

MAHARAJ BHARAT FINDS AN ATTACHMENT



Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: My dear King, one day, after finishing his morning duties — evacuating, urinating and bathing — Mahārāja Bharata sat down on the bank of the river Gaṇḍakī for a few minutes and began chanting his mantra, beginning with omkāra.

O King, while Bharata Mahārāja was sitting on the bank of that river, a doe, being very thirsty, came there to drink. While the doe was drinking with great satisfaction, a lion, which was very close, roared very loudly. This was frightful to every living entity, and it was heard by the doe.

When it heard the lion's tumultuous roar, it became very agitated. Looking here and there with disturbed eyes, the doe, although it had not fully satisfied itself by drinking water, suddenly leaped across the river. The doe was pregnant, and when it jumped out of fear, the baby deer fell from its womb into the flowing waters of the river. Being

separated from its flock and distressed by its miscarriage, the black doe, having crossed the river, was very much distressed. Indeed, it fell down in a cave and died immediately.

The great King Bharata, while sitting on the bank of the river, saw the small deer, bereft of its mother, floating down the river. Seeing this, he felt great compassion. Like a sincere friend, he lifted the infant deer from the waves, and, knowing it to be motherless, brought it to his āśrama.

Gradually Mahārāja Bharata became very affectionate toward the deer. He began to raise it and maintain it by giving it grass. He was always careful to protect it from the

attacks of tigers and other animals. When it itched, he petted it, and in this way he always tried to keep it in a comfortable condition. He sometimes kissed it out of love. Being attached to raising the deer, Mahārāja Bharata forgot the rules and regulations for the advancement of spiritual life, and he gradually forgot to worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead. After a few days, he forgot everything about his spiritual advancement. Due to attachment for the deer, Mahārāja Bharata lay down with it, walked about with it, bathed with it and even ate with it. Thus his heart became bound to the deer in affection. When Mahārāja Bharata

wanted to enter the forest to collect kuśa grass, flowers, wood, leaves, fruits, roots and water, he would fear that dogs, jackals, tigers and other ferocious animals might kill the deer. He would therefore always take the deer with him when entering the forest.

When entering the forest, the animal would appear very attractive to Mahārāja Bharata due to its childish behavior. Mahārāja Bharata would even take the deer on his shoulders and carry it due to affection. His heart was so filled with great love for the deer that he would sometimes keep it on his lap or, when sleeping, on his chest. In this way he felt great pleasure in fondling the animal.

When Mahārāja Bharata was actually worshiping the Lord or was engaged in some ritualistic ceremony, although his activities were unfinished, he would still, at intervals, get up and see where the deer was. In this way he would look for it, and when he could see that the deer was comfortably situated, his mind and heart would be very satisfied. If Bharata Mahārāja sometimes could not see the deer, his mind would be very agitated. He would become like a miser, who, having obtained some riches, had lost them and had then become very unhappy. When the deer was gone, he would be filled with anxiety and would lament due to separation. Thus he

would become illusioned and speak as follows.

Bharata Mahārāja would think: Alas, the deer is now helpless. I am now very unfortunate, The deer has put its faith in me, although I have proved faithless, will this deer return and place its faith in me? I do not know, but the deer might have been eaten by a wolf or a dog or by the boars that flock together or the tiger who travels alone. That deer is exactly like a prince. When will it return? When will it again display its personal activities, which are so pleasing? After speaking like a madman in this way, Mahārāja Bharata got up and went outside. Seeing the footprints of

the deer on the ground, he praised the footprints out of love. Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: My dear King, in this way Bharata Mahārāja was overwhelmed by an uncontrollable desire which was manifest in the form of the deer. Due to the fruitive results of his past deeds, he fell down from mystic yoga, austerity and worship of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The King was so engrossed in petting and maintaining the deer that he fell down from his spiritual activities. In due course of time, insurmountable death, which is compared to a venomous snake that enters the hole created by a mouse, situated itself before him.

At the time of death, the King saw that the deer was sitting by his side, exactly like his own son, and was lamenting his death. Actually the mind of the King was absorbed in the body of the deer, and consequently — like those bereft of Kṛṣṇa consciousness — he left the world, the deer, and his material body and acquired the body of a deer.