kindly

hear attentively what I shall say to you. Do not be jealous of the Supreme Lord, who is beyond our experimental measurements. All of us, including Lord Śiva, your father and the great sage Mahārṣi Nārada, must carry out the order of the Supreme. We cannot deviate from His order.

One cannot avoid the order of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, not by the strength of severe austerities, an exalted Vedic education, or the power of mystic yoga, physical prowess or intellectual activities.

My dear Priyavrata, by the order of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, all living

entities accept different types of bodies for birth and death, activity, lamentation, illusion, fear of future dangers, and happiness and distress.

My dear boy, all of us are bound by the Vedic injunctions to the divisions of varṇāśrama according to our qualities and work. These divisions are difficult to avoid because they are scientifically arranged. We must therefore carry out our duties of varṇāśrama-dharma, like bulls obliged to move according to the direction of a driver pulling on ropes knotted to their noses.

Even householder life, however, cannot harm

a self-satisfied, learned man who has conquered his senses.

One who is situated in household life and who systematically conquers his mind and five sense organs is like a king in his fortress who conquers his powerful enemies. After one has been trained in household life and his lusty desires have decreased, he can move anywhere without danger.

Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: After thus being fully instructed by Lord Brahmā, who is the spiritual master of the three worlds, Priyavrata, his own position being inferior, offered obeisances, accepted the order and

carried it out with great respect.

Svāyambhuva Manu, with the assistance of Lord Brahmā, thus fulfilled his desires. With the permission of the great sage Nārada, he delivered to his son the governmental responsibility for maintaining and protecting all the planets of the universe. He thus achieved relief from the most dangerous, poisonous ocean of material desires.

Following the order of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Mahārāja Priyavrata fully engaged in worldly affairs, yet he always thought of the lotus feet of the Lord, which are the cause of liberation from all

material attachment. Although Priyavrata Mahārāja was completely freed from all material contamination, he ruled the material world just to honor the orders of his superiors.

Thereafter, Mahārāja Priyavrata married Barhiṣmatī, the daughter of the prajāpati named Viśvakarmā. In her he begot ten sons equal to him in beauty, character, magnanimity and other qualities. He also begot a daughter, the youngest of all, named Ūrjasvatī.

He greatly loved his wife Barhiṣmatī, and with the increase of days, their exchange of

nuptial love also increased. By her feminine behavior as she dressed herself, walked, got up, smiled, laughed, and glanced about, Queen Barhiṣmatī increased his energy. Thus although he was a great soul, he appeared lost in the feminine conduct of his wife. He behaved with her just like an ordinary man, but actually he was a great soul.

While so excellently ruling the universe, King Priyavrata once became dissatisfied with the circumambulation of the most powerful sun-god. Encircling Sumeru Hill on his chariot, the sun-god illuminates all the surrounding planetary systems. However, when the sun is on the northern side of the hill,

the south receives less light, and when the sun is in the south, the north receives less. King Priyavrata disliked this situation and therefore decided to make daylight in the part of the universe where there was night. He followed the orbit of the sun-god on a brilliant chariot and thus fulfilled his desire. He could perform such wonderful activities because of the power he had achieved by worshiping the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

When Priyavrata drove his chariot behind the sun, the rims of his chariot wheels created impressions that later became seven oceans, dividing the planetary system known as Bhū-

maṇḍala into seven islands.

The seven oceans respectively contain salt water, sugarcane juice, liquor, clarified butter, milk, emulsified yogurt, and sweet drinking water. All the islands are completely surrounded by these oceans, and each ocean is equal in breadth to the island it surrounds. Mahārāja Priyavrata, the husband of Queen Barhiṣmatī, gave sovereignty over these islands to his respective sons. Thus they all became kings by the order of their father. King Priyavrata then gave his daughter, Ūrjasvatī, in marriage to Śukrācārya, who begot in her a daughter named Devayānī. While enjoying his material opulences with

full strength and influence, Mahārāja Priyavrata once began to consider that although he had fully surrendered to the great saint Nārada and was actually on the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he had somehow become again entangled in material activities. Thus his mind now became restless, and he began to speak in a spirit of renunciation.

The King thus began criticizing himself: Alas, how condemned I have become because of my sense gratification! I have now fallen into material enjoyment, which is exactly like a covered well. I have had enough! I am not going to enjoy any more. Just see how I have

become like a dancing monkey in the hands of my wife. Because of this, I am condemned.

By the grace of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Mahārāja Priyavrata reawakened to his senses. He divided all his earthly possessions among his obedient sons. He gave up everything, including his wife, with whom he had enjoyed so much sense gratification, and his great and opulent kingdom, and he completely renounced all attachment. His heart, having been cleansed, became a place of pastimes for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Thus he was able to return to the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, spiritual life, and resume the position he had attained by the

grace of the great saint Nārada.