

ALL GLORY TO SHRI GURU AND SHRI GAURANGA



The Initiation of Shriman Kushakratha das Brahmachary, ISKCON Brooklyn 1971

-His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Founder Acharya: International Society for Krishna Consciousness

“The sincere disciple of the pure devotee considers the spiritual master equal to the Lord, but always considers himself to be a humble servant of the servant of the Lord. This is the pure devotional path.” (SB 1.1.15, Bhaktivedanta Purport).

THE ASTROLOGICAL NEWSLETTER

Mithuna Twiins Astrological Services
“Home of the Bhrigu Project”

In this issue: Lord Surya Narayana
Also: Remembering Shriman Kushakratha das

Chant this mantra:

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

...and your life will be sublime

16 May. 2012 (#29) Aparā Ekaḍaśi. Jyeshtha kṛishna ekaḍaśi, 526 Gaurabḍa Era, corresponding to the 11th day of the waning Moon of the Gaudiya month of Trivikram.

The Astrological Newsletter (Please e-share it with your friends)

Patita Pavana das Adhikary, Ed.

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Dear Prabhus,

Dandavats to the Vaishnavas and welcome to the issue. As Rahu was retrogressing into debility and entering the sign of Scorpio a year ago, we issued a warning that this transit threatens ISKCON with some severe accidents. Rahu stays in Scorpio for 18 months from 6 June 2011 till 24 Dec. of this year. Scorpio is a rising sign that many leaders of ISKCON share, hence it follows that a debilitated Rahu might be devastating for devotees. As of this writing we are five days from the first eclipse of a cycle that involves the Sun in Taurus on the 20th and Moon in Scorpio a fortnight later. We are well within the bleak EFI, the eclipse field of influence.

We advised our fellow devotees especially during these overshadowed times to consult the *panchang* for auspicious travel *muhurtas* and to learn *Hora Shastra*. Only routine activities are recommended during an EFI, and certainly not any activity that involves risk. An easy method for grabbing an auspicious hour of departure on the spur of the minute is revealed in this article: <http://www.dandavats.com/?p=7057>. Apparently many devotees are listening

because that essay has gone viral with well over a quarter million hits. We also have other articles on eclipses on the Dandavats site.

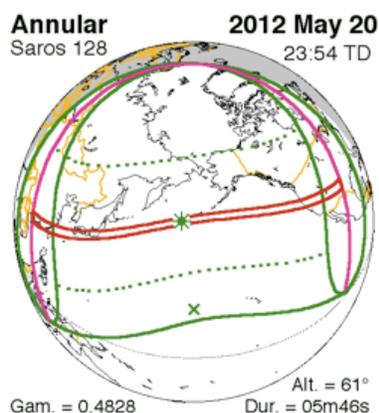
Yet, as we go to press, we are a Society in mourning. Many precious devotee lives were lost in a Himalayan air crash, members of an ISKCON *tirtha yatra* group on route to Muktinath and Shaligram Kshetra. While we understand that Lord Krishna has a plan for His servants, we join with the families and friends of the departed to grieve and pray for their safe trip back to home back to Godhead. They are now in the arms of the Lord because they were chanting His Names forcefully.

Always wishing you the very best in Krishna consciousness,

Patita Pavana das Adhikary, Ed

Beware of Eclipses

Abhaya Mudra Dasi

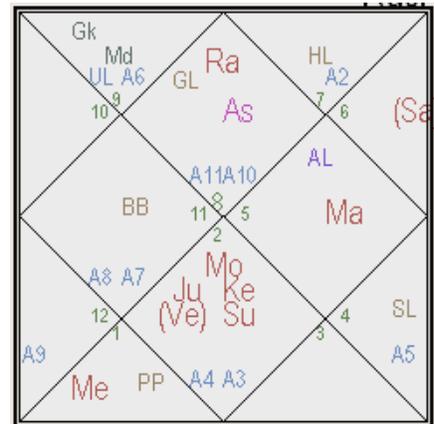


The first eclipse of 2012 is an annular solar eclipse in Taurus that occurs on May 20th. Annular means that a ring of Sunlight will remain visible. In fact, the ancient sages of Bharat identified such an eclipses as a Kankanakriti Surya Grahan or 'like a golden bangle.' The *nakshatra* at the time of eclipse is Krittika, 3rd *pada*. Krittika is a *rakshasa nakshatra*, the symbol of which is a sword. On the left is a picture of the path of the eclipse from the NASA site which has many technical details, timings and areas of visibility: <http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/OH/OH2012.html#SE2012May20A>.

The greatest eclipse will occur in the region of Russia's Eastern Kamchatka peninsula and around Alaska. Japan is also not very far from the reach of the eclipse. Thus, still more lingering after-effects caused by Japan's atomic explosions during last year's tsunami disaster will spread and affect many parts of the world. Since the eclipse occurs around pristine and relatively remote areas—places that are generally considered remote—these regions will naturally become affected. And since the eclipse occurs in the north eastern direction, devotees of Shri Krishna should also take extra precautions since everything pure is being negatively affected.

Let us examine the chart for the time of eclipse:

The eighth sign of Scorpio rises, a sign that is famous for secrecy and deep matters. Mars, the dispositor of the rising sign is located in the 10th house of government and society. Mars strongly cancels the debility of Rahu indicating that any problems can be solved by the quick action of the government and the army. This may also show that some governments in the world may try to act desisevly now so they can become major player on the global scene.

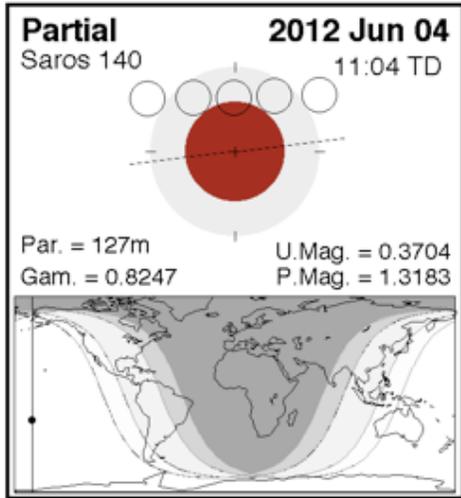


Jupiter, the lord of the second house of wealth, is pulled into the action of the eclipse in the 7th house of partnerships. Not only Jupiter but Venus, the lord of the eclipsed sign, is also there. The Sun and the Moon as well debilitated Ketu are the key players in the eclipse thus making of total 5 planets involved in the house where the action tskes place. Venus also strongly cancels the debility of Ketu. There will be problems in the world but due to cancellation of debility of both eclipsers Rahu and Ketu, the situation will be covered up to appear less harmful than it actually is. Problems may not be disclosed with the pretense that they have been already solved. Mercury is separated and behind the Sun—never a good sign*—and still lingering in fiery Aries. This could create explosive situations like sudden storms, lightning and fires. Mars in Leo, the sign of the Sun, threatens more lightning, explosions and calamities that arise with suddenness, jolting the world out of its serenity.

Saturn has just returned to Virgo in retrograde motion (on 16 May). Shani in the 11th house creates misunderstandings where clear communications are required. Isolated regions may develop problems wherein help is not available for extended periods. Saturn in Virgo, an earth sign, and aspected by Jupiter from earthy Taurus, will trigger some earthquakes. This effect will be most strongly felt in the areas where both eclipses are most prominently visible. Or possibly the Middle East (Turkey, Iran, etc.) which is ruled by the Bull.

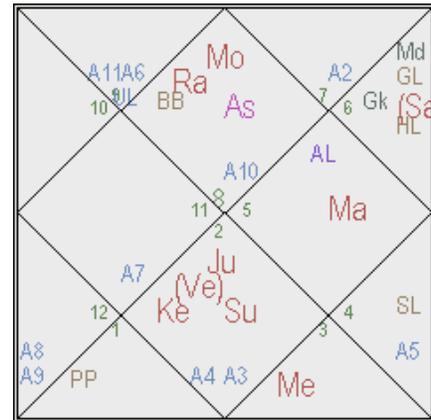
Rahu in the 1st in a water sign will create problems of pollution for the entire world, spread via the ocean and waterways.

The second eclipse is a lunar event in the 3rd *pada* of Jyeshtha that occurs on June 4th 2012. The visibility is stronger in the white areas of the picture above as the dark gray areas shows the places where the eclipse is not visible. Jyeshtha is said to



be the *nakshatra* of the elder sister and its symbol is earring. Like Krittika, she is also a *rakshasa nakshatra*. Some major underground crimes will be uncovered during these times, shady dealings that have been going on in secret for a long time. Elders will be severely affected and their social security and pension funds diminished. Intelligent people will be accused of wrong doing. Dangers of pirates and other violent action at sea will become prominent. Eruption of volcanoes and tidal waves in the most affected areas by the eclipse are also expected.

On the right is the horoscope at the time of onset of the lunar eclipse of 4 Jun. Ominously, once again the rising sign is Scorpio. The situation from the previous sign is not much changed with exception of Mercury and the Moon. Mercury has managed in a mere 15 days (!) to travel through 3 signs. This planet of communications has been able to disseminate some important ideas throughout the world. In his own sign of Gemini in the 8th (house of secrets) Mercury shows that some truths will come to light and cures for global problems will be sought through unconventional ways. Debilitation of both Moon and Rahu is cancelled by Mars, which shows that good fortune is in the hands of fast action on the part of governmental officials and intelligent parties. There will be widespread bloodshed in the Middle East, and the area from Turkey to Afghanistan may have a serious earthquake. There will be seafaring disasters and floods in hilly regions. Some big leaders will bite the dust. Gangland activity will continue to rock Mexico. America's sabres will continue to rattle.



The solar eclipse occurs first in this sequence of two eclipses, which is considered a better arrangement than when the lunar eclipse occurs first. Although the usual grizzly events will accompany this eclipse, the event also offers the chance for some positive events which will bring to light the truth of the current situation on Earth. Devotees should utilize this as opportunity to preach, though traveling around the time of the eclipse is best avoided. ♪

*FROM SB 5.22.13: Mercury is described as similar to Venus, in that he moves sometimes behind the Sun, sometimes in front of the Sun and sometimes along with him. Mercury or Budha is 1,600,000 miles above Venus, or 7,200,000 miles above earth. Mercury, who is the son of the Moon, is almost always very auspicious for the inhabitants of the universe, but when he does not move along with the Sun, it forbodes cyclones, dust, irregular rainfall, and waterless clouds. In this way creates fearful conditions due to inadequate or excessive rainfall.”

Lord Surya Narayana: Controller of Time and Destiny

Abhaya Mudra Dasi

Lord Surya Narayana is a representation of the Personality of Godhead Shri Vishnu in the material world. The Sun is the father of this material universe because he controls time and provides sustenance. Wherever there is either not enough Sun or too much of his energy—either way the Universe can be destroyed. For this reason Surya is constantly moving. If he were to stop even for a second he could burn to a crisp that place over which he hovers. On the other hand, if he were to move too fast then the world would freeze. In this way the Sun stands as the ultimate epitome of discipline, never deviating from his course. Vivasvan, the deity of the Sun, is the ultimate king and an inspiration to all other righteous kings. For this reason the kings have been called Raja.

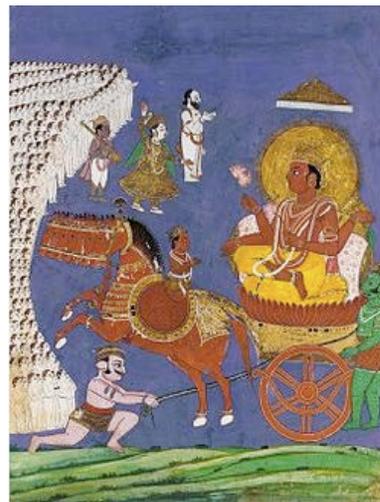


Shrila Prabhupada: Formerly the kings (rajās) were great saintly persons. They were not ordinary people engaged in drinking and dancing. They were all rishis (sages), up to the time of Maharaja Parikshit. They were trained in such a way that they were not ordinary men but were called naradeva. Naradeva refers to Bhagavan in the form of a human being. The king was worshiped because he was a rajarishi, both a king and a sage. Shri Krishna says that if the king knows the purpose of life, he can rule well. (Purport to Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti: TLK Vs 3)

A person who never deviates from his discipline needs *raja guna* to keep him active. A true king is influenced by *raja guna*. Pure or uncontaminated *rajastic* quality is rarely seen in the material world, especially in Kali Yuga which is predominated by ignorance. *Rajoguna* is the mode of material Nature involved in creation. New projects require the destruction of obstacles. The Sun god is the epitome of a king who embodies the qualities of pure *raja guna*. It is not easy to

find the exalted qualities of *raja guna*. In Kali Yuga the qualities represented by the Sun are totally absent. This is seen in the natural environment as well. The weather is either predominantly cold or extremely hot. In every activity discipline and regulation are absent, qualities which come under the jurisdiction of the swiftly-moving Sun.

Shrila Prabhupada: *The universe is by nature dense darkness, and therefore the total creation is called tamas, or darkness. The night is the real feature of the universe, for then one cannot see anything, including oneself. The Lord, out of His causeless mercy, first desired to see Himself and all the creation as well, and thus the Sun became manifested, the power of vision for all living entities became possible, and the objects of vision were also manifested. This means that the whole phenomenal world became visible after the creation of the Sun. (Purport to SB 2.10.21)*



Surya regulates time by moving at different speeds and directions. His movement to the south or the north of Manasottara Mountain creates the seasons on Earth and the days and nights for the demigods. The night and the day for the earthly plane are created by his horizontal movement in a fixed circle.

From the Bhagavat: *In the midst of that region of outer space [antariksha] is the most opulent Sun, the king of all the planets that emanate heat, such as the moon. By the influence of its radiation, the Sun heats the universe and maintains its proper order. He also gives light to help all living entities see. While passing toward the north, toward the south or through the equator, in accordance with the order of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he is said to move slowly, swiftly or moderately. According to his movements in rising above, going beneath or passing through the equator—and correspondingly coming in touch with various signs of the zodiac, headed by Makara [Capricorn]—days and nights are short, long or equal to one another. (SB 5.21.3)*

The Sun god rides in golden chariot which is 28,800,000 miles long and 7,200,000 miles wide. His charioteer is Arunadeva who yokes seven horses of rainbow colors. Sixty



thousand thumb-sized saintly entities called Valikhilyas precede the chariot of the Sun and are constantly glorify his activities. Just as a king needs encouragement in his activities and for this reason is glorified, so all residents of the universe should also offer their prayers to Surya. Especially on the island of Plakshadvipa the inhabitants are dedicated to worshiping the Sun-god. They are privileged to always see the Sun directly overhead.

From the Bhagavat: *The inhabitants of Plakshadvipa live for one thousand years. They are beautiful like the demigods, and they also beget children like the demigods. By completely performing the ritualistic ceremonies mentioned in the Vedas and by worshiping the Supreme Personality of Godhead as represented by the Sun-god, they attain the Sun, which is a heavenly planet. (SB 5.20.3-4)*

In relatively modern times, the Egyptians fought many wars until the emperors of the New Kingdom finally established Ra (from Ravi) or Syrya (from Surya) as the main deity of the Egyptians. Syrya has been worshiped throughout the world and some of his more popular names are Apolon, Svarog, Helios, Mihr and Sol. In the Mayan culture he has been worshiped under the name of Kinich Ahau.

These civilizations mostly lacked the profound knowledge to directly worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead Shri Krishna. However, they did possess enough wisdom based upon their observation to understand the importance of the Sun. In this way they recognized his unique quality of reflecting the will of the Supreme Lord and lived by the pulse of Nature. Such qualities of simple living and high thinking are lacking in the modern world. Contemporary society is influenced by a demonic mentality which is blind to the Supreme Lord and His representatives, the demigods. Therefore, demons live in the underworld where the Sun does not shine. For this reason they are also called *daityas*, or ‘contrary to Aditya,’ a name signifying the lineage of the Sun god. The demons use artificial light emanating from the hoods of the gigantic serpents living in Pataloka.

From the Bhagavata: *Beneath Rasatala is another planetary system, known as Patala or Nagaloka, where there are many demoniac serpents, the masters of Nagaloka, such as Shankha, Kulika, Mahashankha, Shveta, Dhananjaya, Dhritarashtra, Shankhacuda, Kambala, Ashvatara and Devadatta. The chief among them is Vasuki. They are all extremely angry, and they have many, many hoods—some snakes five hoods, some seven, some ten, others a hundred and others a thousand. These hoods are bedecked with valuable gems, and the light emanating from the gems illuminates the entire planetary system of bila-svarga. (SB 5.24.31)*

The passage of time seems to have stopped in the subterranean heavenly planets and the demons enjoy a false sense of longevity. Even so, they fear the Sudarshan *chakra* of the Supreme Lord.

Shrila Prabhupada: *Time is compared here to a big wheel which has 360 joints, six rims in the shape of seasons, and numberless leaves in the shape of moments. It rotates on the eternal existence, Brahman. (Purport to SB 3.21.18)*

Thus Sudarshan Chakra is also represented by the Sun in the material world. The movement of the Sun reflects the movement of Sudarshan. Sudarshan means ‘beautiful to behold’ and all living entities similarly feel joy seeing the beauty of the Sun. Rahu cannot stay for more than 48 minutes in front of the Sun because he fears the scorching power of the Sudarshan *chakra*. Rahu lacks the capacity to move at the speed of the Sun and, like a coward, he waits for the Sun to reach his position. At that time Rahu tries to swallow the Sun. He is ultimately unsuccessful because the movements of the Sun are directly controlled by none other than Lord Shri Krishna.

Shrila Prabhupada: *The phenomenon that occurs when Rahu blocks the light of the Sun or Moon is called an eclipse. The attempt of the scientists of this earth to go to the Moon is as demoniac as Rahu’s attack. Of course, their attempts will be failures because no one can enter the Moon or Sun so easily. Like the attack of Rahu, such attempts will certainly be failures. (Purport to SB 5.24.3)*

Sun is the center of the Universe just like the heart is center of the human body. Just like the heart the Sun is the center of life and a residence of the Supreme Lord Shri Krishna in the form of Paramatma. Both the Sun and the heart are constantly working. When they stop life is also gone. At the end of the universe the Sun is destroyed along all other demigods and living entities.

Shrila Prabhupada: *Not this Kali-yuga, but at the end of the universal life there will be a great fire all over the universe. That is called samvartaka. And everything will be ablaze. This fire will take place on account of the heat increase of the Sun. It is said that the present temperature of the Sun will be increased twelve times, so naturally there will be fire. As we know, sometimes there is forest fire. Similarly, the fire will take place, and everything will be burned into ashes. (Lecture on SB 1.7.30-31 given in Vrindavana on September 26, 1976)*

Until the final destruction the living entities can see the Supreme Lord in the form of time just by looking at the disc of the Sun. Someone who desires to meditate on the Sun should chant the Gayatri Mantra. By chanting one develops the capacity to see Shri Narayana directly in the globe of the Sun.



***Shrila Prabhupada:** There are twelve Adityas, of which Krishna is the principal. And among all the luminaries twinkling in the sky, the Sun is the chief, and in the Brahma-samhita the Sun is accepted as the glowing effulgence of the Supreme Lord and is considered to be one of His eyes. Marichi is the controlling deity of the heavenly spaces. (Purport to Bg 10.21)*

From the pages of Bhagavad Gita (4.1) we learn that knowledge of the self was first instructed to Vivasvan. In astrology the Sun is the default *atmakaraka* or “significator or the soul and of self-realization.” When he is well positioned in a horoscope, the Sun stimulates knowledge of the self. These are the 12 deities of the Sun in relation to the 12 zodiacal signs.

***Shrila Prabhupada:** The Sun-god has expanded himself in twelve divisions, and thus he controls the six seasonal changes and causes winter, summer, rain and so on. Yogis and karmis following the varnashrama institution, who practice hatha or ashtanga-yoga or who perform agnihotra sacrifices, worship Surya Narayana for their own benefit. The demigod Surya is always in touch with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Narayana. Residing in outer space, which is in the middle of the universe, between Bhuloka and Bhuvarloka, the Sun rotates through the time circle of the zodiac, represented by twelve rashis, or signs, and assumes different names according to the sign he is in. (SB 5.22 Summary)*

In each of the 12 signs the Sun appears differently and assumes different names according to his activities and mood:

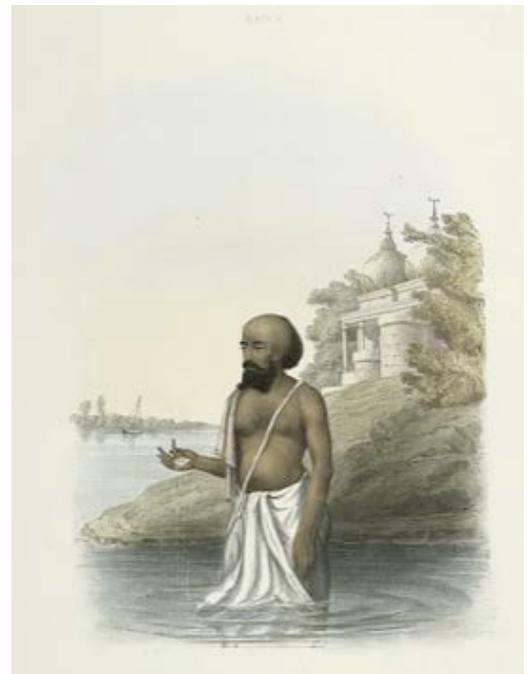
(1) In Aries the Sun is called **Mitra** or friend. In this sign the Sun is bright, majestic and exalted, but easy to look at. He does not harm the eyes. (2) In the sign of Taurus the Sun god is called **Ravi** or the one who gives abundance and joy. Then the Sun has a crystal spark to his shine. (3) In Gemini the Sun is called

Surya because he looks his best. It appears as though the Sun globe shines and the light emits a melody compared to the sound coming from countless chandeliers.

(4) In the sign of Cancer the Sun's name is **Bhanu** or divine. During this month we most often see the rays of the Sun through the clouds coming down to earth and most beautiful sunsets are generated.

(5) In the sign of Leo the Sun is called **Khaga**. He appears as though countless rays are coming from his head. During the rule of this sign the Sun cannot be ignored. His presence is felt everywhere. (6) In Virgo the Sun is called **Pushna** or golden because he exhibits shine similar to a precious metal or a ripened fruit. (7) During the rule of Libra the Sun is shining like the egg from which the whole universe originated. Thus he is named is **Hiranyagarbha**. We cannot see the features of the Sun during this time. He can be seen like a blotched light spot in the sky without an exact definition. It is very harmful to look at the Sun during this time (when he is debilitated). It can cause blindness.

(8) In the sign of Scorpio the Sun is called **Maricha** or overwhelming. During this time the Sun appears to be red. He is happy to be in his friendly sign ruled by Mars. (9) In the sign of Sagittarius the Sun is called **Aditya** or boundless. The Sunshine is very valuable during these days, the shortest of the year. During this time the Sun is called with the name of his mother because he stays close to his maternal home. (10) In Capricorn the Sun god is called **Savitra** or stimulator. During this time the cycle of life starts anew. This is the name of the Sun god that is invoked in the Gayatri Mantra. The Sun gains his full power at Makara Sankranti (when the Sun enters Uttarayana on or around 14 Jan.), and can even



be seen shining as two Suns in the sky. (11) While traveling in the sign of Aquarius the Sun is called **Arka** or lightning. Here the Sun behaves like an older brother. A tinge of dark orange can be seen on the disk of the Sun in addition to his distinctive arch movement during this time. (12) In Pisces the Sun is called **Bhashkara** or glittering. Dew is seen mostly formed at early morning and after 'sun rain' during this time of the year. The shine of the Sun is transferred to the earth through the shine of water. This is the time of mystical metamorphosis.

The Sun (along with the Moon) never goes retrograde. This demonstrates how time cannot be returned and how valuable each moment is. By observing the disk of the Sun during the 12 months of the year we can understand the qualities of the people born under each of the respective twelve signs. Moreover, we can understand the qualities of the Personality of Godhead Lord Narayana as reflected in the qualities of the Sun. By observing the cycles created by the Sun through his circular motions, it becomes clear that time is cyclic and not linear. Cyclic time calls for repetition, for discipline and ultimately for following a *sadhana* that can lead us to liberation from this material world. By chanting the Surya Gayatri Mantras at three specific times of the day at sunrise, at noon (or Abhijit Muhurta when the Sun is exactly between sunset and sunrise) and at sunset, we can perfect our *sadhana*. The consecutive Gayatri Mantras that we Gaudiya Vaishnavas repeat for Shri Guru, Shri Gauranga and Shri Krishna, cannot be chanted without the invocation of Surya Gayatri. Gayatri means “passed through the body of a cow.” Gayatri is the wife of Brahma, the creator of the universe. Thus Gayatri is the *mantra* of purification for the entire universe. The appropriate times for chanting this *mantra*—the *tri-sandhyas*—are set by the movements of the Sun, the ultimate force for purification within the material world.

*yach-cakshur esha savita sakala-grahanam
 raja samasta-sura-murtir ashesha-tejah
 yasyajnyaya bhramati sambhrita-kala-chakro
 govindam adi-purusham tam aham bhajami*

The Sun who is the king of all the planets, full of infinite effulgence, the image of the good soul, is as the eye of this world. I adore the primeval Lord Govinda in pursuance of Whose order the Sun performs his journey mounting the wheel of time. (Shri Brahma-samhita 5.52) ♪



Editor’s note: This article first appeared on the site www.dandavats.com a few weeks ago where it drew this comment from Shriman Payonidhi Das Prabhu:

In Modrumadvipa Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura obtained *darshan* of Surya as described in his *Navadvipa Bhava Taranga*:

120. Crossing over the river Viraja and bypassing the town of Brahmani Nagar, I will climb on top of the hill called Arka Tila(The hill of the sun god). sitting there in solitude and worshipping Lord Gaurahari, I will become intoxicated with sweet nectar-mellow of the holy name by singing it with great relish.

121. Arka-deva, the sun god, will mercifully appear to me - with red-hued complexion, long arms, wearing pinkish cloth and Tulasi beads, with sandalwood paste spread over all his limbs, the name of Gaurahari constantly on his tongue, and tears flowing from his eyes.

122. He will speak to me, “Dear child, I have appeared before you because you are the devotee of Gauranga. We demigods, although powerful directors of material affairs, are also servants of Gauranga’s lotus feet. In my mind, I simply aspire to be the servant of the servant of Gaura.”

123. “By my blessings, you will get Krsna-bhakti, and you will have the spiritual strength to live in the Dhama and sing the Lord’s pure holy name. But please come here from time to time, singing the nectar-smear name of Krsna for my satisfaction.”

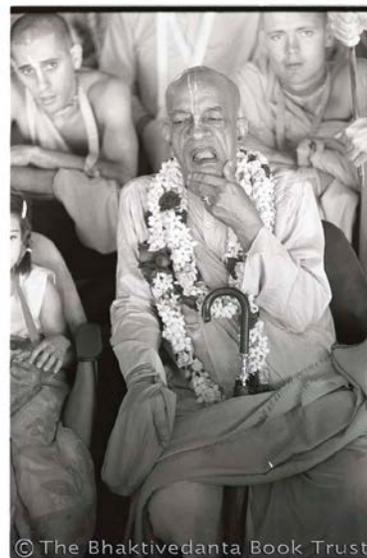
124. Falling down like a rod to offer obeisances at Surya-deva’s feet, I will then proceed onward to the town of Mahatpur. This Mahatpur is non different from the forest of Kamyavan, a place of Krsna’s pastimes in Braja. Here the devotees of Lord Gaura raise a tumultuous sound in chanting the name and glories of Sri Krsna. ♪

Modern Mystics of the Hare Krishna Movement:

The Hidden History of Kushakratha Das

Shriman Pushkar Das Adhikary

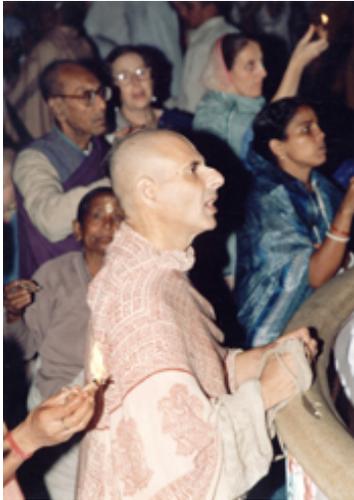
This is the touching yet humorous story of a rare mahatma of our times, the late lamented Kushakratha das Brahmachary, whose initiation picture appears above in the heading. Your Editor was there at his initiation. At that time, after Srila Prabhupada asked Kushkratha to recite the four regulative principles, the Paramhansa asked wryly, “And which one is your favorite?” The photographer, Bhargava das, caught the light emotion of the moment just on queue. I knew Kushakratha from the time he joined, in Boston. Some considered him a mad man, but he went on to learn Sanskrit and Bengali on his own and translated hundreds of Gaudiya Vaishnava literatures which he self-published. He was a saint, scholar and a sadhu. What follows is also an artistic, loving and wonderful tribute from one Godbrother to another.



(Right) The author, well-known artist Shriman Pushkar Das, sits and chants behind Shrila Prabhupada. That’s your Editor on his left. New York 1971

In 1956, we moved to the Benson Hurst area of Brooklyn, where I entered fifth grade. Peter Viggiani (the future Kusakratha) was in my class for the next

two years. He also attended the same junior high as I, and we shared some of the same classes. For approximately 5 years we were good friends. He was always quite eccentric and didn't appear to have many other friends. Devotees who knew "Kusa" found him to be a bit of an *avadhuta*, and he was no less so in his early days. There was one other odd fellow who was an artist. We would sometimes associate, and together we once built a sculpture in his yard composed completely of old wire coat hangers.



Predictably, other kids would pick on Peter. They would walk by and punch him in the shoulder or hurl some insult his way, but he tolerated it. Although I had various associates, he was a loner as his aspirations were distinctly loftier than the neighborhood's average Jewish or Italian resident. Out of thousands and thousands of kids growing up in Brooklyn at the time it would not be possible to find someone similar to him.

He had a younger sister, Rosemary. Although her features resembled his in many ways, they were distant. He seemed to be a bit distant from all of his family members—perhaps because his parents were a bit older than others. His mother once threw an open box of crayons at me, and loudly blamed me for being a bad influence on her son, because he was constantly doodling in his smaller-than-average loose leaf book.

As someone who had taken special art classes in early childhood and visited museums regularly, I can say that these "doodles" were not ordinary. They were amazing and unforgettable. His wonderful and original conceptions remain with me still. How I wish those sketches had been preserved! No doubt the world of art has been deprived of a great genius. The figurative drawings swirled, lifelike, drawing the consciousness into the page more and more. The notes were barely detectable amidst the free unprecedented expressions decorating the pages. A few times I asked him to draw people congregating nearby in Central Park. With astonishing ease, capturing the gesture in perfect proportion, figures would manifest on the paper.

When the opportunity for an illustrated school project sometimes arose, he would stun the entire school, teachers and students alike, by utilizing his skill at watercolor and pencil drawings. In the sixth grade, who among us was able to

paint the billowing sails of Columbus's ships plying the waves in perfect perspective?

His talents were not restricted to the art world. His compositions were not to be rivaled in our tiny circle. Of course, the spelling and grammar were never faulty, but his wit was prodigious and while reading his compositions the teacher would sometimes laugh out loud. After all, by seventh grade he was already writing 60,000 word poems. Yin-Yang is one that I remember.

Kusa had zero desire to engage in sports like all the rest of us. As we rolled by quickly on our bikes, or skates, he was often seated on a bench in front of his house pouring over philosophy and poetry books. He would make his way to the main Library near Prospect Park, which was quite some distance by public transport. There he would take out as many books as they allowed, and then scrutinize them. They would range from the writings of the Ancient Greeks such as Homer, Socrates, and Virgil to modern existentialists such as Sarte and Camus. Kirkegaard, Kafka, and Pound are also some of the names that come to mind.

All of this extra study never prevented him from effortlessly getting the top marks in school. It was always "O" for outstanding, except for maybe P.E., and cleanliness. Whenever there was an oral quiz, Peter was the first one with his hand up, enthusiastically waving his hand, unable to contain himself. He was called on when no one else could answer. It was a syndrome; he would blurt out the answer, neglecting to stand, the teacher would admonish him for not standing, and then he would lean on the desk. When the teacher chastised him for leaning on the desk he would stand, and his pants would begin to fall. He was then instructed to pull up his pants midst the chuckles of the other students. Kusa was the kind of guy that needed a shave even in the fifth grade, which added to his slovenly appearance. His dirty handkerchief hanging out of his pocket, waiting for his next amplified nose blow was another colorful feature.

At that time, I was often penalized for misbehavior and was sometimes locked in the principal's office. On one occasion I had a chance to peak through the file cabinets. I checked up on everyone's I.Q. score. Kusa's was definitely the highest at about 158. At around 12 we were making trips to Manhattan to attend Ginsberg and other "beat" poetry readings and meeting off-beat artists in Greenwich Village. At that time he decided he would not touch money, so I was carried the subways tokens and change.

On one memorable occasion around 1962 when I realized I would never be able to read all the books that he had, I pointedly asked him which books he considered to be the most important. He immediately replied, ” Just read Bhagavad Gita. You don’t need any other books.”

By tenth grade we moved to another neighborhood, and I rarely saw him. He attended a local Brooklyn high school, Lafayette. During the U.S. attempted invasion of Cuba, the students at his school were required to salute the flag, but he and another boy defiantly spit on it whereupon they were attacked by other students. This incident actually made the newspapers and appeared on the front page border of the New York World Telegram-long defunct. After this period he attended college for some time, although he never graduated. I remember seeing him once at an anti-Vietnam war rally in front of the U.N. He was continually jumping up and down holding hands with an odd woman. I was trying to communicate with him when the police started unceremoniously dispersing the crowd by beating us with their lead-filled clubs.

Some years ago I asked him about some symphonies he had composed and he said that he had never actually heard them played. From the earliest time that I remember he was practicing *hatha yoga asanas*, although I don’t really know how he learned them. Sometimes when I dropped in he would be sitting in a lotus position which seemed pretty odd at the time, even to me. He would be listening to a stereo that he had assembled.

I came to the L.A. temple via “Sai” in Hawaii sometime in October 1970. Besides chanting and other service, I was engaged by Karandhar in painting sets of the *parampara* for temples on the west coast. One day Karandhar told me he thought I might like to join the other artists who had recently moved from Boston to New York. Anxious to see me, my parents arranged a ticket and I was on my way back to New York. Somewhere in the darkness a chilling premonition came over me. Someone I knew would be at the temple in Brooklyn. Then it came to me-it must be Peter. I reasoned, where else could such a person be? After my arrival, at about 10:00 p.m., and an almost sleepless night, I was abruptly awakened by a loudspeaker blaring Prabhupada singing and sat up groggily in an almost amnesiac daze. Somebody directed me to the tiny laundry room where there was a tangled merge of clean clothes in a few baskets. Standing there was Bhakta Peter attempting to disentangle some extremely knotted wrinkled clothes. He appeared only mildly surprised to see me and I was half expecting to see him anyway. He asked me how I came to join, and I told him about joining in Hawaii with Sai. He asked in his kind of

high pitched voice, “How is Sai?” We both seemed to adjust rather quickly to this “surprise” encounter.

During the time leading up to and after the week long initiation of July 21st at the Brooklyn Temple, Bhakta Peter along with almost everyone else would go out on Harinam Sankirtan during the day. It was a decidedly colorful group and a big group it was -seventy to eighty+ *brahmacaris* and increasing daily! Once, a congregational member named Zubin, who was in in the tie-dye business had donated a bunch of tie-dye *kurtas*. Who could forget *brahmacaris* adorned in tie-dye *kurtas*? Almost everyone had tired of the novelty, but it seemed that Kusa had worn his longer than most of us. This combined with his unique and haphazard *dhoti* style along with two different socks was an unforgettable sight. Of course, if you weren’t careful to lift your *dhoti* while ascending or descending the filthy subway steps you were to sure to pick up an ever-widening decorative grayish-black border.

Before the big initiation Kusa was thinking that the four regulative principles should be embraced by the devotees more enthusiastically. Just after Srila Prabhupada gave Kusakratha his name, Prabhupada asked him to state the regulative principles which he did. Then immediately he asked him which one he like the best and Kusakratha kind of lost it—half gasping and half laughing he replied, “Srila Prabhupada, you are reading my mind.” Srila Prabhupada was also laughing, and this pastime was caught in a classic photo appearing in an early Vyasa Puja book around 1972.

I was told that when Kusakratha first saw Srila Prabhupada in Buffalo, he was rolling on the ground back and forth in front of His Divine Grace. Although it appeared very weird to the devotees at the time, in retrospect this is actually a natural way to approach a pure devotee. Balavanta related that when they began the Atlanta temple, Kusakratha was one of the original founders and although very eccentric performed nice service.

Giriraja Swami remembers when there were hardly any devotees in Boston, Bhakta Peter used to sit in the hallway at the entrance to the building with his back to the wall and legs outstretched, absorbed in reading Prabhupada’s books. When sleep overcame him he would simply lie down in the same spot and take rest. The first thing a guest would see was Peter, slouched in the hallway reading or sleeping. Satsarupa Maharaja wrote to Prabhupada asking what to do. Prabhupada wrote back, “What’s the matter? Can’t you tolerate?” Twenty years later when Giriraja visited New Dwarka and saw Peter he asked curiously,

“Who’s that?” A devotee told him, “Oh, that’s Kusakratha.” Kusa was now famous for translating so many scriptures. Although Maharaj saw so little potential, Prabhupada saw much more.

At the Brooklyn temple I would sometimes plead with Kusa to sketch or do something in art. He would just say that he had no inclination, although because of my persistence he did show me a sketch he had drawn that seemed to me half-heartedly done. It seemed to be his way of discouraging me from bugging him anymore.

Kusa never liked cold weather so he left Brooklyn for warmer climates. I saw him briefly at the famous 1972 festival in New Vrindavan, and he told me again how he couldn’t tolerate cold weather. I don’t remember seeing him again until 1975 when I returned from India and he was residing in San Diego. Jayatirtha was GBC in those days and he became a great admirer of Kusa for his expertise in *shastra*. J.T. organized several retreats with Kusa and the zonal leaders to enthuse others to scrutinize Srila Prabhupada’s books. After that J.T. wanted Kusa to give special evening seminars to all the devotees in New Dwarka. On the first night the temple was filled with expectant devotees. Several boards exhibited Kusa’s summary descriptions of *Bhagavad Gita* chapters. Devotees perused these summaries awaiting Kusa’s appearance.

I began to sense that something could be going wrong, so I ran outside to find Kusa. There he was, near the alley, in the rain. I said, “Everyone is waiting for you.” He just blurted out, “Tell them to move.” Then I saw some women congregating at the entrance so I asked them to move. Kusa didn’t appreciate microphones or any loud noises so he spoke without any amplification. He gave some homework tests for everyone to bring the next evening. The next evening Jadurani handed me all the ladies’ papers. I said, “Here are the women’s papers.” He said, “I don’t want them,” so I returned the papers to Jadurani. Rameswara was denouncing the classes as overemphasizing *jnana* or knowledge, but it had the good effect of encouraging people to put their heads to the books.

The 1976 Gaura Purnima Festival was drawing near, and J.T. decided to sponsor Kusa’s plane ticket. I asked Kusa later if he had ever bathed in the Ganga and he said that he had put his toe in. In those days he used to wear several hooded sweatshirts even on the hottest day in Mayapur.

Sometime after the 1976 festival I was in front of the L.A. temple and I saw Kusa walking toward me from Venice Boulevard. First thing he said was that he was worried that he may have been banned from the L.A. temple, in fact from all of the temples. He recounted that while in India Tamal Krishna Goswami had asked him to visit the Radha-Damodar buses upon his return to the U.S. just to enthruse the *brahmacaris* in studying. He seemed to be doing okay until he was pressured on one bus to clean and perform other chores while the men were out distributing.

One over-zealous *swami* decided to kick him off the bus and even made sure he was unwelcome at the local Chicago temple as well. Kusa had hitchhiked from there back to L.A. and here he was. I assured him that there was no chance of anyone heeding that *swami's* orders here in New Dwarka. Allaying his anxieties, I took his arm and proceeded across the street to the BBT Sanskrit department, and left him there with Gopipranadhana and others. Day by day, he advanced his grasp of Sanskrit and was soon translating simple texts. He was so enthusiastic in the beginning that he would come up to my studio and attempted to teach me Sanskrit grammar while I was painting. He was incredulous that I was unable to develop the same taste for Sanskrit that he now had. I did learn a bit, but in the end I remained a *sudra*, simply memorizing a few verses.

While in Europe in '78 I started to see some of his manuscripts, but it wasn't until 1984 that I had any real association again with him. At that time there were a few small books that he began to publish, but he had big plans. I was surprised that he had recently purchased a ticket to India at an exorbitant rate in order to procure as many original Sanskrit and Bengali works as possible for translation. He was now translating at a feverish pace and had run out of books. Several of us strongly insisted that he return his ticket and get one that was reasonably priced, but he refused again and again-not wanting to deal with the situation. After some days, in touch with Dasaratha-suta, he was able to borrow quite a few books to continue with his translation work, so he now decided not to go to India.

I accompanied him to the travel office, a few blocks away, to get a refund for the ticket. When we walked in the door he blurted out immediately, "I want my money back!" When they asked him why, he wouldn't speak to them so I explained that he would be going later in the year with me. Although he lost seventy or eighty dollars the ticket was refunded. Some days later I noticed that Kusa wasn't at *mangla arati*. He used to stand at the far right side his ears plugged with toilet paper that would stream down the side of his face. Later that

day I saw him and asked suspiciously, “Where were you today?” Sure enough, he had flown all the way to San Francisco on a separate ticket to get his visa which he was unable to get in LA. I reminded him that there was no need for a visa since he wasn’t going to India. He shrugged his shoulders and said, “Oh yeah, that’s right. I forgot.” When Kusa translated he would try to work under as strong a light as possible-practically always natural light. Often he would go to the roof of the temple and sit in the strong sunlight.

Although his father was a simple upholsterer he had received an investment tip and made some money. He had left Kusa a certain amount. I recall he was supposed to receive \$20,000 at intervals. When he received the first twenty thousand he was able to launch his Krishna Institute publications and also pay his rent for some time. After his father’s demise his family members had somehow arranged to prevent him from getting the rest, so he was totally dependent on the sales of his books which he printed in lots of one hundred, increasing the cost considerably. Whenever I saw him he would give me the latest books and sometimes send them to me. He said that I should have an archive. I used to stay with him at his place when I was in L.A. for Rathayatra although it was famously funky. The windows were tightly shut and although *kirtan* from across the street was barely audible, he claimed it was “deafening.” Whenever I tried to open a window he admonished me saying he couldn’t handle the “Arctic breezes,” In 1985 I had completed a painting of Lord Chaitanya instructing Rupa Goswami which I gave him to hang on his wall. He told me that for the next fifteen years or so he took inspiration from that painting. I picked it up when he left for India. It was quite dusty.

Kusa was really bummed out when one devotee pirated his work. It was difficult for him to maintain his service and simple lifestyle. For a few years I had helped arrange a regular stipend from an ex-member of the Sanskrit department who had become quite wealthy and was happy to see the new books being produced. Kusa was pretty stubborn as far as discounts go. Once for more than an hour in his room Mahamantra das Brahmachari (now HH Vishrambha Maharaja) was begging for a discount on buying a bunch of books, but Kusa was humorously unmovable.

At various times Kusa taught *gurukula* students in L.A. and later in Vrindaban, sometimes making funny cartoons on the chalkboard as part of his lesson. Sometimes he wrote spoofs of the perceived foibles of the devotees. He particularly poked fun at T.V. watching, sporting events such as ping-pong, and social events. He used to laugh heartily at these things. He invented original

funny expressions spontaneously such as “dizzydasis”. He found it amusing that people were attending college to learn Sanskrit and in the end were translating *Mahabharata*, when there were so much Goswami literatures that needed translating.



I saw Kusa in 2000 in Vrindavan when he told me that still, after several years, he continued to translate Jiva Goswami’s monumental *Gopal Champu* which he said was the most difficult task he had ever undertaken. At the same time he was composing his own poems in Sanskrit and English. These works are as yet unpublished. He was handwriting everything over the last few years as his computer had failed and he was unable to get it going again. I saw him in April and he was serenely detached coming out to chant for a while every day, take *darshan*, and get *prasadam*.

Kushakratha Prabhu passed away in Vrindavana in 2005. He remains the most prolific author / translator among Prabhupada’s disciples. For a list of translations by Shriman Kushakratha das Prabhu, or to read his books online, see this site: <http://vedicilluminations.com/kusakratha/Translationlist.htm> 

Bad Car-ma for the Fisker Karma



2012 Fisker Karma

The Fisker Automotive Company of Finland and California has produced a luxury electric car they call the Karma. The company’s website explains the car’s name:

Loosely translating from Hindi, Karma implies good deeds are rewarded. The Fisker Karma allows drivers who appreciate style and performance to own and enjoy a car that is also environmentally conscious, one that achieves fuel

consumption and emissions performance that is simply beyond the capability of today's conventional luxury automobiles."

Shrila Prabhupada's Purport to 2.42-43 of *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* offers a more genuine understanding of *karma*: 'People in general are not very intelligent, and due to their ignorance they are most attached to the fruitive activities recommended in the *karma-kanda* portions of the Vedas. They do not want anything more than sense gratificatory proposals for enjoying life in heaven, where wine and women are available and material opulence is very common.'

Jyotish shastra is a means of recognizing the lingering effects of *karma* upon the conditioned soul, as well as understanding the individuality of the *atma*. Krishna consciousness is the pure and simple means of becoming free from *karma*. Krishna conscious astrology seeks to understand karmic conditioning with an eye to minimizing it and ultimately freeing ourselves from its effects.

The makers of the Fisker Karma have neither a proper understanding of *karma* nor do they apparently have a proper understanding of making cars. The test model that Consumer's Reports bought from them for \$1000,000 died in their parking lot. Another Fisker Karma caught fire sitting in a Texas customer's garage and burned down his house! Therefore the lesson is not to buy into more *karma*. Though we recognize and acknowledge *karma*, we must engage in the Lord's service to rid ourselves of it once and for all by the grace of the Holy Names. Hence under proper guidance, *karma-yoga* leads to *bhakti*. ♪



Letters to the Editor

(Edited for brevity)

“Amazed at the Accuracy”

Hare Krishna dear Patita Pavan,
My sister in law is very happy with her chart, and has read it three times. She has asked me to convey her message: "Thank you very much for the wonderful chart, I will use it as a future guide. I am amazed at the accuracy of your and Matajee's skills."
Your servant,
SM (So. Africa)

“A Beautiful Presentation”

Thank you so much for sending my daughter's horoscope and what a beautiful presentation. I have had charts done by different astrologers for myself, but no one has ever taken this much care and made such a nice presentation.

Thank you so much.

Your servant,
PD (Germany)

...*And that is why we say that the Full Life Reading is the world's most comprehensive horoscope reading. Thanks very much for your appreciation and for the opportunity to serve your family.* –Ed

“Enmity Between Sun and Saturn”

Dear Patita Pavana Prabhu,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to our beloved Guru Maharaja Shрила Prabhupada!

In my article on Lord Shanaishchara I had written, “In Jyotish it is stated that the Sun and Saturn are enemies. When Shani opened his eyes as a baby for the very first time, the Sun went into an eclipse. If some Pundit among the esteemed readers of this newsletter can explain why in a future issue, we would be most grateful.”

While re-reading the *Nrismha Purana* for the occasion of Nrsimha Chaturdasi, I came across the following episode. So it seems that the enmity between the Sun and Saturn are due to these curses.

Your servant,
Arjuna das (Mautitius)

From the *Nrismha Purana* by Purnaprajna dasa, page 42:

Bharadvaja Muni said, "My dear Suta, you have described the origin of some of the demigods, but you have not told us about the Maruts and the Ashvini-kumaras. Kindly tell us about them." Romaharsana Suta said, "In ancient times, Parashara Muni, the son of Shakti, had described the origin of the Ashvini-kumuras as related in the *Visnu Purana* and *Vayu Purana*. I will give you a brief account of what Parashara Muni had said. "Daksha's daughter, Aditi, gave birth to Aditya, the sun-god. Prajapati Tvasta (Vishvakarma) gave his daughter, Samjna, in marriage to Aditya.

However, the brilliance of the sun-god was intolerable for Samjna, and so after some time she returned to her father's house.

When Samjna's father, Vishvakarma, saw that his daughter had returned home, he asked her, "Did your husband maintain you properly and treat you with affection, or did he behave harshly with you?"

Samjna said, "My dear father, I have been scorched by the extreme heat of my husband."

Prajapati Tvasta then said, "You must return to your husband, for the only duty of a chaste woman is to serve her husband. Rest assured that I will soon reduce his glare, for I plan to visit him shortly."

In obedience to her father's command, Samjna returned to her husband, and in due course of time she gave birth to Shraddhadeva Manu, Yama, and Yami (Yamuna). However, Samjna still found the glaring effulgence of her husband to be practically unbearable. Finally conceiving a plan to alleviate her suffering, Samjna created a shadow, or illusory self, named Chaya. Leaving Chaya to consort with her husband, Samjna transformed herself into a mare, left home, and began to wander within the province of the Northern Kurus.

Being deceived by his wife in this way, the sun-god believed Chaya to be Samjna and so he happily enjoyed intimate relations with her. In due course of time, Chaya gave birth to two sons; Sanaishchara and Savarni Manu, and a daughter named Tapati. It so happened that Chaya favored her own children and thus neglected the children of Samjna. Therefore, one day, Yama approached his father and said, "My dear father, this woman is not our mother."

At this, the Sun-god told Chaya that she should treat all of his children equally. However, Chaya didn't change her ways. Seeing how she favored her own children, Yama and Yami began to treat her harshly, at least as long as their father was not present. Being the butt of Yama and Yami's jokes, Chaya became enraged and cursed Yama to become the lord of ghosts, and Yami to become the River Yamuna. When the sun-god came to understand that Chaya had cursed Yama and Yami, he in turn cursed her children. The sun-god cursed Sanaishchara to be a slow-moving and evil planet, and he cursed Tapati to become a river. Thereafter, the sun-god absorbed his mind in meditation to find out the whereabouts of Samjna. When he came to understand the truth of the matter, the sun-god transformed himself into a horse and went to the Uttara-kuru Province. It was from the union of the Sun-god in the form of a horse and Samjna in the form of a mare that the Ashvini-kumaras were born, and their bodies were more handsome than any of the other demigods.

At the time of their births, Brahma appeared to the Ashvini-kumaras and granted them the status of demigods and the right to a share of sacrificial offerings. He also awarded them their positions as the chief physicians among the demigods.

Brahma then returned to his own abode and the Sun-god assumed his original form, as did Samjna. Sometime after the Sun-god returned home, Vishvakarma came to see him, offering prayers containing many names, for his satisfaction. It was then that Vishvakarma kept his promise to Samjna and reduced the glare of the Sun-god's body.

**Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama Rama Hare Hare**