

Elocution

Class: IV-VI

Passage 1: The Hare Krishna Mantra

The transcendental vibration established by the chanting of Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, is the sublime method for reviving our transcendental consciousness. As living spiritual souls, we are all originally Krishna conscious entities, but due to our association with matter from time immemorial, our consciousness is now adulterated by the material atmosphere. The material atmosphere, in which we are now living, is called *māyā*, or illusion. *Māyā* means that which is not. And what is this illusion? The illusion is that we are all trying to be lords of material nature, while actually we are under the grip of her stringent laws. When a servant artificially tries to imitate the all-powerful master, it is called illusion. We are trying to exploit the resources of material nature, but actually we are becoming more and more entangled in her complexities. Therefore, although we are engaged in a hard struggle to conquer nature, we are ever more dependent on her. This illusory struggle against material nature can be stopped at once by revival of our eternal Krishna consciousness.

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare is the transcendental process for reviving this original pure consciousness. By chanting this transcendental vibration, we can cleanse away all misgivings within our hearts. The basic principle of all such misgivings is the false consciousness that I am the lord of all I survey.

The word Hara is the form of addressing the energy of the Lord, and the words Krishna and Rama are forms of addressing the Lord Himself. Both Krishna and Rama mean the supreme pleasure, and Hara is the supreme pleasure energy of the Lord, changed to Hare (Hah-ray) in the vocative. The supreme pleasure energy of the Lord helps us to reach the Lord.

The material energy, called *maya*, is also one of the multi-energies of the Lord. And we the living entities are also the energy, marginal energy, of the Lord. The living entities are described as superior to material energy. When the superior energy is in contact with the inferior energy, an incompatible situation arises; but when the superior marginal energy is in contact with the superior energy, called Hara, it is established in its happy, normal condition.

These three words, namely Hara, Krishna and Rama, are the transcendental seeds of the mahamantra. The chanting is a spiritual call for the Lord and His energy, to give protection to the conditioned soul. This chanting is exactly like the genuine cry of a child for its mother's presence. Mother Harā helps the devotee achieve the Lord Father's grace, and the Lord reveals Himself to the devotee who chants this mantra sincerely.

No other means of spiritual realization is as effective in this age of quarrel and hypocrisy as the mahā-mantra: *Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare*.

Passage 2: What is a Guru?

The *guru's* business is to bring his disciples from darkness to light. At present everyone is suffering due to ignorance, just as one contracts a disease out of ignorance. If one does not know hygienic principles, he will not know what will contaminate him. Therefore due to ignorance there is infection, and we suffer from disease. A criminal may say, "I did not know the law," but he will not be excused if he commits a crime. Ignorance is no excuse. Similarly, a child, not knowing that fire will burn, will touch the fire. The fire does not think, "This is a child, and he does not know I will burn." No, there is no excuse. Just as there are state laws, there are also stringent laws of nature, and these laws will act despite our ignorance of them. If we do something wrong out of ignorance, we must suffer. This is the law. Whether the law is a state law or a law of nature, we risk suffering if we break it.

The *guru's* business is to see that no human being suffers in this material world. No one can claim that he is not suffering. That is not possible. In this material world, there are three kinds of suffering: *adhyatmika*, *adhibhautika*, and *adhidaivika*. These are miseries arising from the material body and mind, from other living entities, and from the forces of nature. We may suffer mental anguish, or we may suffer from other living entities—from ants or mosquitoes or flies—or we may suffer due to some superior power. There may be no rain, or there may be flood. There may be excessive heat or excessive cold. So many types of suffering are imposed by nature. Thus there are three types of miseries within the material world, and everyone is suffering from one, two, or three of them. No one can say that he is completely free from suffering.

We may then ask why the living entity is suffering. The answer is: out of ignorance. He does not think, "I am committing mistakes and am leading a sinful life; that is why I am suffering." Therefore the *guru's* first business is to rescue his disciple from this ignorance. We send our children to school to save them from suffering. If our children do not receive an education, we fear that they will suffer in the future. The *guru* sees that suffering is due to ignorance, which is compared to darkness. How can one in darkness be saved? By light. The *guru* takes the torchlight of knowledge and presents it before the living entity enveloped in darkness. That knowledge relieves him from the sufferings of the darkness of ignorance.

One may ask whether the *guru* is absolutely necessary. The Vedas inform us that he is:

*tad-vijñānārthā sa gurum evābhigacchet
samit-pāēiṁ ṣrotriyā brahma-niñōham*

The Vedas enjoin us to seek out a *guru*; actually, they say to seek out the *guru*, not just a *guru*. The *guru* is one because he comes in disciplic succession. What Vyasadeva and Krishna taught five thousand years ago is also being taught now! There is no difference between the two instructions. Although hundreds and thousands of *acaryas* have come and gone, the message is one. The real *guru* cannot be two, for the real *guru* does not speak differently from his predecessors.

Passage 3: Spiritual Study of Greed

The Black-marketers are almost in all cases rich merchants, millionaires and landlords. These people are not needy men but they amass money and hoard commodities out of a passion for accumulating wealth not just for their personal enjoyment but also for the enjoyment of their future generation. Such diseased persons do not know the highest value of human life. They simply go on amassing money unnecessarily and immorally for the simple reason of sense gratification. Such persons are described in the Bhagavad Gita as asuras. The asuras are generally faithless and do not believe in the existence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

They amass money for the enjoyment of the senses but do not care for the benefit of the soul. Their only business is to see how much bank balance they possessed yesterday and how it has increased today. They think of annihilating one enemy today and others tomorrow and try to pose themselves as one of the dominating Gods as if they have attained to all perfection of life through the medium of money. But such asuras are always bound up by the laws of Nature which they do not know. It is stated in the Bhagavad Gita that such class of asuras are the lowest of the human beings,

So the asuras, although appearing very fortunate are actually the most unfortunate creatures. Wealth is considered to be Laxmi the Mother of opulence or the Internal Energy of Godhead. As such Mother Laxmi is an Eternal Consort of Narayana, the Personality of Godhead. Therefore wherever there is Narayana surely there is His Eternal Consort Laxmi. But where there is no realization of Narayana, the apparent existence of Laxmi is the false representation of Her existence—just like Sita (Who is Laxmi Herself) was falsely in the possession of Ravana.

The black-marketeers are not influenced by any design of Godhead but they have become so by dint of their association with the modes of passion and ignorance. Unrestricted hankering after wealth is the result of the mode of passion and ignorance. They are due to lack of cultivation of the mode of goodness which alone can endow them with a sense of proper vision and knowledge of life.

State cannot check or banish out the black marketing process simply by police action. The mode of ignorance and passion has pervaded the whole atmosphere. The mode of goodness has altogether been banished from the social life of the present generation. There are clear directions in the Bhagavad-gita on how one can achieve the quality of goodness. One has to imbibe the characteristic goodness of habits with respect to bodily and mental activities, controlling the movements of body, mind and words. The world when ruled by such trained leaders would attain peace and calmness and the root cause of all unwanted habits like greed can be controlled.

Passage 4: Relevant Inquiries

A small child walking with his father goes on inquiring constantly. He asks his father so many odd things, and the father has to satisfy him with proper answers. Once when Srila Prabhupada was a young father in his householder life, he and his second son happened to pass a marriage procession. The four-year-old boy, as usual, inquired what the big procession was. He was given all possible answers to his thousand and one questions regarding the marriage party, and finally he asked whether his own father was married! This question gave rise to loud laughter from all the elderly gentlemen present, although the boy was perplexed as to why they were laughing. Anyway, the boy was somehow satisfied by his married father.

The lesson from this incident is that since a human being is a rational animal, he is born to make inquiries. The greater the number of questions, the greater the advancement of knowledge and science. The whole of material civilization is based on this originally large volume of questions put by young men to their elders. When elderly persons give proper answers to the questions of the youngsters, civilization makes progress, one step after another. The most intelligent man, however, inquires about what happens after death. The less intelligent make lesser inquiries, but the questions of those who are more intelligent go higher and still higher.

Among the most intelligent of men was Mahārāja Parékñit, who was accidentally cursed by a brāhmaëa to meet death from the bite of a serpent within seven days. The great king placed the following relevant inquiries before the great sage Çukadeva. “Please tell me, my lord—what should I hear, what should I worship, or whom should I remember now?”

As long as a man is in full vigor of life, he forgets the reality called death. Thus a foolish man makes no relevant inquiry about the real problems of life. An animal like a goat has no sense of its impending death. Although its brother goat is being slaughtered, the goat, being allured by the green grass offered to it, will stand peacefully waiting to be slaughtered next. On the other hand, if a human being sees his fellow man being killed by an enemy, he either fights to save his brother or leaves, if possible, to save his own life. That is the difference between a man and a goat.

Sri Sukadeva Gosvami, who was asked for direction by Maharaja Pariksit, responded to the king’s relevant inquiries by advising him as follows:

“O descendant of Bharata, it is the duties of mortal men to inquire about, hear about, glorify, and meditate upon the Personality of Godhead, who is the most attractive person because of His fullness in opulence. He is called Hari because He alone can undo the conditional existence of a living being. If we at all want to be freed from conditional existence, we must make relevant inquiries about the Absolute Truth so that He may be pleased to bestow upon us perfect freedom in life.”

Passage 5: The Real Peace Formula

Every living entity is searching after peace. That is the struggle for existence. Everyone, from the aquatics to the highest form of human being—from the ant up to Brahma, the first creature of this universe—is searching for peace. That is the main objective. Lord Chaitanya said that a person who is in full Krishna consciousness is the only peaceful man because he has no demands. That is the special qualification of a person who is in Krishna consciousness. He is *akamaù*. *Akamaù* refers to those who have no desire, who are self-sufficient, who have nothing to ask and who are fully peaceful. Who are they? They are the devotees who are situated in Krishna consciousness.

All others fall into three classes. One class is *bhukti*, those who are hankering after material happiness and enjoyment. These people want to eat, drink, be merry and enjoy. There are different modes of enjoyment according to the body. People are searching after sense enjoyment on this planet, on other planets, here, there and everywhere. Their main object is to gratify the senses. That is called *bhukti*. The next class is those people who are fatigued or frustrated in sense gratification and therefore want liberation from this material entanglement. And then there are those who, in search of knowledge, speculate about what the Absolute Truth is. Thus there are some who want sense enjoyment, and others, the Salvationists, who are seeking liberation. The Salvationists also have some desire, the desire to be free from this material entanglement. Then there are those who are yogis; they are searching after mystic perfection. There are eight kinds of mystic perfection which grant the ability to become the smallest, to become the heaviest, or to get whatever one desires. Ordinary persons who are after sense enjoyment and those who are Salvationists or who are after mystic perfection all have some demand. But what about the devotees? They have no demands. Because they simply want to serve Krishna, they are waiting for the order of Krishna, and that is their satisfaction. If Krishna wants the devotees to go to hell, they are prepared to go to hell. And if Krishna says, "You come to Me," they are prepared to go. They have no demands. This is the perfectional stage.

Therefore, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says that those who are Krishna conscious, because they have no demands, are actually peaceful. Those who are after sense enjoyment, salvation and yogic mystic perfection are always full of anxiety. As long as one is full of anxiety, one should know that he is still under the grip of material nature. And as soon as one is free from all anxiety, one should know that he is liberated. This fearful anxiety exists because we do not know Krishna, the Supreme Lord, the supreme controller.

e of the key episodes in the epic Mahabharata.

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

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Passage 2: Dhritarashtra quits home Mahatma Vidura, the uncle of the Pandavas, had not participated in the fierce battle of Kurukshetra. Vidura returned to Hastinapura after a pilgrimage during the battle. King Yudhishtira treated Mahatma Vidura like a godly person, and thus he remained there for a certain period just to rectify the mentality of his eldest brother. The eternal time unnoticeably overcomes those who are too much attached to family affairs and are always absorbed in their thought.

Mahatma Vidura knew all this, and therefore he addressed Dhritarashtra, saying, “My dear King, please get out of here immediately. Do not delay. Just see how fear has overtaken you. This frightful situation cannot be cured by any person in this material world. My lord, it is the Supreme Personality of Godhead as eternal time or *kala* that has approached us all. Whoever is under the influence of supreme *kala* must surrender his most dear life, and what to speak of other things, such as wealth, honour, children, land and home. Your father, brother, well-wishers and sons are all dead. You yourself have spent the major portion of your life, your body is now overtaken by invalidity, and you are living in the home of another. You have been blind from your very birth, and recently you have become hard of hearing. Your memory is shortened, and your intelligence is disturbed. Your teeth are loose, your liver is defective, and you are coughing up mucus. Alas, how powerful are the hopes of a living being to continue his life. Verily, you are living just like a household dog and are eating bits and pieces of food given by Bhima. There is no need to live a degraded life and exist on the charity of those whom you tried to kill by arson and poisoning. You also insulted one of their wives and seized their kingdom and wealth. Despite your unwillingness to die and your desire to live even at the cost of honour and prestige, your miserly body will certainly decline and deteriorate like an old garment. He is called undisturbed who goes to an unknown, remote place and, freed from all duties, quits his material body when it has become useless. He is certainly a first-class man who awakens and understands, either by himself or from others, the falsity and misery of this material world and thus leaves home and depends fully on the Personality of Godhead residing within his heart. Please, therefore, leave for the North immediately, without letting your relatives know, for soon that time will approach which will diminish the good qualities of men.”

Thus Maharaja Dhritarashtra, firmly convinced by knowledge, broke at once the strong network of family affection by his firm determination. Thus he immediately left home to set out on the path of liberation, as directed by his younger brother Vidura.

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Passage 3: Maharaja Parikshit cursed by a Brahmana boy

Once upon a time Maharaja Parikshit, while engaged in hunting in the forest with bow and arrows, became extremely exhausted, hungry and thirsty. While searching for water, he entered the hermitage of the well-known Shamika Rishi and saw him sitting silently in a trance with closed eyes. The King, whose mouth was dry from thirst, asked him for water. The King, who did not receive any formal welcome by means of being offered a seat, water and sweet addresses, considered himself neglected, and became angry. While leaving, the King, being so insulted, picked up a lifeless snake with his bow and angrily placed it on the shoulder of the sage. He then returned to his palace.

Upon returning, he began to think and argue within himself whether the sage had actually been in meditation, with senses concentrated and eyes closed, or whether he had just been pretending to be in trance just to avoid receiving a lower *kshatriya*. The sage had a son who was very powerful, being a *brahmana*'s son. While he was playing with inexperienced boys, he heard of his father's distress, which was occasioned by the King. Then and there the *brahmana*'s son, Shringi, said, "O just look at the sins of the rulers who, like crows and watchdogs at the door, commit sins against their masters, opposing the principles governing servants. After the departure of Lord Sri Krishna, the Personality of Godhead and supreme ruler of everyone, these upstarts have flourished, our protector being gone. Therefore I myself shall take up this matter and punish them. Just witness my power."

The son of the *rishi*, his eyes red-hot with anger, touched the water of the River Kaushika while speaking to his playmates and discharged the following thunderbolt of words. The *brahmana*'s son cursed the King thus, "On the seventh day from today a snake-bird will bite the most wretched one of that dynasty because of his having broken the laws of good manners by insulting my father."

On hearing his son explain to him what had happened, the *rishi* did not congratulate his son, but, on the contrary, began to repent, saying, "Alas! What a great sinful act was performed by my son. He has awarded heavy punishment for an insignificant offence. The emperor Parikshit is a pious king. He is highly celebrated and is a first-class devotee of the Personality of Godhead. He is a saint amongst royalty, and he has performed many horse sacrifices. When such a king is tired and exhausted, being stricken with hunger and thirst, he does not at all deserve to be cursed."

Then the *rishi* prayed to the all-pervading Personality of Godhead to pardon his immature boy, who had no intelligence and who committed the great sin of cursing a person who was completely free from all sins. This curse however acted to the advantage of Maharaja Parikshit, for he could give up all material attachments and return to the eternal kingdom of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

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Passage 4: Duryodhana offends Vidura

King Dhritarashtra became blind under the influence of impious desires to support his dishonest sons. Affected by illusion he refused to return the rightful share of the kingdom of Yudhishtira. When Vidura was invited by his elder brother Dhritarashtra for consultation, he entered the house and gave instructions which were exactly to the point. His advice is well known, and instructions by Vidura are approved by expert ministers of state.

Vidura said, “You must now return the rightful share to Yudhishtira, who has no enemies and who has been patient through countless sufferings due to your offenses. He is waiting with his younger brothers, among whom is the revengeful Bhima, breathing heavily like a snake. Surely you are afraid of him. Lord Krishna, the Personality of Godhead, has accepted the sons of Pritha as His kinsmen, and all the kings of the world are with Lord Sri Krishna. He is present in His home with all His family members, the kings and princes of the Yadu dynasty, who have conquered an unlimited number of rulers, and He is their Lord. You are maintaining Duryodhana, as your flawless son, but he is envious of Lord Krishna. And because you are thus maintaining a nondevotee of Krishna, you are devoid of all auspicious qualities. Relieve yourself of this ill fortune as soon as possible and do good to the whole family!”

While speaking thus, Vidura, whose personal character was held in esteem by respectable persons, was insulted by Duryodhana, who was swollen with anger and whose lips were trembling. Duryodhana was in company with Karna, his younger brothers and his maternal uncle Shakuni. Duryodhana said, “Who asked him to come here, this son of a maid? He is so crooked that he spies in the interest of the enemy against those on whose support he has grown up. Toss him out of the palace immediately and leave him with only his breath.”

Thus being pierced by arrows through his ears and upset to the core of his heart, Vidura placed his bow on the door and quit his brother’s palace. He was not sorry, for he considered the acts of the external energy to be supreme. By his piety, Vidura achieved the advantage of the pious Kauravas. After leaving Hastinapura, he took shelter at many places of pilgrimage, which are the Lord’s lotus feet. With a desire to gain a high order of pious life, he traveled to holy places where thousands of transcendental forms of the Lord are situated. He began to travel alone, thinking only of Krishna, through various holy places like Ayodhya, Dvaraka and Mathura. He traveled where the air, hill, orchard, river and lake are all pure and sinless and where the forms of the Unlimited decorate the temples. Thus he performed the pilgrim’s progress.

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Passage 5: Questions by Vidura to Uddhava

Vidura left Hastinapura after Duryodhana spoke to him in a very rude manner. He started traveling to many places of pilgrimage, which are the Lord's lotus feet. At last he reached the bank of the Yamuna, where he happened to meet Uddhava, the great devotee of Lord Krishna. Vidura then asked him for news of the family of Lord Krishna, the Personality of Godhead.

Vidura said, "Please tell me whether the original Personalities of Godhead, who incarnated Themselves at the request of Brahma, are doing well in the house of Shurasena. Please tell me whether the best friend of the Kurus, our brother-in-law Vasudeva, is doing well. O Uddhava, please tell me how is Pradyumna, the commander-in-chief of the Yadus, who was Cupid in a former life? Rukmini bore him as her son from Lord Krishna, by the grace of *brahmanas* whom she pleased. O gentle one, does Samba fare well? He exactly resembles the son of the Personality of Godhead. In a previous birth he was born as Karttikeya in the womb of the wife of Lord Shiva, and now he has been born in the womb of Jambavati, the most enriched wife of Krishna. Please tell me whether Akrura, the son of Shvaphalka, is doing well. He is a faultless soul surrendered unto the Personality of Godhead.

"Also let me inquire whether Maharaja Yudhishtira is now maintaining the kingdom according to religious principles and with respect for the path of religion. Formerly Duryodhana was burning with envy because Yudhishtira was being protected by the arms of Krishna and Arjuna as if they were his own arms. Please tell me whether the unconquerable Bhima, who is like a cobra, has released his long-cherished anger upon the sinners? The field of battle could not tolerate even the wonderful playing of his club when he stepped on the path. Please tell me whether Arjuna, whose bow bears the name Gandiva and who is always famous amongst the chariot warriors for vanquishing his enemies, is doing well. He once satisfied Lord Shiva by covering him with arrows when Shiva came as an unidentified false hunter.

"O my lord, is Pritha still living? She lived only for the sake of her fatherless children; otherwise it was impossible for her to live without King Pandu. O gentle one, I simply lament for Dhritarashtra who rebelled against his brother after death. By him I was driven out of my own house, although I am his sincere well-wisher, because he accepted the line of action adopted by his own sons. I am not astonished at this, having traveled over the world without being seen by others. The activities of the Personality of Godhead, which are like those of a man in this mortal world, are bewildering to others, but I know of His greatness by His grace, and thus I am happy in all respects."

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Passage 6: Vidura approaches Maitreya

Vidura, the best amongst the Kuru dynasty, who was perfect in devotional service to the Lord, reached Hardwar, the source of the celestial Ganges River, where Maitreya, the great, immeasurably learned sage of the world, was seated. Vidura, who was perfect in gentleness and satisfied in transcendence, inquired from him, “O great sage, everyone in this world engages in fruitive activities to attain happiness, but one finds neither satiation nor the lessening of distress. On the contrary, one is only irritated by such activities. Please, therefore, give us directions on how one should live for real happiness. O my lord, great generous souls travel on the earth on behalf of the Supreme Personality of Godhead to show compassion to the fallen souls who are averse to the sense of subordination to the Lord. Therefore, O great sage, please give me instruction on the transcendental devotional service of the Lord, so that He who is situated in the heart of everyone can be pleased to impart, from within, knowledge of the Absolute Truth in terms of the ancient Vedic principles delivered only to those who are purified by the process of devotional service. You may narrate also about the auspicious characteristics of the Lord in His different incarnations for the welfare of the twice-born, the cows and the demigods. Our minds are never satisfied completely, although we continuously hear of His transcendental activities.

“Who in human society can be satisfied without hearing sufficient talk of the Lord, whose lotus feet are the sum total of all places of pilgrimage and who is worshiped by great sages and devotees? Such topics can cut off one’s bondage to family affection simply by entering one’s ears. Your friend the great sage Krishna-dvaipayana Vyasa has already described the transcendental qualities of the Lord in his great work, the *Mahabharatha*. But the whole idea is to draw the attention of the mass of people to *Krishna-katha* through their strong attraction for hearing mundane topics. For one who is anxious to engage constantly in hearing such topics, *Krishna-katha* gradually increases his indifference towards all other things. Such constant remembrance of the lotus feet of Lord Krishna by the devotee who has achieved transcendental bliss defeats all his miseries without delay. O sage, persons who because of their sinful activities are disinclined to the topics of Transcendence and thus ignorant of the purpose of the *Mahabharatha* or *Bhagavad-gita* are pitied by the pitiable. I also pity them because I see how their duration of life is spoiled by eternal time while they involve themselves in presentations of philosophical speculation, theoretical ultimate goals of life, and different modes of ritual. O Maitreya, O friend of the distressed, the glories of the Supreme Lord can alone do good for people all over the world. Therefore, just as bees collect honey from flowers, kindly describe the essence of all topics—the topics of the Lord.”

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 7: Creation of the Kumaras and Rudra

In the beginning, Brahma created four great sages named Sanaka, Sananda, Sanatana and Sanat-kumara. All of them were unwilling to adopt materialistic activities because they were highly elevated. Brahma spoke to his sons after generating them. “My dear sons,” he said, “now generate children.” But due to their being attached to Vasudeva, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, they aimed at liberation, and therefore they expressed their unwillingness. On the refusal of the sons to obey the order of their father, there was much anger generated in the mind of Brahma, which he tried to control and not express. Although he tried to control his anger, it came out from between his eyebrows, and a child of mixed blue and red hues was immediately generated.

After his birth he began to cry, “O destiny maker! Teacher of the universe, kindly assign my name and place.” The all-powerful Brahma, who was born from the lotus flower, pacified the boy with gentle words, accepting his request, and said, “Do not cry. I shall certainly do as you desire. O chief of the demigods, you shall be called by the name Rudra by all people because you have so anxiously cried. My dear boy, I have already selected the following places for your residence: the heart, the senses, the air of life, the sky, the air, the fire, the water, the earth, the sun, the moon and austerity. My dear boy Rudra, you have eleven other names. O Rudra, you also have eleven wives, called the Rudranis. My dear boy, you may now accept all the names and places designated for you and your different wives, and since you are now one of the masters of the living entities, you may increase the population on a large scale.”

The most powerful Rudra, whose bodily color was blue mixed with red, created many offspring exactly resembling him in features, strength and furious nature. The sons and grandsons generated by Rudra were unlimited in number, and when they assembled together they attempted to demolish the entire universe. When Brahma, the father of the living entities, saw this, he became afraid of the situation. Brahma told Rudra, “O best among the demigods, there is no need for you to generate living entities of this nature. They have begun to destroy everything on all sides with the fiery flames from their eyes, and they have even attacked me. My dear son, you had better situate yourself in penance, which is auspicious for all living entities and which will bring blessing upon you. By penance only shall you be able to create the universe as it was before. By penance only can one even approach the Personality of Godhead, who is within the heart of every living entity, and at the same time beyond the reach of all senses.” Thus Rudra, having been ordered by Brahma, circumambulated his father, the master of the Vedas. Addressing him with words of approval, he entered the forest to perform severe penances.

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 8: Description of the Kingdom of God

In the spiritual sky there are spiritual planets known as Vaikunthas, which are the residence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His pure devotees, and are worshiped by the residents of all the material planets. There, all the residents are similar in form to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They all engage in devotional service to the Lord without desires for self enjoyment. In those planets there are many forests which are very auspicious. In those forests the trees are desire trees, and in all seasons they are filled with flowers and fruits because everything in the Vaikuntha planets is spiritual and personal. The inhabitants fly in their airplanes, accompanied by their wives and partners, and eternally sing of the character and activities of the Lord, which are always free of all inauspicious qualities. While singing the glories of the Lord, they mock even the presence of the blossoming *madhavi* flowers, which are fragrant and overloaded with honey. When the king of bees hums in a high pitch, singing the glories of the Lord, there is a temporary silence in the noises of the different birds which stop their own singing simply to hear the glories of the Lord.

Although flowering plants like the *mandara*, *kunda*, *champak*, lily and *parijata* are full of transcendental fragrance, they are still conscious of the austerities performed by *tulasi*, for *tulasi* is given special preference by the Lord, who garlands Himself with *tulasi* leaves. The inhabitants of Vaikuntha travel in their airplanes made of *lapis lazuli* (a type of blue gemstone), emerald and gold. The ladies in the Vaikuntha planets are as beautiful as the goddess of fortune herself. Such transcendently beautiful ladies, their hands playing with lotuses and their leg bangles tinkling, are sometimes seen sweeping the marble walls, which are bedecked at intervals with golden borders, in order to receive the grace of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The goddesses of fortune worship the Lord in their own gardens by offering *tulasi* leaves on the coral-paved banks of sacred reservoirs of water.

It is very sad that unfortunate people do not discuss the description of the Vaikuntha planets but engage in topics which are unworthy to hear and which confuse one's intelligence. Those who give up the topics of Vaikuntha and take to talk of the material world are thrown into the darkest region of ignorance. The human form of life is of such importance that demigods also desire to have such life, for in the human form one can attain perfect religious truth and knowledge. If one in this human form of life does not understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His abode, it is to be understood that he is very much affected by the influence of external nature. Persons whose bodily features change in ecstasy and who breathe heavily and sweat due to hearing the glories of the Lord are promoted to the kingdom of God, even though they do not care for meditation and other austerities. The kingdom of God is above the material universe, and it is desired even by Brahma and other demigods.

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 9: The two doorkeepers of Vaikuntha, Jaya and Vijaya, cursed by the Sages

The Kumaras had cursed the two doorkeepers of Vaikuntha, Jaya and Vijaya, to go down to the material world and take birth in the family of demons. At that very moment, the Lord, who is called Padmanabha, accompanied by the goddess of fortune, went to the spot. After the Kumaras offered their obeisances and prayers, the Lord said, “These attendants of Mine have committed a great offense against you because of ignoring Me. O great sages, I approve of the punishment that you have given them.

“To Me, the *brahmana* is the highest and most beloved personality. The disrespect shown by My attendants has actually been displayed by Me. I take this to be an offence by Myself; therefore I seek your forgiveness for the incident that has arisen. A wrong act committed by a servant leads people in general to blame his master, just as a spot of white leprosy on any part of the body pollutes all of the skin. Anyone in the entire world, even a *chandala*, who lives by cooking and eating the flesh of the dog, is immediately purified if he takes bath in hearing through the ear the glorification of My name, fame, etc. Now you have realized Me without doubt; therefore I will not hesitate to lop off My own arm if its conduct is found hostile to you.”

The Lord continued, “Because I am the servitor of My devotees, My lotus feet have become so sacred that they immediately wipe out all sin, and I have acquired such a nature that the goddess of fortune does not leave Me, even though I have no attachment for her. I do not enjoy the oblations offered in the sacrificial fire, as much as I do, the delicacies overflowing with ghee which are offered to the mouths of the *brahmanas* who have dedicated to Me the results of their activities and who are ever satisfied with My *prasada*.

“The water of the Ganges is the remnant left after My feet are washed, which makes the three worlds sacred, along with Lord Shiva, who bears it on his head. If I can take the dust of the feet of the Vaishnava on My head, who will refuse to do the same? They enchant My heart who are gladdened in heart and who with a smiling face, respect the *brahmanas*, even if the *brahmanas* utter harsh words. They look upon the *brahmanas* as My own Self and pacify them by praising them in loving words, even as a son would calm down an angry father or as I am pacifying you.

“These servants of Mine have misbehaved with you, not knowing the mind of their master. I shall therefore consider it a favour done to Me, if you order that they may return to My presence soon and the time of their exile from My abode may be short. O *brahmanas*, know that the punishment you have given them was originally designed by Me, and therefore they will fall to a birth in a demoniac family. But they will be firmly united with Me in thought through mental concentration, intensified by anger, and they will return to My presence shortly.”

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 10: Victory of Hiranyaksha over all the directions of the Universe

Sage Kashyapa, named his twin sons as Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu. The elder son, Hiranyakashipu, was unafraid of death because he received a boon from Lord Brahma. His younger brother, Hiranyaksha, was always ready to satisfy his elder brother by his activities. Hiranyaksha's temper was difficult to control. The demigods were seized with fear at his very sight, and they hid themselves as snakes hide themselves for fear of Garuda. On not finding Indra and the other demigods, Hiranyaksha, the chief of the Daityas, seeing that they had all vanished before his might, roared loudly. After returning from the heavenly kingdom, the mighty demon, for the sake of sport dived into the deep ocean. Vibhavari is the home of Varuna, lord of the aquatic creatures and guardian of the lower regions of the universe, where the demons generally reside. There, Hiranyaksha fell at Varuna's feet like a lowborn man, and to make fun of him he said with a smile, "Give me battle, O Supreme Lord!" Thus mocked by an enemy whose pride knew no bounds, the worshipful lord of the waters replied, "You are so skilled in war that I do not see anyone else but Lord Vishnu, who can give satisfaction in battle to you."

He saw the Lord in His boar incarnation, bearing the earth upward on the ends of His tusks. The demon laughed, "Oh, an amphibious beast!" Then the demon addressed the Lord, "O best of the demigods, dressed in the form of a boar, just hear me. This earth is entrusted to us, the inhabitants of the lower regions, and You cannot take it from my presence and not be hurt by me. When You fall dead with Your skull smashed by the mace hurled by my arms, the demigods and sages who offer You oblations and sacrifice in devotional service will also automatically cease to exist, like trees without roots."

Although the Lord was pained by the shaft like abusive words of the demon, He bore the pain. But seeing that the earth on the ends of His tusks was frightened, He rose out of the water being chased by the demon. Roaring like thunder, he said, "Are You not ashamed of running away before a challenging opponent? There is nothing disgrace for shameless creatures!" The Lord placed the earth within His sight on the surface of the water and transferred to her His own energy to float on the water. Then the Personality of Godhead said, "Indeed, We are creatures of the jungle, and We are searching after hunting dogs like you. One who is freed from the entanglement of death has no fear from the loose talk in which you are indulging, for you are bound up by the laws of death."

A great battle ensued, and finally after the Lord dealt him a hard blow, the demon's body began to wheel. He fell down dead, like a gigantic tree uprooted by the wind.

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 11: The Glories of Devotional Service

When Lord Kapila, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and son of Devahuti, was sitting before her, she began to question Kapila. Devahuti said, “I am very sick of the disturbance caused by my material senses, for because of this sense disturbance I have fallen into the deep hole of ignorance. Now be pleased, my Lord, to drive out my great illusion. Due to my feeling of false ego, I have been engaged by Your *maya* and have identified myself with the body and consequent bodily relations. I have taken shelter of Your lotus feet because You are the only person of whom to take shelter. You are the axe which can cut the tree of material existence. I therefore offer my obeisances unto You, who are the greatest of all spiritualists, and I inquire from You as to the relationship between man and woman and between spirit and matter.”

After hearing of His mother’s uncontaminated desire for self-realization, the Lord thanked her within Himself for her questions, and thus, His face smiling, He explained the path of the spiritualists, who are interested in self-realization. The Personality of Godhead answered, “The *yoga* system which relates to the Lord and the individual soul, which is meant for the ultimate benefit of the living entity, and which causes detachment from all happiness and distress in the material world, is the highest *yoga* system. O most pious mother, I shall now explain unto you the ancient *yoga* system, which I explained formerly to the great sages. It is helpful and practical in every way.

“The stage in which the consciousness of the living entity is attracted by the three modes of material nature is called conditional life. But when that same consciousness is attached to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one is situated in the consciousness of liberation. When one is completely cleansed of the impurities of lust and greed produced from the false identification of the body as “I” and bodily possessions as “mine,” one’s mind becomes purified. In that pure state he goes past the stage of so-called material happiness and distress. Perfection in self-realization cannot be attained by any kind of *yogi* unless he engages in devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, for that is the only auspicious path.

“In the association of pure devotees, discussion of the pastimes and activities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is very pleasing and satisfying to the ear and the heart. By cultivating such knowledge one gradually becomes advanced on the path of liberation, and thereafter he is freed, and his attraction becomes fixed. Then, real devotion and devotional service begins. Thus, consciously engaged in devotional service in the association of devotees, one gets distaste for sense enjoyment, both in this world and in the next, by constantly thinking about the activities of the Lord. This process of Krishna consciousness is the easiest process of spiritual power; when one is actually situated on that path of devotional service, he is able to control the mind.”

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 12: Explanation of Devotional Service by Lord Kapila

Lord Kapila, the Personality of Godhead said, “There are different paths of devotional service in terms of the different qualities of the doer. Devotional service executed by a person who is envious, proud, violent and angry, is considered to be in the mode of darkness. The worship of Deities in the temple by such a person, with a motive for material enjoyment, fame and richness, is devotion in the mode of passion.

“When a devotee worships the Supreme Personality of Godhead and offers the results of his activities in order to free himself from the inebriety of fruitive activities, his devotion is in the mode of goodness. The sign of pure devotional service is exhibited when one’s mind is at once attracted to hearing the holy name and qualities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is residing in everyone’s heart. Just as the water of the Ganges flows naturally down towards the ocean, such devotional ecstasy, uninterrupted by any material condition, flows towards the Supreme Lord.

“The devotee should regularly see My statues in the temple, touch My lotus feet and offer worshipable things and prayer. He should see in the spirit of renunciation, from the mode of goodness, and see every living entity as spiritual. The pure devotee should execute devotional service by giving the greatest respect to the spiritual master and the *acharyas*. He should be sympathetic to the poor and make friendship with persons who are his equals, but all his activities should be executed under regulation and with control of the senses.”

“A devotee should always try to hear about spiritual matters and should always utilize his time in chanting the holy name of the Lord. His behaviour should always be straightforward and simple, and although he is not envious but friendly to everyone, he should avoid the company of persons who are not spiritually advanced. When one is fully qualified with all these qualities and his consciousness is thus completely purified, he is immediately attracted simply by hearing My name or hearing of My quality. As the chariot of air carries a fragrance from its source and immediately catches the sense of smell, similarly, one who constantly engages in devotional service, in Krishna consciousness, can catch the Supreme Soul, who is equally present everywhere.”

“One who worships the Deity of Godhead in the temples but does not know that the Supreme Lord, as *Paramatma*, is situated in every living entity’s heart, must be in ignorance and is compared to one who offers oblations into ashes. One who offers Me respect but is envious of the bodies of others never attains peace of mind, because of his unfavorable behavior towards other living entities. Even if he worships with proper rituals and paraphernalia, a person who is ignorant of My presence in all living entities never pleases Me by the worship of My Deities in the temple.”

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 13: History and Significance of Srimad-Bhagavatam

Once upon a time, Narada Muni reached the cottage of the great sage Vyasadeva. After being respectfully worshiped by Vyasadeva, Narada inquired, “Your inquiries were full and your studies were also well fulfilled, and you have prepared a great work, the *Mahabharatha*, where all Vedic sequences are elaborately explained. Why then should you be unhappy in spite of all this?” Sri Vyasadeva said, “All you have said about me is perfectly correct. Despite all this, I am not satisfied. I therefore question you about the root cause of my dissatisfaction, for you are a man of unlimited knowledge.”

Sri Narada said, “You have not spread the sublime and spotless glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Those words which do not describe the glories of the Lord, who alone can purify the atmosphere of the whole universe, are considered by saintly persons to be like a place of pilgrimage for crows. On the other hand, that literature which is full of description of the transcendental glories of the name, fame, forms, pastimes, etc., of the unlimited Supreme Lord is a different creation, full of transcendental words directed toward bringing about a revolution in the impious lives of this world’s misdirected civilization. What is the use of activities, which are naturally painful from the very beginning and temporary by nature, if they are not utilized for the devotional service of the Lord? The people in general are naturally inclined to enjoy, and you have encouraged them in that way in the name of religion. Because they are guided under your instructions, they will accept such activities in the name of religion and will hardly care for prohibitions.”

“Those who are not well situated, due to material attachment, should be shown the ways of transcendental realization through descriptions of the transcendental activities of the Supreme Lord. Please, therefore, describe the transcendental pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sri Krishna more vividly. Learned people have positively concluded that the infallible purpose of the advancement of knowledge, namely austerities, study of the Vedas, sacrifice, chanting of hymns and charity, ends in the transcendental descriptions of the Lord, who is defined in choice poetry.”

Thus addressing Vyasadeva, Srila Narada Muni took leave of him. The material miseries of the living entity can be directly lessened by the linking process of devotional service. But the mass of people does not know this, and therefore the learned Vyasadeva compiled the vast *Srimad Bhagavatam*, which is in relation to the Supreme Truth. Simply by hearing this Vedic literature, the feeling for loving devotional service to Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, sprouts up at once to extinguish the fire of grief, illusion and fearfulness.

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 14: Sources of Absolute Knowledge

We require to hear about the method of relishing the Srimad-Bhagavatam, the most elevated text on the science of God consciousness, the matured and ripened fruit of the tree of Vedic wisdom. The Sanskrit word *rasa* means juice, just like the juice of an orange or a mango. And the author of the Srimad-Bhagavatam requests that you kindly try to taste the *rasa*, or juice, of the fruit of the Bhagavatam. Why? Why shall I taste the juice of the fruit of the Bhagavatam? Because it is the ripened fruit of the Vedic desire tree. As a desire tree, whatever you want you can have from the Vedas. Veda means knowledge; it is so complete that whether you want to enjoy in this material world or you want to enjoy spiritual life, both kinds of knowledge are there. If you follow the Vedic principles, then you will be happy. This is like the codes of the state. If the citizens obey, then they will be happy, there will be no criminal trespassing, and they will enjoy life. The state does not come to you for nothing just to trouble you, but if you live according to the state law there is no question of unhappiness.

Now in the Bhagavad-gita you will find that Krishna says that to study or to follow the rules and regulations of the Vedas actually means to come to the understanding of Krishna consciousness. That is stated in the Srimad-Bhagavatam also. So the Vedas give you the chance to gradually come to the point of understanding Krishna, after many, many births. But the Bhagavatam is called the essence of life, the ripened fruit of the Vedas, because the Bhagavatam gives you directly what is needed in your life.

The Vedas are divided into four: Sama, Rg, Atharva and Yajur. Then these are explained by the Puranas, of which there are eighteen. Then these are still further explained by the Upanishads, of which there are 108. The Upanishads are summarized in the Vedanta-sutra, and the Vedanta-sutra is still again explained by the Srimad-Bhagavatam, by the same author. This is the process. So the Bhagavatam is the essence of all Vedic knowledge.

The Bhagavad-gētā was spoken by Krishna Himself, and it contains all descriptions of *jnana-yoga*, *karma-yoga*, *dhyana-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga*. Now this inquiry was made: Where can you get spiritual knowledge, now that Krishna is gone? The answer was that Krishna, having departed, has left us the Srimad-Bhagavatam. It is the representation, the sound representation, of Krishna. The Bhagavatam is not different from Krishna, as the Gita is not different from Krishna. They are absolute. Krishna and Krishna's sound vibration are not different. Krishna and Krishna's name are also not different. And Krishna and Krishna's form, again, are not different. This is absolute. It requires realization.

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 15: Daksha curses Lord Shiva

Once upon a time, the leaders of the universal creation performed a great sacrifice in which all the great sages, philosophers, demigods and fire-gods assembled with their followers. When Daksha, the leader of the Prajapatis, entered the assembly, he was very much offended to see Lord Shiva sitting and not showing him any respect. At that time, Daksha became greatly angry and, with his eyes glowing, he began to speak very strongly against Lord Shiva.

“All sages, *brahmanas* and fire-gods present, please hear me with attention,” said Daksha, “for I speak about the manners of gentle persons. I do not speak out of ignorance or envy. Shiva has spoiled the name and fame of the governors of the universe and has polluted the path of gentle manners. Because he is shameless, he does not know how to act. He has already accepted himself as my subordinate by marrying my daughter in the presence of fire and *brahmanas*. He has married my daughter, who is equal to Gayatri, and has pretended to be just like an honest person.

“He has eyes like a monkey’s, yet he has married my daughter, whose eyes are just like those of a deer cub. Nevertheless he did not stand up to receive me, nor did he think it fit to welcome me with sweet words. I had no desire to give my daughter to this person, who has broken all rules of good manners. Because of not observing the required rules and regulations, he is impure, but I was obliged to hand over my daughter to him just as one teaches the messages of the *Vedas* to a *shudra*. He lives in filthy places like grave yards, and his companions are the ghosts and demons. Naked like a madman, sometimes laughing and sometimes crying, he smears burial ground ashes all over his body. He does not bathe regularly, and he ornaments his body with a garland of skulls and bones. Therefore only in name is he Shiva, or auspicious; actually, he is the most mad and inauspicious creature. Thus he is very dear to crazy beings in the gross mode of ignorance, and he is their leader. On the request of Lord Brahma I handed over my pure daughter to him, although he is devoid of all cleanliness and his heart is filled with nasty things.”

Thus Daksha, seeing Lord Shiva sitting as if against him, washed his hands and mouth and cursed him in the following words, “The demigods are eligible to share in the oblations of sacrifice, but Lord Shiva, who is the lowest of all the demigods, should not have a share.” In spite of the requests of all the members of the sacrificial assembly, Daksha, in great anger, cursed Lord Shiva and then left the assembly and went back to his home.

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 16: Instructions by Maharaja Prithu

Once upon a time King Prithu initiated the performance of a very great sacrifice in which great sages, *brahmanas*, demigods and great saintly kings known as *rajarishis* all assembled together. Just to encourage the members of the assembly and to increase their pleasure, King Prithu glanced over them and spoke to them in a loud voice.

“O gentle members of the assembly,” King Prithu said, “may all good fortune be upon you! All of you great souls who have come to attend this meeting kindly hear my prayer attentively. A person who is actually inquisitive must present his decision before an assembly of noble souls. By the grace of the Supreme Lord I have been appointed the king of this planet, and I carry the sword of state to rule the citizens, protect them from all danger and give them employment according to their respective positions in the social order established by Vedic injunction. Any king who does not teach his citizens about their respective duties in terms of *varna* and *ashrama* but who simply collects tolls and taxes from them is likely to suffer for the impious activities which have been performed by the citizens. In addition to such degradation, the king also loses his own fortune.

“By the inclination to serve the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, suffering humanity can immediately cleanse the dirt which has accumulated in their minds during innumerable births. When a devotee takes shelter at the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he is completely cleansed of all misunderstanding or mental speculation, and he displays renunciation. This is possible only when one is strengthened by practicing *bhakti-yoga*. Once having taken shelter at the root of the lotus feet of the Lord, a devotee never comes back to this material existence, which is full of the threefold miseries.

“The *brahmanas* and Vaishnavas are personally glorified by their characteristic powers of tolerance, penance, knowledge and education. By dint of all these spiritual assets, Vaishnavas are more powerful than royalty. It is therefore advised that the princely order not exhibit its material prowess before these two communities and should avoid offending them. O respectable personalities present here, I beg the blessings of all of you that I may always carry on my crown the dust of the lotus feet of such *brahmanas* and Vaishnavas until the end of my life. He who can carry such dust on his head is very soon relieved of all the reactions which arise from sinful life, and eventually he develops all good and desirable qualities.”

After hearing King Prithu speak so nicely, all the demigods, the denizens of Pitruloka, the *brahmanas* and the saintly persons present at the meeting congratulated him by expressing their good will.

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 17: The glories of Lord Ananta

Sri Sukadeva Gosvami said to Maharaja Parikshit, “My dear King, approximately 2,40,000 miles beneath the planet Patala, lives an incarnation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead; an expansion of Lord Vishnu known as Lord Ananta or Lord Sankarshana. He is always in the transcendental position, but because He is worshiped by Lord Shiva, the deity of *tamo-guna* or darkness, He is sometimes called *tamasi*. Lord Ananta is the controlling Deity of the material mode of ignorance as well as the false ego of all conditioned souls.

“This great universe, situated on one of Lord Anantadeva’s thousands of hoods, appears just like a white mustard seed. It is extremely small compared to the hood of Lord Ananta. At the time of destruction, when Lord Anantadeva desires to destroy the entire creation, He becomes slightly angry. Then from between His two eyebrows appears three-eyed Rudra, carrying a trident. This Rudra, who is known as Sankarshana, is the embodiment of the eleven Rudras, or incarnations of Lord Shiva. He appears in order to destroy the entire creation.

“Lord Sankarshana is the ocean of unlimited spiritual qualities, and thus He is known as Anantadeva. He is nondifferent from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. For the welfare of all living entities within this material world, He resides in His abode, controlling His anger and intolerance. If persons who are very serious about being liberated from material life hear the glories of Anantadeva from the mouth of a spiritual master, and if they always meditate upon Sankarshana, the Lord enters the cores of their hearts. There He crushes all the dirt of the material modes of nature, and cuts to pieces the hard knot within the heart, which has been tied tightly since time immemorial by the desire to dominate material nature.

“Narada Muni, the son of Lord Brahma, always glorifies Anantadeva in his father’s assembly. There he sings pleasurable verses of his own composition, accompanied by his stringed instrument known as *Tumbura*. There is no end to the great and glorious qualities of powerful Lord Anantadeva. Indeed, His prowess is unlimited. Though self-sufficient, He Himself is the support of everything. He resides beneath the lower planetary systems and easily sustains the entire universe. Even if he be distressed or degraded, any person who chants the holy name of the Lord, having heard it from a bona fide spiritual master, is immediately purified. Even if he chants the Lord’s name jokingly or by chance, he and anyone who hears him are freed from all sins. Therefore how can anyone seeking disentanglement from the material clutches avoid chanting the name of Lord Shesha? Of whom else should one take shelter?”

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 18: Arjuna's contemplation on departure of Lord Krishna

Arjuna, the celebrated friend of Lord Krishna, was grief-stricken because of his strong feeling of separation from Krishna.

Remembering Lord Krishna, Arjuna overwhelmed and breathing very heavily, said to Yudhishtira Maharaja: "O King! The Supreme Personality of Godhead Hari, who treated me exactly like an intimate friend, has left me alone. Thus my astounding power, which astonished even the demigods, is no longer with me. I have just lost Him. Only by His merciful strength was I able to vanquish all the princes assembled at the palace of King Drupada and thereby gain the hand of Draupadi. Because, He was near me, it was possible for me to conquer the powerful King of heaven, Indradeva, along with his demigod associates."

Arjuna continued: "Your respectable younger brother, who possesses the strength of ten thousand elephants, killed, by His grace, Jarasandha, whose feet were worshiped by many kings. During our exile, Durvasa Muni, who eats with his ten thousand disciples, schemed with our enemies to put us in dangerous trouble. At that time Lord Krishna, simply by accepting the remnants of food, saved us. By His accepting food thus, the assembly of *munis* felt completely fed. And all the three worlds were also satisfied. It was by His influence only that in a fight I was able to astonish the personality of god Lord Shiva and his wife, the daughter of Mount Himalaya. Thus Lord Shiva became pleased with me and awarded me his own weapon."

The military strength of the Kauravas was like an ocean in which there dwelled many invincible existences, and thus it was insurmountable. But because of His friendship, I, seated on the chariot, was able to cross over it. Great generals like Bhishma, Drona, Karna, BhuriShrava, SuSharma, Shalya, Jayadratha, and Bahlika all directed their invincible weapons against me. But by Lord Krishna's grace they could not even touch a hair on my head. It was by His mercy only that my enemies neglected to kill me when I descended from my chariot to get water for my thirsty horses.

O King! His jokings and frank talks were pleasing and beautifully decorated with smiles. Generally both of us used to live together and sleep, sit and loiter together. And at the time of advertising oneself for acts of chivalry, sometimes, if there were any irregularity, I used to reproach Him by saying, "My friend, You are very truthful." Even in those hours when His value was minimized, He, being the Supreme Soul, used to tolerate all those utterings of mine, excusing me exactly as a true friend excuses his true friend, or a father excuses his son.

O Emperor, now I am separated from my friend and dear most well-wishers, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and therefore my heart appears to be void of everything. In His absence I have been defeated by a number of infidel cowherd men while I was guarding the bodies of all the wives of Krishna. Now I am attracted to those instructions imparted to me by the Personality of Godhead because they are filled with instructions for relieving the burning heart in all circumstances of time and space.

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 19: Narada Muni cursed by Prajapati Daksha

Driven by the illusory energy of Lord Vishnu, Prajapati Daksha begot ten thousand sons in the womb of his wife. When Srila Narada Muni saw these boys engaged in such praiseworthy austerities simply for material creation, he thought it better to release them from this tendency. Narada Muni described to the boys their ultimate goal of life and advised them not to become ordinary *karmis* to produce children. Thus all the sons of Daksha became enlightened and left, never to return. When Prajapati Daksha was lamenting for his lost children, Lord Brahma pacified him with instructions, and thereafter Daksha begot one thousand more children, but Narada Muni convinced them to become mendicants and engage in Krishna consciousness.

When Daksha met Narada, lips trembling in anger, he said, “Alas, Narada Muni, you wear the dress of a saintly person, but you are not actually a saint. Indeed, although I am now in *grihastha* life, I am a saintly person. My sons were not at all freed from their three debts. Indeed, they did not properly consider their duties. O Narada Muni, you have obstructed their progress toward good fortune in this world and the next because they are still indebted to the saintly persons, the demigods and their father.”

“You think that simply awakening the sense of renunciation will detach one from the material world. But unless full knowledge is awakened, simply changing dresses as you have done cannot possibly bring detachment. Material enjoyment is indeed the cause of all unhappiness, but one cannot give it up unless one has personally experienced how much suffering it is. Therefore one should be allowed to remain in the so called material enjoyment while simultaneously advancing in knowledge to experience the misery of this false material happiness. Then, without help from others, one will find material enjoyment to be horrible. Those whose minds are changed by others do not become as renounced as those who have personal experience. You do not know how to behave towards others. You may travel all over the universe, but I curse you to have no residence anywhere.”

Since Narada Muni is an approved saintly person, when cursed by Prajapati Daksha he replied, “*tad badham*: Yes, what you have said is good. I accept this curse.” He could have cursed Prajapati Daksha in return, but because he is a tolerant and merciful *sadhu*, he took no action.

Prajapati Daksha improperly thought Narada Muni to be non-saintly, because Narada had foiled his intentions. Generally a *grihastha* thinks that unless one enters *grihastha* life he cannot properly enter the renounced order. But a *grihastha* should also follow the path of renunciation. Even a *grihastha* has to give up so many bad habits.

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 20: King Chitraketu's lamentation

Once upon a time, the powerful sage named Angira came to the palace of King Chitraketu. King Chitraketu, desiring a son, bent low in great humility and requested the sage to bless him with a son, who then performed a sacrifice. The remnants of the food offered in the *yajna* were given to Kritadyuti, the first and most perfect among Chitraketu's millions of queens. Thereafter, the great sage told the King, "O great King, now you will have a son who will be the cause of both joy and grief." The sage then left, without waiting for Chitraketu's response. Upon the birth of this son, the King and all the residents of the palace were very happy. The co-wives of Kritadyuti, however, were envious, and later they poisoned the child. When King Chitraketu heard of his son's death, he became almost blind. Accompanied by his wife, who was thus grieving for her dead son, King Chitraketu began crying loudly with an open mouth.

When the great sage Angira understood that the King was almost dead in an ocean of lamentation, he went there with Narada Rishi and instructed him about spiritual consciousness. "O King, what relationship does the dead body for which you lament have with you, and what relationship do you have with him? You may say that you are now related as father and son, but do you think this relationship existed before? Does it truly exist now? Will it continue in the future? O King, as small particles of sand sometimes come together and are sometimes separated due to the force of the waves, the living entities who have accepted material bodies sometimes come together and are sometimes separated by the force of time."

Then by his mystic power the great sage Narada brought the dead son back to life, who then said, "According to the results of my fruitive activities, I, the living being, move from one body to another, sometimes going to the species of the demigods, sometimes to the species of lower animals, sometimes among the vegetables, and sometimes to the human species. Therefore, in which birth were these, my mother and father? No one is actually my mother and father. How can I accept these two people as my parents? Just as gold and other commodities are continually transferred from one place to another in due course of purchase and sale, so the living entity, as a result of his fruitive activities, wanders throughout the entire universe, being injected into various bodies in different species of life by one kind of father after another. The Supreme Lord does not accept the happiness and distress that result from fruitive actions. He is completely independent of having to accept a material body, and because He has no material body, He is always neutral. The living entities, being part and parcel of the Lord, possess His qualities in a minute quantity. Therefore one should not be affected by grief."

When the conditioned soul in the form of Maharaja Chitraketu's son had spoken in this way and then left, Chitraketu and the other relatives of the dead son were all astonished. Thus they cut off the chains of their affection, which was due to their relationship with him, and gave up their grief.

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 21: Prahlada instructs his demoniac schoolmates

Prahlada Maharaja, the son of the demon Hiranyakashipu, was already educated in devotional life, but when his father sent him to the two sons of Shukracharya to be educated, they accepted him at their school along with the other sons of the *asuras*. When the teachers went home to attend to their household affairs, the students of the same age as Prahlada Maharaja would call him to take the opportunity of leisure hours for play. Prahlada Maharaja, who was truly the supreme learned person, then addressed his class friends in a very sweet language.

“One who is sufficiently intelligent,” Prahlada Maharaja said, “should use the human form of body from the tender age of childhood to practice the activities of devotional service, giving up all other engagements. The human body is most rarely achieved, and although temporary like other bodies, it is meaningful because in human life one can perform devotional service. The human form of life affords one a chance to return home, back to Godhead. Therefore every living entity, especially in the human form of life, must engage in devotional service to the lotus feet of Lord Vishnu. This devotional service is natural because Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the most beloved, the master of the soul, and the well-wisher of all other living beings.

“My dear friends, the happiness experienced with the body can be obtained in any form of life, according to one’s past fruitive activities. Such happiness is automatically obtained without any effort, just as we obtain distress. Activities merely for sense gratification or material happiness through economic development are not to be performed, for they result only in loss of time and energy, with no actual profit. If one’s activities are directed towards Krishna consciousness, one can surely attain the spiritual platform of self-realization.

“Therefore, while in material existence, a person must endeavor to achieve the highest goal of life as long as the body is stout and strong and is not humiliated by dwindling. Every human being has a maximum duration of life of one hundred years, but for one who cannot control his senses, half of those years are completely lost because at night he sleeps twelve hours, being covered by ignorance. Therefore such a person has a lifetime of only fifty years. In the tender age of childhood, when everyone is bewildered, one passes ten years. Similarly, in boyhood, engaged in sporting and playing, one passes another ten years. In this way, twenty years are wasted. Similarly, in old age, when one is an invalid, unable to perform even material activities, one passes another twenty years wastefully. Therefore, my dear young friends born of demons please act in such a way that the Supreme Lord, who is beyond the idea of material knowledge, will be satisfied. Give up your demoniac nature and act without enmity or duality. Show mercy to all living entities by enlightening them in devotional service, thus becoming their well-wishers.”

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 22: The Mohini-murti incarnation bewilders Lord Shiva

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari, in the form of a woman, captivated the demons and enabled the demigods to drink the nectar. After hearing of these pastimes, Lord Shiva, carried by a bull, went to the place where Madhusudana, the Lord, resides. Accompanied by his wife, Uma, and surrounded by his companions, the ghosts, Lord Shiva went there to see the Lord's form as a woman. Lord Mahadeva said, "My Lord, I have seen all kinds of incarnations You have exhibited by Your transcendental qualities, and now that You have appeared as a beautiful young woman, I wish to see that form of Your Lordship. My Lord, we have come here desiring to see that form of Your Lordship which You showed to the demons to charm them completely and in this way enable the demigods to drink nectar. I am very eager to see that form."

When Lord Vishnu was thus requested by Lord Shiva, who carries a trident in his hand, He smiled with gravity and replied to Lord Shiva, "When the demons took away the jug of nectar, I assumed the form of a beautiful woman to confuse them by directly cheating them and thus to act in the interest of the demigods. O best of the demigods, I shall now show you My form that is very much appreciated. Since you want to see that form, I shall reveal it in your presence." After speaking in this way, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vishnu, immediately disappeared, and Lord Shiva remained there with Uma, looking for Him all around with moving eyes.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is very kind to His devotees. Therefore, to fulfill the desire of His devotee Lord Shiva, He expanded His energy and revealed Himself in the form of a very beautiful and attractive woman. Upon seeing this form, even Lord Shiva was captivated. Thus Lord Shiva could understand his position and that of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who has unlimited powers. Having reached this understanding, he was not at all surprised by the wonderful way Lord Vishnu had acted upon him. Seeing Lord Shiva undisturbed, Lord Vishnu, Madhusudana, was very pleased. Thus He resumed His original form and praised Lord Shiva, who then circumambulated Him. Then, after taking permission from Him, Lord Shiva returned to his abode, Kailasa, along with his associates.

Lord Shiva, in delight, then addressed his wife, Bhavani, who is accepted by all authorities as the potency of Lord Vishnu. "O Goddess, you have now seen the illusory energy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the unborn master of everyone. Although I am one of the principal expansions of His Lordship, even I was illusioned by His energy. What then is to be said of others, who are fully dependent on *maya*? When I finished performing mystic *yoga* for one thousand years, you asked me upon whom I was meditating. Now, here is that Supreme Person to whom time has no entrance and who the Vedas cannot understand."

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 23: What is a Guru?

The *guru's* business is to bring his disciples from darkness to light. At present everyone is suffering due to ignorance, just as one contracts a disease out of ignorance. If one does not know hygienic principles, he will not know what will contaminate him. Therefore due to ignorance there is infection, and we suffer from disease. A criminal may say, "I did not know the law," but he will not be excused if he commits a crime. Ignorance is no excuse. Similarly, a child, not knowing that fire will burn, will touch the fire. The fire does not think, "This is a child, and he does not know I will burn." No, there is no excuse. Just as there are state laws, there are also stringent laws of nature, and these laws will act despite our ignorance of them. If we do something wrong out of ignorance, we must suffer. This is the law. Whether the law is a state law or a law of nature, we risk suffering if we break it.

The *guru's* business is to see that no human being suffers in this material world. No one can claim that he is not suffering. That is not possible. In this material world, there are three kinds of suffering: *adhyatmika*, *adhibhautika*, and *adhidaivika*. These are miseries arising from the material body and mind, from other living entities, and from the forces of nature. We may suffer mental anguish, or we may suffer from other living entities—from ants or mosquitoes or flies—or we may suffer due to some superior power. There may be no rain, or there may be flood. There may be excessive heat or excessive cold. So many types of suffering are imposed by nature. Thus there are three types of miseries within the material world, and everyone is suffering from one, two, or three of them. No one can say that he is completely free from suffering.

We may then ask why the living entity is suffering. The answer is: out of ignorance. He does not think, "I am committing mistakes and am leading a sinful life; that is why I am suffering." Therefore the *guru's* first business is to rescue his disciple from this ignorance. We send our children to school to save them from suffering. If our children do not receive an education, we fear that they will suffer in the future. The *guru* sees that suffering is due to ignorance, which is compared to darkness. How can one in darkness be saved? By light. The *guru* takes the torchlight of knowledge and presents it before the living entity enveloped in darkness. That knowledge relieves him from the sufferings of the darkness of ignorance.

One may ask whether the *guru* is absolutely necessary. The Vedas inform us that he is:

*tad-vijñānārthā sa gurum evābhigacchet
samit-pāēiṁ çrotriyā brahma-niñōham*

The Vedas enjoin us to seek out a *guru*; actually, they say to seek out the *guru*, not just a *guru*. The *guru* is one because he comes in disciplic succession. What Vyasadeva and Krishna taught five thousand years ago is also being taught now! There is no difference between the two instructions. Although hundreds and thousands of *acaryas* have come and gone, the message is one. The real *guru* cannot be two, for the real *guru* does not speak differently from his predecessors.

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 24: Vasudeva persuades Kamsa from killing Devaki

Wanting to pacify Kamsa, who was so cruel and envious that he was shamelessly ready to kill his sister, the great soul Vasudeva, who was to be the father of Kāishna, spoke to him in the following words.

Vasudeva said: “My dear Kamsa, you are the pride of your family, the Bhoja dynasty, and great heroes praise your qualities. How could such a qualified person as you kill a woman, your own sister, especially on the occasion of her marriage? O great hero, one who takes birth is sure to die, for death is born with the body. One may die today or after hundreds of years, but death is sure for every living entity. When the present body turns to dust and is again reduced to five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether—the proprietor of the body, the living being, automatically receives another body of material elements. When the next body is obtained, he gives up the present body. Just as a person traveling on the road rests one foot on the ground and then lifts the other, or as a worm on a vegetable transfers itself to one leaf and then gives up the previous one.”

At the time of death, according to the thinking, feeling and willing of the mind, one receives a particular body. In other words, the body develops according to the activities of the mind. Changes of body are due to the flickering of the mind, for otherwise the soul could remain in its original, spiritual body. When the living entity, the soul, is absorbed in materialistic thoughts, he accepts various manifestations as his own identity because of ignorance. Therefore, since envious, impious activities cause a body in which one suffers in the next life, why should one act impiously? As your younger sister, this poor girl Devaki is like your own daughter and deserves to be affectionately maintained. You are merciful, and therefore you should not kill her. Indeed, she deserves your affection.

Vasudeva’s mind was full of anxiety because his wife was facing danger, but in order to please the cruel, shameless and sinful Kamsa, he externally smiled and spoke to him as follows.

Vasudeva said: “O best of the sober, you have nothing to fear from your sister Devaki because of what you have heard from the unseen omen. The cause of death will be her sons. Therefore I promise that when she gives birth to the sons from whom your fear has arisen, I shall deliver them all unto your hands.”

Kamsa agreed to the logical arguments of Vasudeva, and, having full faith in Vasudeva’s words, he refrained from killing his sister. Vasudeva, being pleased with Kamsa, pacified him further and entered his own house.

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 25: The dynasty of Maharaja Nimi

After beginning sacrifices, Maharaja Nimi, the son of Ikshvaku, requested the great sage Vasishtha to take the post of chief priest. At that time, Vasishtha replied, “My dear Maharaja Nimi, I have already accepted the same post in a sacrifice begun by Lord Indra. I shall return here after finishing the *yajna* for Indra. Kindly wait for me until then.” Maharaja Nimi, being a self-realized soul, considered that this life is flickering. Therefore, instead of waiting long for Vasishtha, he began performing the sacrifice with other priests. When Vasishtha returned and found that his disciple Maharaja Nimi had disobeyed his instructions, Vasishtha cursed him, saying, “May the material body of Nimi, who considers himself learned, immediately fall.” For unnecessarily cursing him when he had committed no offense, Maharaja Nimi counter cursed his spiritual master. “For the sake of getting contributions from the King of heaven,” he said, “you have lost your religious intelligence. Therefore I pronounce this curse: your body also will fall.” After saying this, Maharaja Nimi, who was expert in the science of spiritual knowledge, gave up his body. Vasishtha also gave up his body.

The body given up by Maharaja Nimi was preserved in fragrant substances, and at the end of the Satra-yaga the great saints and *brahmanas* made the following request to all the demigods assembled there. “If you are satisfied with this sacrifice and if you are actually able to do so, kindly bring Maharaja Nimi back to life in this body.” The demigods said yes to this request by the sages, but Maharaja Nimi said, “Please do not imprison me again in a material body. Mayavadis generally want freedom from accepting a material body because they fear having to give it up again. But devotees whose intelligence is always filled with the service of the Lord are unafraid. Indeed, they take advantage of the body to render transcendental loving service. I do not wish to accept a material body, for such a body is the source of all suffering, lamentation and fear, everywhere in the universe, just as it is for a fish in the water, which lives always in anxiety because of fear of death.”

The demigods then said, “Let Maharaja Nimi live without a material body. Let him live in a spiritual body as a personal associate of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and, according to his desire, let him be visible or invisible to common people.” Thereafter, to save the people from the danger of an unregulated government, the sages churned Maharaja Nimi’s material body, from which, as a result, a son was born. Because he was born in an unusual way, the son was called Janaka, and because he was born from the dead body of his father, he was known as Vaideha. Because he was born from the churning of his father’s material body, he was known as Mithila, and because he constructed a city as King Mithila, the city was called Mithila. All the kings of the dynasty of Mithila were completely in knowledge of their spiritual identity. Therefore, even though staying at home, they were liberated from the duality of material existence.

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 26: Spiritual Study of Greed

The Black-marketers are almost in all cases rich merchants, millionaires and landlords. These people are not needy men but they amass money and hoard commodities out of a passion for accumulating wealth not just for their personal enjoyment but also for the enjoyment of their future generation. Such diseased persons do not know the highest value of human life. They simply go on amassing money unnecessarily and immorally for the simple reason of sense gratification. Such persons are described in the Bhagavad Gita as asuras. The asuras are generally faithless and do not believe in the existence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

They amass money for the enjoyment of the senses but do not care for the benefit of the soul. Their only business is to see how much bank balance they possessed yesterday and how it has increased today. They think of annihilating one enemy today and others tomorrow and try to pose themselves as one of the dominating Gods as if they have attained to all perfection of life through the medium of money. But such asuras are always bound up by the laws of Nature which they do not know. It is stated in the Bhagavad Gita that such class of asuras are the lowest of the human beings,

So the asuras, although appearing very fortunate are actually the most unfortunate creatures. Wealth is considered to be Laxmi the Mother of opulence or the Internal Energy of Godhead. As such Mother Laxmi is an Eternal Consort of Narayana, the Personality of Godhead. Therefore wherever there is Narayana surely there is His Eternal Consort Laxmi. But where there is no realization of Narayana, the apparent existence of Laxmi is the false representation of Her existence—just like Sita (Who is Laxmi Herself) was falsely in the possession of Ravana.

The black-marketeers are not influenced by any design of Godhead but they have become so by dint of their association with the modes of passion and ignorance. Unrestricted hankering after wealth is the result of the mode of passion and ignorance. They are due to lack of cultivation of the mode of goodness which alone can endow them with a sense of proper vision and knowledge of life.

State cannot check or banish out the black marketing process simply by police action. The mode of ignorance and passion has pervaded the whole atmosphere. The mode of goodness has altogether been banished from the social life of the present generation. There are clear directions in the Bhagavad-gita on how one can achieve the quality of goodness. One has to imbibe the characteristic goodness of habits with respect to bodily and mental activities, controlling the movements of body, mind and words. The world when ruled by such trained leaders would attain peace and calmness and the root cause of all unwanted habits like greed can be controlled.

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 27: Relevant Inquiries

A small child walking with his father goes on inquiring constantly. He asks his father so many odd things, and the father has to satisfy him with proper answers. Once when Srila Prabhupada was a young father in his householder life, he and his second son happened to pass a marriage procession. The four-year-old boy, as usual, inquired what the big procession was. He was given all possible answers to his thousand and one questions regarding the marriage party, and finally he asked whether his own father was married! This question gave rise to loud laughter from all the elderly gentlemen present, although the boy was perplexed as to why they were laughing. Anyway, the boy was somehow satisfied by his married father.

The lesson from this incident is that since a human being is a rational animal, he is born to make inquiries. The greater the number of questions, the greater the advancement of knowledge and science. The whole of material civilization is based on this originally large volume of questions put by young men to their elders. When elderly persons give proper answers to the questions of the youngsters, civilization makes progress, one step after another. The most intelligent man, however, inquires about what happens after death. The less intelligent make lesser inquiries, but the questions of those who are more intelligent go higher and still higher.

Among the most intelligent of men was Mahārāja Parékñit, who was accidentally cursed by a brāhmaëa to meet death from the bite of a serpent within seven days. The great king placed the following relevant inquiries before the great sage Çukadeva. “Please tell me, my lord—what should I hear, what should I worship, or whom should I remember now?”

As long as a man is in full vigor of life, he forgets the reality called death. Thus a foolish man makes no relevant inquiry about the real problems of life. An animal like a goat has no sense of its impending death. Although its brother goat is being slaughtered, the goat, being allured by the green grass offered to it, will stand peacefully waiting to be slaughtered next. On the other hand, if a human being sees his fellow man being killed by an enemy, he either fights to save his brother or leaves, if possible, to save his own life. That is the difference between a man and a goat.

Sri Sukadeva Gosvami, who was asked for direction by Maharaja Pariksit, responded to the king’s relevant inquiries by advising him as follows:

“O descendant of Bharata, it is the duties of mortal men to inquire about, hear about, glorify, and meditate upon the Personality of Godhead, who is the most attractive person because of His fullness in opulence. He is called Hari because He alone can undo the conditional existence of a living being. If we at all want to be freed from conditional existence, we must make relevant inquiries about the Absolute Truth so that He may be pleased to bestow upon us perfect freedom in life.”

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 28: The Real Peace Formula

Every living entity is searching after peace. That is the struggle for existence. Everyone, from the aquatic to the highest form of human being—from the ant up to Brahma, the first creature of this universe—is searching for peace. That is the main objective. Lord Chaitanya said that a person who is in full Krishna consciousness is the only peaceful man because he has no demands. That is the special qualification of a person who is in Krishna consciousness. He is *akamaù*. *Akamaù* refers to those who have no desire, who are self-sufficient, who have nothing to ask and who are fully peaceful. Who are they? They are the devotees who are situated in Krishna consciousness.

All others fall into three classes. One class is *bhukti*, those who are hankering after material happiness and enjoyment. These people want to eat, drink, be merry and enjoy. There are different modes of enjoyment according to the body. People are searching after sense enjoyment on this planet, on other planets, here, there and everywhere. Their main object is to gratify the senses. That is called *bhukti*. The next class is those people who are fatigued or frustrated in sense gratification and therefore want liberation from this material entanglement. And then there are those who, in search of knowledge, speculate about what the Absolute Truth is. Thus there are some who want sense enjoyment, and others, the Salvationists, who are seeking liberation. The Salvationists also have some desire, the desire to be free from this material entanglement. Then there are those who are yogis; they are searching after mystic perfection. There are eight kinds of mystic perfection which grant the ability to become the smallest, to become the heaviest, or to get whatever one desires. Ordinary persons who are after sense enjoyment and those who are Salvationists or who are after mystic perfection all have some demand. But what about the devotees? They have no demands. Because they simply want to serve Krishna, they are waiting for the order of Krishna, and that is their satisfaction. If Krishna wants the devotees to go to hell, they are prepared to go to hell. And if Krishna says, "You come to Me," they are prepared to go. They have no demands. This is the perfectional stage.

Therefore, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says that those who are Krishna conscious, because they have no demands, are actually peaceful. Those who are after sense enjoyment, salvation and yogic mystic perfection are always full of anxiety. As long as one is full of anxiety, one should know that he is still under the grip of material nature. And as soon as one is free from all anxiety, one should know that he is liberated. This fearful anxiety exists because we do not know Krishna, the Supreme Lord, the supreme controller.

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 29: Devotee and Divinity

A pure devotee is just like the desire-tree from whom we can have on request everything desirable. The devotee can deliver to us the mercy of God and what is not obtainable by one who has got the mercy of God? Therefore the devotees are the most magnanimous in their charitable disposition of mind. They are also the deliverer of the fallen souls and we need to offer our obeisances unto their lotus feet so that we can invoke their blessings in all our attempts.

The highest authority for benediction is God Himself and the Devotees are His custodians. If a devotee desires to bestow upon us the mercy of God, he is quite competent to do it in all respects. Such devotees are called Mahatmas i.e. those who have surpassed all narrowness of the mind. All these make the devotee just qualified to accept everyone's' obeisance and the devotee is as worshipable as the Personality of Godhead Himself. There is no difference between them qualitatively. I am a needy man, constantly suffering from the pangs of insufficiency and the devotee is as above mentioned, the desire tree from whom I can have everything that I desire. The Divinity has empowered the devotees to deliver the fallen souls and by nature they are not only kind but also liberal and munificent. They are not poor either in knowledge or in opulence.

If we have to approach a devotee of the nature described above, we must have at least the preliminary knowledge of discriminating a pure devotee from a non-devotee. Men who are eternally attached to the transcendental loving service of Godhead are called devotees and men who are detached from the transcendental service of Godhead are called the non-devotees. In Sanskrit language the devotee is called 'Vaisnava', the divinity is called 'Vishnu' and the non-devotee is called 'Avaisnava' Thus we can conclude that there are these three categories eternally existing in this world. The 'Avaisnavas' or the non-devotees are those who are constantly engaged in topics and matters not concerned with the Divinity or Vishnu. Such non-devotees have their own plan of living, dictated by the illusory energy of Godhead and they think it their duty to eat, drink, be merry and enjoy the senses. The whole plan of material civilization is based on the foundation of such non-devotional plan of sensuous activities.

One may ask? "What is there if somebody remains a non-devotee?" To answer this question it may be said that if we want to remain a non-devotee, the threefold miseries inflicted by the laws of Nature will surely disturb us. In the Bhagavad-gita it is said that the laws of Nature are insurmountable. Those who surrender unto the Supreme will of Godhead can get rid of the threefold misery of the laws of Nature. In extreme difficulty i.e. when a man fails to make a solution of his difficult problems, he automatically and unconsciously surrenders unto God. We gain everything by becoming a devotee and we spoil everything by remaining a non-devotee.

BRAJ HERITAGE FEST

Passage 30: Arjuna

Arjuna is one of the heroes of the great epic Mahabharata. His name means 'bright', 'shining', or 'silver'. The third of the five brothers, Arjuna was the youngest of the children borne by Kunti, first wife of Pandu. Arjuna was a master archer and played a central role in the conflict between the Pandavas and their enemies, the sons of Dhritrashtra known as the Kauravas.

Arjuna is depicted as a wholesome and well-rounded personality, a healthy mind in a healthy body, a person whom any mother, wife and friend would cherish and be proud of. The son of Indra, Arjuna is said to have been well built and extremely handsome.

But it is as a warrior that Arjuna is best remembered. The foundation for his career as a warrior was laid young; Arjuna was an outstanding and diligent student, learning everything that his Guru Dronacharya could teach him, and early attaining the status of "Atirathi" or outstanding warrior. Dronacharya once decided to test his students. He hung a wooden bird from the branch of a tree and then summoned his students. One by one, he asked his students to aim for the eye of the wooden bird and be ready to shoot; then, when they were ready, he would ask the student to describe all that he was able to see. The students generally described the garden, the tree, flowers, the branch from which the bird was suspended and the bird itself. Dronacharya then asked them to step aside, saying that they were not fit to shoot.

It was now Arjuna's turn. Dronacharya asked him the same question: "What do you see, Arjuna?" He replied "I see the eye of the wooden bird". "What else do you see, Arjuna?" "Nothing!" "Come now, Arjuna, describe all that you see". "I only see the black eye of a wooden bird". Such was his concentration! Dronacharya bade him shoot; needless to say, he hit the target exactly.

His skill in archery won him the hand of Draupadi, his first wife, the daughter of Drupada, king of Panchala.

During the fifth year of exile, Arjuna proceeded to the Himalayas and performed tapasya in order to please Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva became pleased with him and gave him the Pasupatastra. After obtaining this *astra*, he then proceeds to Indraloka (heaven) spending time with his father, and acquiring further astras from the devas.

Before the beginning of the battle of Kurukshetra, Arjuna is specifically chosen by Lord Sri Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead to speak the immortal message of the Bhagavad-gita on account of his being the Lord's intimate devotee and friend. Their dialogue about issues involved in war—courage, a warrior's duty, the nature of human life and the soul, the role of demigods, the doctrine of surrender, principles of devotional service—forms the subject of the Bhagavad-gita, one of the key episodes in the epic Mahabharata.