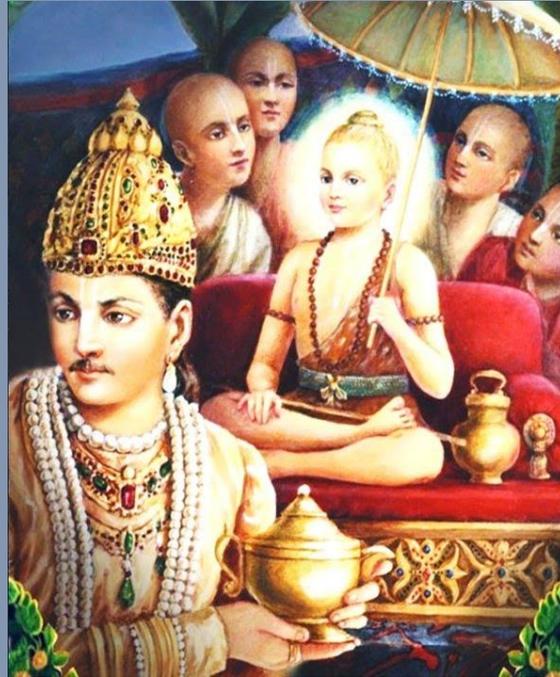


Lord Begs Charity from a King



When the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vāmanadeva, heard Bali Mahārāja speaking in this pleasing way, He was very satisfied, for Bali Mahārāja had spoken in terms of religious principles. Thus the Lord began to praise him.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: O King, you are indeed exalted because your present advisors are the brāhmaṇas who are descendants of Bhṛgu and because your instructor for your future life is your grandfather, the Prahlāda Mahārāja. I know that even until now, no one taking birth in your family has been poor-minded or miserly. No one has refused to give charity to brāhmaṇas, nor after promising to give charity has anyone failed to fulfill his promise.

And your dynasty is even more glorious due to the presence of Prahlāda Mahārāja, who is like the beautiful moon in the sky.

It was in your dynasty that Hiraṇyākṣa was born. Carrying only his own club, he wandered the globe alone, without assistance, to conquer all directions, and no hero he met could rival him. When delivering the earth from the Garbhodaka Sea, Lord Viṣṇu, in His incarnation as a boar, killed Hiraṇyākṣa, who had appeared before Him. The fight was severe, and the Lord killed Hiraṇyākṣa with great difficulty.

Hiraṇyakaśipu's anger against Lord Viṣṇu persisted until his death. Other people in the bodily concept of life maintain anger only because of false ego and the great

influence of ignorance. Your father, Virocana, the son of Mahārāja Prahlāda, was very affectionate toward brāhmaṇas. Although he knew very well that it was the demigods who had come to him in the dress of brāhmaṇas, at their request he delivered to them the duration of his life. You also have observed the principles followed by great personalities who are householder brāhmaṇas, by your forefathers and by great heroes who are extremely famous for their exalted activities.

O King of the Daityas, I ask only three paces of land, to the measurement of My

steps. Although you are very munificent and are able to give Me as much land as I want, I do not want anything from you that is unnecessary.

Bali Mahārāja said: O son of a brāhmaṇa, Your instructions are as good as those of learned and elderly persons. Nonetheless, You are a boy, and Your intelligence is insufficient. Thus You are not very prudent in regard to Your self-interest. I am able to give You an entire island because I am the proprietor of the three divisions of the universe. You have come to take something from me and have pleased me by Your sweet words, but You

are asking only three paces of land. Therefore You are not very intelligent. Therefore, if You wish, You may ask from me as much land as will suffice to maintain You according to Your needs.

The Personality of Godhead said: O my dear King, even the entirety of whatever there may be within the three worlds to satisfy one's senses cannot satisfy a person whose senses are uncontrolled. If I were not satisfied with three paces of land, then surely I would not be satisfied even with possessing one of the seven islands, consisting of nine varṣas. Even if I possessed one island, I would hope to get

others. One should be satisfied with whatever he achieves by his previous destiny, for discontent can never bring happiness. A person who is not self-controlled will not be happy even with possessing the three worlds.

A brāhmaṇa who is satisfied with whatever is providentially obtained is increasingly enlightened with spiritual power, but the spiritual potency of a dissatisfied brāhmaṇa decreases, as fire diminishes in potency when water is sprinkled upon it. Therefore, O King, from you, the best of those who give charity, I ask only three paces of land. By

such a gift I shall be very pleased, for the way of happiness is to be fully satisfied to receive that which is absolutely needed.

When the Supreme Personality of Godhead had thus spoken to Bali Mahārāja, Bali smiled and told Him, “All right. Take whatever You like.” To confirm his promise to give Vāmanadeva the desired land, he then took up his waterpot.

Understanding Lord Viṣṇu’s purpose, Śukrācārya, the best of the learned, immediately spoke

- O son of Virocana, this brahmacārī in the

form of a dwarf is directly the imperishable Supreme Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu. Accepting Kaśyapa Muni as His father and Aditi as His mother, He has now appeared in order to fulfill the interests of the demigods. You do not know what a dangerous position you have accepted by promising to give Him land. I do not think that this promise is good for you. It will bring great harm to the demons. This person falsely appearing as a brahmacārī is actually the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari, who has come in this form to take away all your land, wealth, beauty, power, fame and

education. After taking everything from you, He will deliver it to Indra, your enemy. You have promised to give Him three steps of land in charity, but when you give it He will occupy the three worlds. You are a rascal! You do not know what a great mistake you have made. After giving everything to Lord Viṣṇu, you will have no means of livelihood. How then shall you live?

Vāmanadeva will first occupy the three worlds with one step, then He will take His second step and occupy everything in outer space, and then He will expand His universal body to occupy everything.

Where will you offer Him the third step? You will certainly be unable to fulfill your promise, and I think that because of this inability your eternal residence will be in hell. Learned scholars do not praise that charity which endangers one's own livelihood.

Therefore one who is in full knowledge should divide his accumulated wealth in five parts — for religion, for reputation, for opulence, for sense gratification and for the maintenance of his family members. Such a person is happy in this world and in the next.

One might argue that since you have

already promised, how can you refuse? O best of the demons, just take from me the evidence of the Bahvṛca-śruti, which says that a promise is truthful preceded by the word om and untruthful if not. The utterance of the word om signifies separation from one's monetary assets. In other words, by uttering this word one becomes free from attachment to money because his money is taken away from him. To be without money is not very satisfactory, for in that position one cannot fulfill one's desires. In other words, by using the word om one becomes poverty-stricken. Especially when one gives

charity to a poor man or beggar, one remains unfulfilled in self-realization and in sense gratification.

Therefore, the safe course is to say no. Although it is a falsehood, it protects one completely, it draws the compassion of others toward oneself, and it gives one full facility to collect money from others for oneself. Nonetheless, if one always pleads that he has nothing, he is condemned, for he is a dead body while living, or while still breathing he should be killed. In flattering a woman to bring her under control, in joking, in a marriage ceremony, in earning one's livelihood, when one's

life is in danger, in protecting cows and brahminical culture, or in protecting a person from an enemy's hand, falsity is never condemned.