

The Saintly Son of Hiraṇyakaśipu



The demons, headed by Hiraṇyakaśipu, accepted Śukrācārya as their priest for ritualistic ceremonies. Śukrācārya's two sons, Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka, lived near Hiraṇyakaśipu's palace.

Prahlāda Mahārāja was already educated in devotional life, but when his father sent him to those two sons of Śukrācārya to be

educated, they accepted him at their school along with the other sons of the asuras.

Prahlāda certainly heard and recited the topics of politics and economics taught by the teachers, but he understood that political philosophy involves considering someone a friend and someone else an enemy, and thus he did not like it.

Once upon a time the King of the demons, Hiraṇyakaśipu, took his son Prahlāda on his lap and very affectionately inquired: My dear son, please let me know what you think is the best of all the subjects you have studied from your teachers.

Prahlāda Mahārāja replied: O best of the asuras, King of the demons, as far as I have learned from my spiritual master, any person who has accepted a temporary body and temporary household life is certainly embarrassed by anxiety because of having fallen in a dark well where there is no water but only suffering. One should give up this position and go to the forest [vana]. More clearly, one should go to Vṛndāvana, where only Kṛṣṇa consciousness is prevalent, and should thus take shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

When Prahlāda Mahārāja spoke about the

path of self-realization in devotional service, thus being faithful to the camp of his father's enemies, Hiraṇyakaśipu, the King of the demons, heard Prahlāda's words and he laughingly said, "Thus is the intelligence of children spoiled by the words of the enemy."

Hiraṇyakaśipu advised his assistants: My dear demons, give complete protection to this boy at the gurukula where he is instructed, so that his intelligence will not be further influenced by Vaiṣṇavas who may go there in disguise.

When Hiraṇyakaśipu's servants brought the boy Prahlāda back to the gurukula, the priests

of the demons, Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka, pacified him. With very mild voices and affectionate words, they inquired from him as follows.

Dear son Prahlāda, all peace and good fortune unto you. Kindly do not speak lies; just reply with the truth. These boys you see are not like you, for they do not speak in a deviant way. How have you learned these instructions? How has your intelligence been spoiled in this way?

O best of your family, has this pollution of your intelligence been brought about by you or by the enemies? We are all your teachers and are very eager to hear about this. Please

tell us the truth.

Prahlāda Mahārāja replied: Persons who always think in terms of “enemy” and “friend” are unable to ascertain the Supersoul within themselves. Not to speak of them, even such exalted persons as Lord Brahmā, who are fully conversant with the Vedic literature, are sometimes bewildered in following the principles of devotional service. O brāhmaṇas [teachers], as iron attracted by a magnetic stone moves automatically toward the magnet, my consciousness, having been changed by His will, is attracted by Lord Viṣṇu, who carries a disc in His hand. Thus I

have no independence.

The great soul Prahlāda Mahārāja became silent after saying this to his teachers, Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka. These so-called brāhmaṇas then became angry at him. Because they were servants of Hiraṇyakaśipu, they were very sorry, and to chastise Prahlāda Mahārāja they spoke as follows.

Oh, please bring me a stick! This Prahlāda is damaging our name and fame. Because of his bad intelligence, he has become like a cinder in the dynasty of the demons. Now he needs to be treated by the fourth of the four kinds of political diplomacy.

This rascal Prahlāda has appeared like a thorn tree in a forest of sandalwood. To cut down sandalwood trees, an axe is needed, and the wood of the thorn tree is very suitable for the handle of such an axe. Lord Viṣṇu is the axe for cutting down the sandalwood forest of the family of demons, and this Prahlāda is the handle for that axe.

Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka, the teachers of Prahlāda Mahārāja, chastised and threatened their disciple in various ways and began teaching him about the paths of religion, economic development and sense gratification. This is the way they educated him.

