

All Glories to Sri Guru and Gauranga

Fourth day's Narration

The Lord protects those who are dedicated to and trust Him, as He did with His devotees, Prahlada, the Pandavas, Mother Kunti, Dropadi and the Gajendra elephant. The Lord does not forget His dedicated devotees regardless of their position in the Varnashram system. He remembers His dedicated devotees whether they are a celibate single person, a married couple, a renounced person, male or female, an intellectual, an ordinary worker, a business person, a bird or a beast, because that is His promise.

After Sri Sukadeva Goswami spoke about the conversation between Yudhisthira and Narada Muni, he spoke about the lawmaker-enforcer, Manu Maharaja. There are fourteen different Manus during the course of Lord Brahma's day. Lord Brahma lives for one hundred years per his calculation. One of his days is equal to one thousand cycles of the four yugas, namely Satyayuga (the golden age lasting 1,728,000 solar years); Tretayuga (the silver age lasting 1,296,000 solar years); Dvaparayuga (the copper age lasting 864,000 solar years); and Kaliyuga (the iron age or the present age lasting 432,000 solar years, from which 5106 years have passed) and the same duration is his night. He lives for one hundred years calculated using the above factors. Lord Brahma created Manus for managing this creation, and at the present time the seventh Manu of this day of Lord Brahma is the acting lawmaker of earth.

Then Sri Sukadeva Goswami narrates the history about Gajendra (king of elephants) and the crocodile. Sri Sukadeva Goswami said, surrounded by the Milk Ocean there is a hill called Trikuta, which is decorated with many wonderful trees, plants, lakes and waterfalls. The water flowing down the waterfalls collects below in a lake where many demigods go to enjoy. A huge elephant lived nearby in a forest that would go there to bathe with his herd. This was not an ordinary elephant, but the king of the elephants, who was very strong and feared by every animal in the forest. A huge crocodile lived in the lake and was also proud of his prowess in his aquatic habitat.

The elephant and crocodile had been devotees in their past life, but both had been cursed by sages to become animals. The Lord does not like to see pride in His devotees because it is detrimental to their devotion; therefore He always destroys their pride, keeping them as His own humble devotees. Now the time had come for the Lord to crush the elephant's and the crocodile's pride and liberate them from their present condition.

One day, the elephant led his whole family to the lake to drink and frolic there, splashing them with water with his trunk, when a huge crocodile attacked him, grabbing his leg with his powerful jaws. Witnessing this dreadful situation, his whole family ran in fear for their own lives, leaving him there alone to fend for himself. The elephant struggled with the crocodile for a thousand earthly years, but could not free himself from the crocodile's grasp. At this point the elephant thought, "What a great surprise it is that the family members I trusted and loved so much and always helped in every way and would have sacrificed my own life for, have all left me to fend for myself as soon as I fell into danger! It is so very astonishing for me." The elephant knew the scriptural codes; thus he thought, "A living entity takes birth alone and after experiencing every type of suffering and so called enjoyment, dies alone. No one can actually help anyone in this world. Anyone that thinks someone can help him/her is truly covered by illusion.

Seeming help from friends and relatives caressing one's mind with influential sensual talk, lures and keeps a person covered with illusion of the real truth. A person that remains in Maya (illusion of the truth) remains tied to the cycle of rebirth and death; therefore it is best for me to take shelter of the Supreme Lord."

The elephant was weakening from having lost a lot of blood, while at the same time the crocodile gained strength by drinking that blood. The crocodile also had an edge because the fight took place in his domain (water). In his time of danger no family member came to the elephant's aid. Those whom he had trusted and loved so much had all left him struggling for his life. When one faces great danger he/she comes to understand the value of surrendering to the Supreme Lord. The elephant understood that material relatives cannot help one at the time of his/her death. When he was on the verge of leaving his body, he relinquished all pride and remembered the Lord. With his trunk he then uprooted a lotus from the lake and lifted it upwards to the Lord, calling for Him saying, "O Lord, please be merciful upon me." As he was finishing his prayer, the Lord arrived there and pulled the elephant by his tail and cut the crocodile's head off, thus liberating both of them. While the Lord was personally taking Gajendra to the spiritual world, all the demigods saw him, and while praising him they said, "O Gajendra, you are glorious because even though you have an animal body, you received the great fortune of having the Lord with you, whereas we demigods have not received such a wonderful opportunity." One of the Lord's names is Artatrana, meaning, He helps and liberates those who call upon Him for help in times of trouble. This example of Gajendra remembering the Lord at the time of death and receiving His help only happens to those who were devotees in their past lives, as were Gajendra and the crocodile.

Gajendra was King Indradyumna in his past life and ruled the Pandya province located in the southern part of India. In due course he gave his kingdom to his son and left for the forest to perform austerities. As destiny would have it, one day when the king was sitting, chanting in meditation of the Lord, the sage Agastya Muni arrived there with his disciples. The king saw the sage arriving and thought, "I am worshipping and chanting the names of the Lord, so it is not necessary for me to get up and welcome him." Thus he remained seated. According to the scriptures, if a pure devotee comes to a person's place they should stop everything they're doing and welcome him. Seeing the king still seated upon his arrival, Agastya Muni was angered and cursed the king to become an elephant. The king thought, "I gave up my kingdom and every pleasure of this world to come to the forest to perform austerity and I have received such an unwanted thing. Maybe there is some plan the Lord is playing out here?" With this in mind, the king fell at the feet of Agastya Muni and asked how he could be liberated from this curse. The words of a true Brahmana are very sharp and hard as a thunderbolt, but their hearts are as soft as a lotus petal. Hence Agastya Muni blessed the king with a boon saying, "You will be liberated by the Lord Himself in that elephant existence."

The crocodile was a Gandharva (celestial singer) in heaven in his previous life named Huhu. Once he brought his heavenly maidens to the Ganges for bathing, after which he began sportingly playing with them in the water. While laughing and humoring the maidens he thought, "Today I should do something extra special to amuse them." Nearby, the sage Devala Muni was performing austerity with closed eyes beneath the water. Huhu had a lusty nature, and lusty people have one particular characteristic, they are daring. Thus, blinded by the lust of being in the company of heavenly maidens, he

stealthily reached the sage and grabbed his foot, startling him, thereby breaking his meditation. The sage saw that Huhu was acting like a crocodile, thus he cursed him to become a crocodile. In regret, Huhu prayed to the sage for forgiveness, for which the sage blessed him to be killed by the hands of the Supreme Lord. Then the sage returned to his ashram.

Then Sri Sukadeva Goswami speaks about the churning of the Milk Ocean. Once, Durvasa Muni gave a garland to King Indra, which he had received from the Lord as His leftover paraphernalia. Not caring about the value of the Lord's leftover garland, Indra put it on his elephant's neck. The scriptures state that the Lord's leftovers should be very carefully accepted and honored, because just by the touch of the Lord's leftovers one can achieve liberation from this material world. Even though King Indra knew of the value of the Lord's leftovers, still he put the garland on his elephant. The elephant, bothered by the garland, tore it from his neck, flung it to the ground and smashed it with his foot. The scripture states, *ucchrinta bhojano dasat tava-maya jayemahi*, "The Lord's leftovers and things given by one's own authentic Spiritual Master should be carefully respected and honored. By so doing the tie to this material world will be cut forever."

Durvasa Muni became angry by seeing the elephant leave the smashed garland on the ground and thus cursed Indra to lose all of his prowess. The smashed garland was also touched by other demigods' feet, who also lost their prowess. Because of this offense the demons defeated the demigods and drove them out of heaven. The demigods then took shelter of Lord Narayana who said, "O demigods, You please churn the Milk Ocean, by so doing nectar will be produced from it. If you fight after drinking the nectar you will surely be victorious in battle. But there is a condition, that you take help from the demons in churning the ocean." According to the logic of the Nyaya Sastra neither the demigods nor the demons have the power to extract nectar from churning an ocean. It was the Lord Himself who extracted the nectar from the Milk Ocean.

By the Lord's advice, Mount Mandara was used as a churning rod and the king of all snakes, Vasuki, was used as a rope for that churning rod, with which the Milk Ocean was churned. Mount Mandara was very heavy, which is why it could not be kept from sinking in the ocean. Hence, the mountain started sinking, stifling the demigods' enthusiasm. Seeing the demigods' helpless condition, the Lord took His turtle form, Kurma, and supported the mountain on His back so that the venture could succeed. Hence nothing can be done without the help of the Lord. All living entities are sinking in the ocean of this material existence and they can only be saved with the Supreme Lord's help. Except for the shelter of Lord Sri Govinda, there is no one else who can rescue one from the ocean of this material existence. Therefore, just as the demigods took shelter of the Lord's lotus feet, everyone who takes shelter of the Lord's lotus feet will surely be rescued. All the demigods prayed to the Lord's turtle incarnation because He helped them churn the Milk Ocean.

The question arises that if the Lord is all pure and He helped churn the ocean, why was poison produced? Because while the demigods and demons churned, they became very proud thinking, "Just see our prowess! We are performing this herculean task so easily." At this point they did not know that only by the Lord's help were they able to churn the ocean. Because of this pride, the churning first produced poison, from which everyone became miserable. The demigods then prayed to the Lord for protection from the poison, who replied, "You go and take shelter of Guru. Only he rescues

everyone by giving them transcendental knowledge and instructs them to chant My glories. I never tell anyone directly to chant My glories or chant *japa* (silent chanting of Lord's names). If I were to make such a statement, no one would trust or follow it, which is why I always advise everyone to please go and take shelter of an authentic Guru. The true Guru explains My glories and My value very understandably, which is why taking shelter of an authentic Guru rewards extraordinary benefit. The real Guru is he who properly instructs how to chant My names and glories." Lord Siva is accepted as Guru by all the demigods and only by his help are they able to see the Lord. This is why the Lord sent the demigods to Lord Siva. When Lord Siva saw all the demigods praying to him, he said to Parvati, "O dear wife, by extending mercy to all living entities, Lord Sri Hari becomes pleased. When the Lord becomes pleased, I also become pleased, from which everyone of this world becomes pleased. Hence, when Lord Sri Hari is pleased everyone is automatically pleased. Therefore the only way to please oneself is to please the Supreme Lord."

The Lord wanted Lord Siva to be given more respect, therefore he desired him to drink the poison extracted from the churning of the Milk Ocean. Hence, Lord Siva drank the poison although the Lord could have drunk it. Poison cannot kill an unalloyed devotee completely surrendered unto the Supreme Lord, which is why Lord Siva was unaffected by consuming it. Thus Lord Siva protected all the demigods by drinking the poison, and gained more respect.

When they restarted churning the ocean, a desire fulfilling cow named Kamadhenu emerged from it, which was given to the sages. Then a celestial horse named Uccaisrava emerged from it which was taken by King Bali Maharaja. Then an elephant named Eravat emerged from it which was taken by King Indra. Then the Kaustubha Gem emerged from it which was taken by Lord Visnu. Then the Parijata flower tree and an Apsara (celestial maiden) emerged from it which were taken by the demigods. Then Laksmi emerged from the ocean and only wanted to stay by Lord Visnu's side, which is why Lord Visnu took Her. Everyone of this world worships Her because She serves the Lord's lotus feet nonstop. Then Varuni (intoxicating wine) came out of it which was taken by the demons. Then Dhanvantari (an incarnation of the Lord) appeared holding a pot full of nectar, which was snatched by the demons. The demons were so powerful that they were able to take the pot of nectar from Lord Dhanvantari. Then the Lord took the form of Mohinimurti (an astoundingly beautiful female form that had never been seen before) and took the pot of nectar from the demons. Then using His cunning prowess, He distributed it to the demigods.

By nature demons are attracted to women, which is why the Lord took the form of a beautiful woman to trick them. The form of Mohinimurti is so captivating that when the demons simply glanced towards the Lord, they all became infatuated with lust and could not look away. In the meantime the Lord had the demigods drink the nectar. But one clever demon did manage to drink the nectar and the Lord cut off his head, but neither his head nor his body could be killed because he drank nectar. The Lord named the head of that demon, Rahu, and his body, Ketu, and added them to the astrological planets. Then the Lord disappeared and the demigods and demons fought, where the demigods were victorious.

The Supreme Lord loves His devotees very much and will break all rules to benefit them. Even though demigods are devotees of the Lord, their devotion is tinted

with some motivation, but because they help all the creatures of the entire creation in many different ways, the Lord helps them. The sun, moon, air, fire, earth, and all other presiding demigods help everyone in the creation, which is why everyone's needs are supplied and they are alive and happy. Because the demigods help everyone in the creation is why the Lord took the pot of nectar and distributed it to the demigods, thus empowering them to be victorious in battle.

Of all the demons, Bali Maharaja was very humble and religious. Once his Guru, Sukracharya, said to him, "If you want to remain respected and superior to all you must respect the saintly people and the traditional Brahmanas. It is stated in the Visnu Purana:

*abhivadana silasya nitya viddho'pi sevinah
catvari tasya vardhante ayur vidya yaso balam*

"Four things surely increase day by day for those who always respect and honor saintly people, as well as authentic traditional Brahmanas living by their merits, and those who serve old people. They are duration of life, knowledge, fame and strength."

Hearing this from his Guru, Bali Maharaja started respecting saintly people, Brahmanas and served old people, without knowingly committing any offense to them. He did his service in such a way that all the learned devotees and learned Brahmanas became very pleased with him and gave him their blessings. Whoever pleases a real devotee or a Brahmana who is a devotee, becomes happy and he/she is successful and victorious everywhere. Seeing Bali Maharaja's attitude, his Guru, Sukracharya, advised him to perform a victory sacrifice, named Visvajit. At the completion of the sacrifice a special chariot appeared from the sacrificial arena, which Bali Maharaja climbed upon and proceeded to attack the heavenly planets. When the demigods saw demons approaching to attack, they reached Brhaspati (heavenly preceptor) and asked what they should do in this situation. To this Brhaspati said, "You should not fight. It is better that you leave heaven and run and hide someplace, because religion personified, Dharma, is presently siding with Bali Maharaja. Whoever's purity is strong will ultimately be victorious." As the Niti Sāstra states, *yato dharmas tato jaya*, "Wherever there is purity, there will be victory. They cannot be defeated." Thus the demigods left heaven and Bali Maharaja reigned over heaven, earth and the lower planets. When the demigods' mother, Aditi, saw her sons helplessly wandering hither and thither, she decided she will do whatever it takes to have her sons' kingdom returned to them. She went to her husband Kasyapa and prayed for his help to get the kingdom back for the demigods. Kasyapa said, "A human being may desire many things, but desires are fulfilled by the all capable Supreme Lord. Human beings cannot do anything by themselves. You please chant the names of the Lord." Kasyapa Muni then taught her the procedure to perform an austerity called Payovrata (a vow of chanting mantras for twelve days where the participant lives on milk). Aditi performed the fast properly, from which the Supreme Lord appeared before her and said, "O Aditi, I know the desire you have in your heart to obtain the kingdom for the demigods. But presently the kingdom is impossible to obtain by fighting, because Bali Maharaja is practicing purity by living by the rules of religion and thus Dharma is with him, insuring his victory. Dharma is a very pure thing. But the spiritual vow you have completed will not go in vain because service executed for My pleasure is beyond all religious duties, thus your desire will surely be fulfilled. Devotion executed properly overpowers religious duty. Thus I shall appear as your son and approach Bali Maharaja and ask him for the kingdom of heaven as alms. O dear Aditi, I shall beg alms

for you. Performance of devotional service to Me is superior to performing religious duties; thus Bhakti is superior to Dharma. Dharma also desires to place Bhakti on a superior platform.” After saying this, the Lord disappeared from Aditi.

Then Aditi went to her husband, Kasyapa, and said, “I have seen the Lord and He said that He will appear as my son.” Upon hearing this Kasyapa became very happy, blessed her for her achievement and said, “The quality of a man’s wife should be that she performs devotional service to please the Lord. Today I am happy because I have such a devotee wife.” It is every husband’s duty to try to make his wife a devotee of the Lord, as well as it is every wife’s duty to make her husband a devotee. In this way peace and harmony will prevail in human society. Kasyapa Muni considered himself glorious because his wife pleased the Lord by executing devotional service. Hence, both husband and wife awaited the Lord’s arrival.

Then the Lord appeared from Aditi at midday on the twelfth day of the light fortnight of the month of Bhadrapada (September-October). At that time, all the main demigods, saints and sages were there engaged in Kirtana (congregational chanting of the Lord’s holy names) to welcome the Lord. The Lord appeared beautifully dressed, emitting transcendental effulgence, wearing garlands and decorated with many other ornaments. He had four arms holding weapons. Upon His appearance everyone glorified Him. Then they witnessed the Lord transform into Vamanadeva, the small dwarf incarnation. Kasyapa Muni invited learned traditional Brahmanas to perform the Lord’s birth ceremony, after which everyone present offered gifts to please the Lord. Kasyapa offered Him a belt and Brhaspati offered Him a sacred thread. The Sungod gave Him the Gayatri Mantra; Aditi gave Him underwear; Mother Earth offered Him deerskin; the personification of sky offered Him an umbrella; Mother Sarasvati, the Goddess of Learning, offered Him chanting beads; Kubera, the treasurer of heaven, offered Him a bag; and the Goddess Parvati (wife of Lord Siva) gave Him the first alms. After accepting the first alms, the Lord proceeded towards the sacrificial arena of Bali Maharaja. From a distance the Lord appeared to the Brahmanas there as if thousands of suns were approaching them at once; He was so effulgent. All the sages and Brahmanas welcomed the Lord, but seeing Him as a dwarf Brahmachari, no one could recognize Him as the Supreme Lord. Bali Maharaja also welcomed Him and after washing His feet, and offering Him a seat said:

*svagatam te namastubhyam brahman kim karavama te
brahmarsinam tapah saksan manye tva’’rya vapur dharam*

“O Brahmana, I whole heartedly welcome you. Please accept my humble obeisance at your feet. Please tell me what I can do to please You. By seeing You it seems as though the purity of austerities performed by all the sages have gathered together and have come to my place in the form of You. O Brahmachari, Your arrival has made my sacrifice successful.”

Bali Maharaja further said, “By offering money to the husband of the Goddess of Fortune and to His real devotees, one’s wealth only increases, it does not decrease. One should only give charity to very meritorious devotees. By giving charity to authentic devotees one’s happiness, peace and pleasure increases. But giving charity whimsically without considering the receiver may not be beneficial. One should not become sympathetic towards everyone because giving charity indiscriminately does not bear the

same result.” Bali Maharaja’s statement is affirmed in a history of a butcher and a Brahmana.

Once a poor butcher purchased a cow to sell her meat for money to maintain his family. But while taking her to butcher, she got loose and the butcher chased her till she was out of sight. One could not recognize this man as a butcher because he was wearing ordinary clothes. Tired from chasing the cow, the butcher took a rest at a junction where he saw a Brahmana named Sadan and asked him if he saw a runaway cow and if so what direction she went. Without considering the person’s motive, the truthful Brahmana pointed in the direction the cow went. Following the Brahmana guidance, the butcher found the cow, butchered her and sold her meat. Hence the Brahmana was implicated with sin because he did not consider whom he helped and for what purpose. Thus after his death the Brahmana reached hell, received punishment, took his next birth as a butcher and was given the same name, Sadan. He had indicated the direction the runaway cow went using his hand; thus in this life as a butcher his hands got cut off while performing his business.

Considering this incident, it should be understood that giving charity out of pity should be done very cautiously. As stated in the Padma Purana:

*danam grhnati yah sudro mahatyam api capadi
yas ca tasmai sampradadyad tau ubhau narakau dhruvam*

“Those born in low class families that have adopted spiritual life and live like devotees are not authorized to accept charity. If such converted people take charity they reach hell and their donors follow them there. Therefore giving charity is said to be a very careful undertaking.”

The Brahmana Sadan was very learned and regularly chanted the Lord’s names, but due to one mistake done unknowingly, he had to take rebirth as a butcher who lost both his hands. Therefore one should be careful whom they extend help to, because helping in an unworthy cause may lead to suffering. Philanthropic donations for a good cause, if used correctly, are worthy.

Nowadays many people build temples to make an external show of devotional life, but they operate them like social clubs. Many even persuade atheists to become members to attract their money to perpetuate their hypocrisy. Giving charity to such people will not benefit one. Lord Krsna states in the Bhagavad Gita that charity should only be given to those who are scripturally authentic.

Bali Maharaja was a very cautious donor. He did not give charity for fame or without careful consideration of who received the charity. But when the Lord arrived at his sacrificial arena, just by looking at His form and demeanor Bali Maharaja immediately recognized that Vamanadeva was born into an authentic Brahmana dynasty. Charity should not be given only by examining the outward appearance of the receiver, but the receiver should also come from an authentic Brahmana dynasty to insure the donor receives appropriate merit from the charity.

The Lord requested Bali to vow to give Him three steps of land and Bali complied. As soon as he accepted the vow, the Lord transformed Himself into His gigantic Trivikrama form and took two steps that covered heaven, earth and the lower planets of the universe. The Lord then asked Bali for the third step, to which Bali bowed and presented the Lord his head. The Lord then placed His foot over Bali’s head and sent

him to Satalaloka (a lower planet with heavenly atmosphere). Afterward the Lord returned the kingdom to the demigods and disappeared.

Then Sri Sukadeva Goswami speaks about the Lord's Fish Incarnation. Whenever religion diminishes on earth and sin increases, the Lord appears taking a suitable form for that situation. In Satyayuga there was a pious king named Satyavrata who ruled Dravida, located in southern India (now Andhra province). One day after bathing in the Krtamala River, the king cupped his hands filling them with water to make an offering, in which he found a tiny fish. Just as he was about to release the fish back into the water, the fish spoke in human language saying, "O king, please protect me." The king was stunned upon hearing human language coming from the fish, then honored its request and brought it to his palace and placed it in a small pond. After a short time the fish outgrew the palace pond. Thereafter the king took and placed it in a lake, which it also outgrew, so the king placed it in the ocean. In due course, with the king still visiting the fish, it grew to eight hundred miles long and grew a horn on its head. Witnessing the growth of the tiny fish to this enormous size in such a short time, the king thought it to be an incarnation of the Lord and prayed to it. After hearing the king's prayers, the fish said, "Lord Brahma's day is coming to an end eight days from today, after which the annihilation will take place. I have taken this Fish form to save you and the seven sages."

When the time of the annihilation arrived, the seven sages collected all the required seeds of this creation to propagate the next creation, took them in a boat accompanied by the King to the Fish Incarnation and tied it to His horn, using Vasuki Snake as a rope. Thus they all witnessed the annihilation together. This same King Satyavrata is known as Vaivasvata Manu in this Kaliyuga. After this annihilation, while Lord Brahma was asleep, a demon named Hayagriva came out of his mouth and stole all the Vedas and entered the ocean. Then the Lord again took the form of the Fish and killed the demon, thus rescuing the Vedas.

Then Sri Sukadeva Goswami speaks about Sudyumna, the son of Vaivasvata Manu. King Vaivasvata Manu did not have any children; therefore he requested Vasistha Muni to perform a sacrifice for him to beget a son, but unbeknownst to them, the queen conspired with the functioning priest of the sacrifice and thus a daughter was born and was named Ila. Because the king was disappointed from not having a son, he questioned Vasistha Muni. To remedy the king's disappointment, Vasistha used his spiritual power to turn the daughter into a son and named him Sudyumna. One day after Sudyumna was grown, he went to the forest to hunt. While wandering the forest, he came upon the garden that belongs to Lord Siva, by whose spiritual influence causes any male that enters it to be transformed into a female. Lord Siva had blessed this garden for Parvati, so that any males coming there would not disturb her. This garden is a sporting place for Lord Siva and his wife. Unaware of this blessing, when Sudyumna entered the garden, he was turned back into Ila, and completely forgot being a male. Near this garden, Ila saw Budha, the son of the Moongod, performing austerity. Ila and Budha became attracted to each other and married on the spot. After some time they had a son named Pururava from whom the Moon Dynasty began on earth and Lord Krsna appeared in this dynasty.

Some generations later King Ambarisa was born in the Vaivasvata Dynasty. His bravery made him famous and he was a great devotee of the Lord. He had heard the great glories of Vrindaban, which is why he went and performed his Ekadasi fasts there. He enjoyed the atmosphere there very much because every plant, tree and animal chants the

names of Lord Krsna and His consort Srimati Radharani. Even the small children of Vrajaland chant Radhe-Radhe (greeting using the Lord's consort, Srimati Radharani's name) and every resident wears Tulasi (a spiritual holy plant) neck beads. Hence King Ambarisa did not want to leave Vrindaban to return to his kingdom. The atmosphere in Vrindaban Dham is transcendental and it supersedes all other Vedic knowledge. It is not on the same platform of other holy places because it is eternal, whereas at one time or another all the other holy places come to reside in Vrindaban. Any person who comes to Vrindaban in a humble mood gets their sins removed because of its transcendental influence, which is why living in Vrindaban is considered to be better than living in Vaikuntha (the spiritual world). As stated in the Upadesamrta, *vaikunthaj janito vara madhupuri*, "Mathura is better than Vaikuntha because Lord Krsna took birth there, whereas the Lord does not take birth in Vaikuntha. That is why Mathura is superior to Vaikuntha." It is further stated, *tatrapi rasotsavat*, "Better than Mathura is Vrindaban, because although Krsna took birth in Mathura He did not stay there. He came to Vrindaban to perform His Rasalila (romantic dance) with the Gopis (cowherd girls). That is why Sri Vrindaban Dham is the best place on earth." Lord Krsna is quoted in the Bhagavatamrta thus:

*trailokye pthavi dhanys yatra vrindsvanam puram
tatra rsdhs-sakhi-vargas tatra rsdhs priys mama*

"Mother Earth is the best of all land in the three worlds and Vrindaban is the best place on earth. In Vrindaban Gopis are the best devotees of the Lord and among the Gopis, Srimati Radharani is the best, which is why I love Radharani very much."

King Ambarisa loved Vrindaban very much and stayed there a considerable amount of time, but when a message from his kingdom arrived requiring his presence, he responded, "I shall return after observing the upcoming Ekadasi fast." The Lord created the Ekadasi fast for human beings, not animals. Although spiritual life benefits every living entity, some spiritual practices are solely meant for human beings. For example, marriage invitations are only sent to relatives, friends and close associates, not to animals. Similarly the Ekadasi fast is solely meant for human beings, who by performing it please the Lord. The Lord is more pleased with the Ekadasi fast than any other fast. The Navaratra fast, Sivaratri fast, Karavachauth fast, Santosi Mata fast, Hanuman fast, Monday fast, Saturday fast, as well as many other fasts do not take the performer to the spiritual world, and if they aren't performed one is not degraded either. If a person fasts on such days they may be rewarded material benefits, but they do not receive the Lord's blessings; and not fasting on these days is irrelevant to Yamaraja. In other words not fasting on these days does not harm one in any way. But fasting on Ekadasi is different. The Ekadasi fast surely rewards the Lord's blessings and helps elevate the performer to the spiritual world, but anyone that avoids it will have to experience punishment from Yamaraja. Fasting on Ekadasi awards so much merit, that by following it the person can have all their desires fulfilled and at last reach the spiritual world to see the Lord face to face.

Ambarisa Maharaja performed the Ekadasi fast in Vrindaban, but before breaking the fast the next day, he fed Brahmanas. One obligatory rule of the Ekadasi fast is, it must be broken at the scripturally decided time on the next day. Usually the time to break fast is around nine in the morning. If one does not follow this rule, his/her observance of the Ekadasi fast may not yield the desired result. King Ambarisa had to return to his

kingdom, which is why he desired to feed Brahmanas on Dvadasi (the day after Ekadasi) morning. The scriptures state that Ambarisa Maharaja sumptuously fed Brahmanas, then gave them gold, cows and clothes in charity. After the Brahmanas finished eating, when Ambarisa Maharaja was about to break his fast, Durvasa Muni arrived at his residence. Durvasa is not a Vaisnava; he is a great meditating yogi and is well known for his anger. Ambarisa Maharaja welcomed him and said, "Please accept something to eat. It is my good fortune that you have come to my place." Durvasa said, "I have to perform my regular *sadhana* (spiritual practice)." The King requested him to return quickly. Durvasa went to the Yamuna River to perform his *sadhana*, during which he forgot to return quickly. All the while the king's time for breaking his Ekadasi fast was elapsing and he did not want to forgo the merits he was due for fasting. Therefore Brahmanas advised him to drink a little Charanamrta (water used to wash the Lord's lotus feet) to break the fast. Through his yogic powers Durvasa came to know that Ambarisa had broken his Ekadasi fast without honoring him, even though he was at the Yamuna River. This made him very angry and he returned to the king. The scriptures state that drinking Charanamrta breaks the Ekadasi fast, but is not considered eating. Therefore the king broke his fast and simultaneously did not eat.

Perfect yogis are able to know what is happening a long distance away and what will happen in the future, but are unable to surmise what is beneficial or harmful to themselves. They are able to know what is going on in someone else's heart, but cannot predict what is best for themselves. Durvasa reached Ambarisa and scolded him saying, "You have broken your fast without feeding me. Now I shall kill you." Then he created a Krutya (a monstrous female cannibal goblin) from his matted hairs and told her to eat the king. Ambarisa thought, "Now I have to die, therefore it is best to remember the Supreme Lord, because it is best to think of the Lord while dying." Following Durvasa's order, the Krutya proceeded to kill Ambarisa, but Ambarisa was a serious devotee and prayed to the Lord for protection. When a person becomes a serious devotee of the Supreme Lord he/she is directly protected by Him. Hence, before Ambarisa could finish saying one name of the Lord, the Lord sent His disc weapon to protect him. Krutya was immediately killed, which surprised Durvasa, and then the disc proceeded to kill him. Seeing this, Durvasa went to Brahmaloaka (Lord Brahma's abode) to ask his father Lord Brahma for protection. (Real Yogés have the ability to travel to any place in a very short time.) Lord Brahma sent him away saying, "You go away from here immediately, otherwise my abode will be burnt into ashes." He then went to Lord Siva at Mount Kailasa to ask for protection, who also drove him away in fear Mount Kailasa would be burnt by the disc weapon. Durvasa then reached Lord Narayana and after paying homage, asked for his protection. Lord Narayana said, "I don't have the power to protect you, you have committed an offense against My pure devotee. You have to ask King Ambarisa, he is the only one able to protect you from this danger. If My pure devotee makes some mistake they are not to be punished. Ambarisa only drank a little Charanamrta to honor the Ekadasi fast, he did not eat any grains to break the fast, for just that little mistake you wanted to kill him, I cannot tolerate this. You please go to My devotee, he is the only one who can protect you. I do not have the power to forgive you."

In despair, Durvasa returned to Ambarisa, who had not yet eaten because he knew the scriptural etiquette that the householder should not eat anything until the guests are first satisfied. Yogis (meditators), Jnanis (speculative knowledge seekers), and

Karmakandis (performers of ritualistic ceremonies) do not believe in fasting on Ekadasi. The Lord does not remain pleased with such people, as we see here in the case of Durvasa Muni. Devotees do not perform yoga meditation, they do not speculate how to understand the Lord, and they do not perform made up rituals; their only engagement is to please the Supreme Lord. This attitude makes the Lord become the devotee's property.

Only the Lord's pure devotees know the pleasure contained in the Lord's service. Yogis, Jnanis, Karmakandis and Karmis (performers of actions desirous of result) cannot understand it. The Lord is honest and very grateful for a little service rendered to Him. He can be bought for a little devotional service executed purely. For example, once Dropadi offered a small piece of cloth to the Lord, and the Lord returned an unlimited sari to her so she could keep her honor when Dusasana was disrobing her. Just see how grateful the Lord is. Those who serve, worship or pray to anyone else are like a person accepting mud and leaving gold aside. The Lord Himself states, *aham bhakta paradhinah*, "I am under the full control of My pure devotee." The Lord then told Durvasa, "You please go to Ambarisa and take hold of his feet and beg pardon from him. He will surely forgive you." Durvasa followed what the Lord said and Ambarisa immediately forgave him. Then, only after feeding Durvasa, did Ambarisa take his meal. Seeing Ambarisa's attitude, Durvasa became a devotee of the Lord.

Then Sri Sukadeva Goswami speaks about Saubhari Risi. He was born in the Kanva Risi Dynasty of the Rgveda tradition. From a very young age he performed austerities in Vraja on the bank of the Yamuna River, (and) hence did not associate with householders and gain worldly experience. Near his Ashram there was a lake formed by the Yamuna where he would sit beneath the water and meditate. According to the scriptures, by nature, everyone has the propensity in their heart to love someone. No one can live without loving someone. Because Saubhari performed austerity underwater he grew so fond of fish that he considered them his own kinsman. Occasionally Garuda (carrier of Lord Visnu) would go to that lake to catch and eat fish. One day Saubhari told Garuda to stop taking fish from there, but he did not listen, so Saubhari cursed him saying, "O Garuda, if you come near this pond you will be dead." Hence Garuda stopped going there. Thus Saubhari felt peaceful and began meditating under the water. The scriptures state that everyone's mind is sinful by nature; it wants to think dirty thoughts. Externally someone may appear pious and sinless, but the desire for sense gratification remains strong in the heart. Unwanted desires wait for the destined time to arrive, and when they do they become very difficult to control. One day when Saubhari was meditating underwater he saw two unique fish overcome with lust and copulating, thus agitating him with lusty desires. He thought, "An honorable person does not do anything small, therefore I shall get connected to a princess of a powerful king." Thus he proceeded towards Ayodhya, ruled by King Mandhata. Upon reaching the king and finding he had fifty daughters, Saubhari asked the king for one of them. The scriptures recommend that if a real devotee sage reaches a householder and requests something, his request should be honored. After hearing Saubhari's request, the king said, "You please go inside the palace where you will find my daughters and whichever of them likes you, you may have." Before entering the palace Saubhari used his mystic power and transformed himself into a handsome young man. As soon as the king's daughters saw this beautiful young man, they all wanted to marry him; thus the king offered all fifty of his daughters to the sage who later married all of them.

Sage Saubhari took them to the gardens of Vrindaban and enjoyed with them there. The princesses felt great joy in their freedom sporting with the sage in the gardens of Vrindaban, because up until that point they were confined to the palace. There, Saubhari expanded himself into fifty forms and enjoyed with each wife simultaneously, producing one hundred sons from each of them. In this way he had five thousand sons. Although Saubhari was enjoying family life like an ordinary man, he was always fixed in devotion to the Lord. One day he retired from family life; and the princesses followed his footsteps and thus they all received liberation.

King Mandhata was born in the Ikshvaku Dynasty from his father Yuvanasha. He did not take birth from a woman. King Yuvanasha married one hundred queens, but none bore any children; therefore he called upon sages to perform a sacrifice to beget a son. On the day of the fire sacrifice the king was asked to sleep that night in the sacrificial arena where he felt thirsty and drank water from a pot there. The king was unaware that the water kept in that pot had been chanted over with mantras and meant to induce the queen to become pregnant. Thus, rather than the queen becoming pregnant, he did. When time to deliver the baby arrived, the king's stomach was operated on and the child was removed. Afterward the child got hungry and started crying. Then Indra went there and told the child "*mam-dhata*," (to drink me) and placed the child's thumb in its mouth. Different parts of the physical body represent various demigods; the thumb represents Indra, thus by sucking its thumb the child grew. Because the child grew up by sucking his thumb, he was named Mandhata, who later became emperor.

In Tretayuga, in Mandhata's dynasty, a king named Satyawrata took birth who became known as Trisanku because of his misdeeds. Trisanku means one who had performed three types of obnoxious sins. He avoided performing Vedic rights; he kidnapped a traditional Brahmana's daughter; and he killed Sage Vasistha's cow. For these sins Vasistha Muni cursed him to become a dog eater and then said, "From today forward you will be known as Trisanku." One day King Trisanku presented Sage Visvamitra with his desire to go to heaven in his physical body, thus Visvamitra sent him there using power derived from his austerity. When the demigods in heaven saw an earthly man had entered heaven, they removed him and pushed him back down towards earth. But because of the power Visvamitra used to send him there, and the power the demigods then used to push him down, Trisanku is still today caught positioned upside down between heaven and earth. From hanging upside down, saliva flowed from his mouth, which became known as the Karmanasa River. It is said that for whosoever bathes in or drinks from the Karmanasa River, all their pious deeds become destroyed.

When Visvamitra heard that Trisanku was thrown out of heaven, he became angry at the demigods and began to make a new creation with a new heavenly planet for Trisanku. He created a new heaven, seven sages, a new quality of foods (millet, corn, etc.), and he started to create human beings from coconut trees. When a coconut grew that would become a human head from the tree, Lord Brahma understood that Visvamitra was going to create human beings from the tree and therefore came to him to beg pardon on behalf of the demigods. Visvamitra forgave the demigods and stopped the new creation. In religious functions, if human sacrifice is required, coconuts are used in place of human beings. Even today people break coconuts in religious functions for this reason.

In the dynasty of Trisanku, King Harischandra was born and is well known for keeping his word. He could not produce any offspring with his queen, Saivya, but

through Narada Muni's help, Varuna (demigod of water) blessed him with a son who was named Rohit. One day King Harischandra went hunting where he met Visvamitra Muni, who wanted to know how truthful the king was. Therefore he asked him for his entire kingdom and the treasury in charity, and afterward asked him to leave the kingdom. While the king and his family were departing, Visvamitra asked for *daksina* (remuneration) for his accepting the kingdom in charity. Having already given everything, the king asked for one month to arrange the money. In Vedic culture when things are given in charity to authentic people or they are fed, they are given money as *daksina*. After leaving his kingdom, Ayodhya, Harischandra reached Varanasi (a neighboring city) where he sold his wife and son to a Brahmana and sold himself to a crematorium owner. With the money gotten by selling himself and his family he paid remuneration to Visvamitra. To help Harischandra, Indra (king of heaven) became a Brahmana and Dharmaraja (the personality that decides who goes to heaven) became the crematorium owner. The crematorium owner told Harischandra to live in the crematorium and collect taxes from people who came to cremate dead bodies and give him the money. One day when Harischandra's child Rohit was playing, he was bitten by a cobra and died. At nightfall Saivya took her son's dead body to the same crematorium that Harischandra tended. With her son dead, not knowing her husband's whereabouts and being thrown out of the kingdom, Saivya was now helpless and cried pitifully. She thought, "How will I live now?" Then Harischandra went to the crying woman to request the fee for the cremation, but did not recognize her because so much time had elapsed since they last met. Upon seeing the dead boy the king remembered his son Rohit and when the woman cried, "O son, O Rohit," the king recognized his family and began crying and fell unconscious. After regaining consciousness and he and the queen acknowledged each other, they decided to cast themselves into the fire with their dead son when Lord Brahma and Lord Indra appeared and Sage Visvamitra and Dharmaraja arrived. Indra sprinkled nectar upon Rohit from which he came back to life and Lord Brahma bestowed upon the king his former royal attire and appearance. Indra then offered Harischandra a golden chariot; Dharmaraja blessed him with unending fame; and Visvamitra blessed him with the knowledge of self realization and returned his kingdom. Then the demigods disappeared and the king and his family returned to their kingdom.

In the same Dynasty of Harischandra, King Sagara was born, who performed a horse sacrifice. In horse sacrifices, the sacrificial horse is released and allowed to roam freely in all directions and return on his own to the sacrificial arena. If the horse returns safely without any difficulty the sacrifice is accepted as a success. But when Sagara released the horse from the sacrificial arena, the horse did not return. King Indra had captured and hid the horse, thereby preventing any result from the sacrifice that may challenge his power. Outraged that the horse did not return, Sagara Maharaja angrily ordered his sixty thousand sons to find the horse and bring it back to the arena. All his sons searched everywhere in every direction, but could not find the horse until they started digging the earth, thinking the horse may be hidden there. While King Sagara's sons were digging, they reached Kapiladeva's Ashram and saw the horse tied to a hook there. They thought Lord Kapila to be a thief and attempted to kill Him. This disturbance broke Kapiladeva's trance, thus angering Him and He burnt all sixty thousand of Sagara's sons into ashes. Then King Sagara sent his grandson Ansuman to find out what happened to his sons. In his search he reached Kapiladeva's Ashram where he found the horse and

the pile of ashes of his uncles' remains. Ansuman paid his respects to Kapiladeva and asked Him for the horse. Kapiladeva granted his request and told him what had happened to his uncles. He then asked Lord Kapila how his uncles could be liberated. Kapiladeva said, "Only Mother Ganges can liberate them. You should perform austerity to please Lord Brahma and beg him to release Mother Ganges so your relatives can be liberated." Ansuman performed austerity, but was unsuccessful in bringing Ganges and later died. His son, Dilipa, also performed austerity to bring Ganges to liberate them, but was also unsuccessful and died. But Dilipa's son, Bhagiratha was successful in bringing Mother Ganges to earth, thus liberating his ancestors that were turned into ashes by Kapiladeva. In this dynasty Lord Rama appeared and killed the demon Ravana, removing the burden of the earth.

By the prayers of all the demigods, the Supreme Lord appeared as Lord Rama. He appeared with His plenary portions Bharat, Laksman and Satrugna as His brothers, in King Dasaratha's palace. When the earth becomes burdened with demoniac forces and religion diminishes, all the demigods pray to the Lord to help remove the burden. Sometimes the merciful Lord comes Himself and other times He sends His portions or plenary portions to reestablish religion. When the Lord decided to incarnate in the form of a human being, Laksmidevi (the Goddess of Fortune) desired to appear with Him. The Lord told Laksmidevi, "I shall appear in the house of King Dasaratha in Ayodhya and You appear in the home of King Janaka in Mithila." King Dasaratha had three queens by the names Kausalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra, but the king could not beget an issue from any of them. Through the advice of his Guru, Vasistha, the king called upon Sage Rsyasrnga to perform a sacrifice that would reward sons. When the sacrifice was almost completed, the Firegod appeared from the sacrificial fire and gave the king *charu* (a pot of cooked rice), which was distributed to the queens to eat. Hence, the Lord appeared from Kausalya as Lord Rama; Bharat from Kaikeyi; and Laksman and Satrugna from Sumitra. Bharat, Laksman and Satrugna are the Lord's partial incarnations. All self-realized saints and sages sing the wonderful qualities of Lord Rama with love and devotion. Lord Rama performed many childhood pastimes in Ayodhya. In the company of Sage Visvamitra He killed the demoness Tadaka, the demon Subahu and Maricha. Visvamitra also took Lord Rama to Mithila where He won the hand of Mother Sita in marriage by breaking Lord Siva's bow. Sita is the Lord's eternal consort, but to comply with earthly customs He had His marriage ceremony performed as well as many other pastimes to give pleasure to His devotees. Even today the Lord's marriage festivals are observed, which help purify the participants so they can reach the spiritual world.

Lord Rama appeared not just to kill the demons; He also appeared to demonstrate the ideal life. King Dasaratha had awarded his wife Kaikeyi three boons of her choice whenever she wanted, for her having helped him in a battle. In order to keep His Father's promise to queen Kaikeyi, after marrying Sita, the Lord went to live in the forest as a mendicant. Kaikeyi was persuaded by her maidservant Manthara when to redeem those boons, thus having her son Bharat placed upon the throne of Ayodhya instead of Rama, and having Rama exiled to the forest to keep His presence from causing a disturbance during her son's reign. In great despair from hearing the queen's first two boons, King Dasaratha fell unconscious. Thus Lord Rama went to the forest with Mother Sita and Laksman. How surprising it is that the rule of a kingdom that is even rare for the demigods to achieve was renounced by Lord Rama to wander the forest to keep His

father's honor! The Lord also ran barefoot to catch Maricha, who had taken the form of a golden deer, to retrieve as a gift for Sita. Ravana and Maricha had conspired to lure Rama and Laksman away from the Ashram (where mendicants live), so that the demon Ravana could kidnap the beautiful Sita. As Rama pursued the golden deer, He found the deer to be very illusive and very tricky, and thus understood that the deer was some mystical trick. Then, with the deer at a great distance away, Rama shot and hit it with a single arrow. But just before he died he shouted, mimicking Lord Rama's voice, "Laksman, Laksman!" Thus Laksman, who was guarding Sita, left in the mood of helping Rama. Then with Sita all alone at the Ashram, Ravana disguised himself as a sage and kidnapped Her. Upon Rama and Laksman's return to the Ashram, They discovered Sita gone and traversed all over the forest in search of Her, just like ordinary helpless people. While searching for Sita, Lord Rama performed the death ceremony of Jatayu, the devotee vulture, and killed a demon named Kabandha.

Then the Lord met and befriended Sugriva, a devotee and king of monkeys and killed his irreligious elder brother Bali. Afterward, under Sugriva's command, all the monkeys searched in every direction for Sita. Hanuman found Her in Sri Lanka, then burnt Ravana's capital city and brought the news of Mother Sita's location to Lord Rama. The Lord's feet that are worshipped by Lord Brahma and Lord Siva, those very feet walked barefoot on thorns and pebbles behind monkeys to the ocean's southern shoreline in search of Sita. Then Ravana's younger brother, Vibhisana, came and took shelter of the Lord. By the mercy of the Lord, the monkey army united and built a bridge spanning from the tip of India to Sri Lanka. Always teaching by perfect example, Lord Rama, aware that Ravana was a disciple of Lord Siva, first worshipped Lord Siva to please him. The scriptural rule is, if a disciple of a Guru has to be punished, permission from his/her Guru should be taken first. After dispatching Hanuman to the Himalayas to bring a Siva Linga, Lord Rama inquired from all the sages present who should be the presiding priest for the installation of the Siva Linga. The sages answered, "Ravana is expert in this service and is also a very dear disciple of Lord Siva. Please invite him to be the priest. If You call him for this service he will not decline." Lord Rama sent message to Ravana, and he accepted the invitation with great joy and reached Lord Rama. Then after chanting all the required mantras for installing the Siva Linga, Ravana asked, "Where is the Siva Linga?" But Hanuman had not yet returned with it. Ravana then said, "The auspicious moment to install the Linga is passing." Hearing this, Lord Rama collected sand nearby and formed a Siva Linga and thus it was installed. Lord Rama called upon Samudra (ocean personified) to supply the required remuneration for the priest. The ocean gave a large amount of gems and pearls to Rama, which He in turn gave to Ravana for performing the installation rites. Lord Rama then paid Ravana respect, for which Ravana asked the Lord to ask a blessing from him. Lord Rama then asked Ravana, "Please bless Me so I can kill my enemy, Ravana." Ravana was acting as the presiding priest, therefore he had to give the requested blessing. He then returned to Sri Lanka. Lord Rama named His installed Siva Linga, Ramanath, which means *ramah nathah yasya sah ramanath*, "The worshippable Lord of whom is Lord Rama." In other words, the temple of the servant of Lord Rama. The name "Ramanath Temple" is written atop the entrance of the sanctum sanctorum; and the village where this temple is located is known as Rameswaram.

Then when Hanuman returned with his Siva Linga and saw that a Siva Linga had already been installed he became very upset. So to please Hanuman, Lord Rama installed his Siva Linga and named it Hanumateswara. Whosoever goes to see Lord Siva at Rameswaram, must first see and worship Hanumateswara to get maximum benefit. If someone does not see and worship Hanumateswara, they do not get benefit from worshipping Lord Siva in Rameswaram. After worshipping Lord Siva, Lord Rama's entire monkey army reached Sri Lanka. The war ensued between the demons and monkey armies, from which great loss was experienced by the demons and their nation. Ravana's army had four divisions and they were equipped with every category of celestial and nuclear weapon, but by the Lord's blessings the monkey army destroyed the demon army just by throwing stones and trees at them. Lord Rama killed Kumbhakarna, the younger brother of Ravana; and Laksman killed Meghanath, Ravana's heroic son. Then Ravana himself went to the battlefield, whom upon seeing, Lord Rama said, "O shameless one, you kidnapped My beloved wife Sita when She was alone at Panchavati (area where Rama's Ashram was located) like a dog, for which I will punish you today." After saying this, Lord Rama shot a fiery arrow at Ravana's navel and cut his ten heads off with ten other arrows. With blood spouting from his body and ten heads, he fell to the ground like a person falls from heaven when his/her merits expire. Afterward Vibhisana, Ravana's youngest brother, consoled all the crying demons' wives and performed Ravana's death ceremony. After Lord Rama's happy reunion with Mother Sita took place, He placed Vibhisana on the throne of Sri Lanka and returned to the mainland with His family and the main army personnel. When Lord Rama returned to Ayodhya He was greeted with cheers and was enthroned as the king of Ayodhya. His ruling style was so perfect and wonderful that everyone desires it even today.

After this Sri Sukadeva Goswami speaks about Lord Parasurama. He is a partial incarnation of the Lord that appeared from the Brahmana family of Sage Jamadagni and Mother Renuka. He was the youngest of His brothers. One day, while helping her husband with worship, Renuka became distracted and made a mistake. For this Sage Jamadagni became angry at her and asked his sons to cut her head off, but they refused his command. Then he asked Parasurama to perform the task, who then cut His mother's head off and cut off all His brothers' heads as well. Unless one has the spiritual power to revive another person back to life, he/she does not have the authority to kill or order anyone killed. Unless an incarnation of the Supreme Lord is foretold by the ancient scriptures, they are not authorized to kill anyone. Parasurama did this because He knew of His father's spiritual potency. When His father asked Him to request a boon for obeying his order, He asked for His mother and brothers to be revived, by which they all returned to life. Parasurama exterminated the entire Haihaya Dynasty from earth because they killed His father. He then killed all the Ksatriyas (ruling class) from earth twenty-one times. Today, Parasurama is praying to the Lord with peaceful mind at Mount Mahendra.

It was previously stated that the Moon dynasty began with the birth of Pururava, born from Budha and his wife Ila. Pururava's son was named Ayu, and his son was Nahusa, who was once installed as king of heaven in King Indra's absence. Nahusa had wanted to copulate with Indra's wife, Sachidevi, for which he asked the seven sages of heaven to carry him in a palanquin to her. He was anxious to be with her, which is why he told the seven sages, "*sarpa, sarpa*" meaning for them to walk quickly (the word

sarpa also means snake). This angered the sages, causing them to curse him to become a snake and fall down from heaven. One day when the Pandavas were in exile, Nahusa having taken the form of a python caught Bhimasena to eat, when Yudhisthira arrived there and preached spirituality to Nahusa. This enlightenment liberated him from the python body, thus Bhimasena was saved. Nahusa had a son named Yayati, who was placed as king when Nahusa became a snake. Yayati married Sukracharya's daughter, Devayani, who was arrogant and angry by nature. Once Devayani and King Vrsaparva's daughter, Sarmistha, fought, where Sarmistha disrobed Devayani, pushed her into a well and returned home. As destiny would have it, while King Yayati was hunting, he then reached that well for water where he found Devayani. He gave her his shawl to cover up and helped her out of the well. King Yayati became attracted by her beauty and Devayani sensed it, so she asked the king to marry her, to which the king said, "I am Ksatriya born in the ruling class family and you are born into a traditional Brahmana family. Therefore this marriage cannot take place unless your father (Sukracharya) accepts this marriage, then everything will be fine." After returning home, Devayani narrated the episode to her father and persuaded him to agree to her marriage with King Yayati. Sarmistha's ill treatment towards Devayani angered Sukracharya, so he left Vrsaparva's kingdom. Vrsaparva was the king of demons and Sukracharya was their presiding priest. The demigods saw this division as an opportunity to attack the demons. To evade the approaching trouble, Vrsaparva took shelter of Sukracharya because he knew mantras for protection, which is why the king begged pardon from him for his daughter's mistake. When Devayani heard Vrsaparva's plea she said, "If Sarmistha together with one thousand maidservants becomes my maidservant, only then will I return to the kingdom." Vrsaparva accepted Devayani's request and thus Sarmistha was given as her maidservant and she lived at Devayani's residence. Sarmistha was a princess by nature; therefore when she saw Devayani pregnant, she also secretly asked King Yayati to impregnate her. The king knew the Vedic codes, which state that if a decent young woman requests to become pregnant, a wise man should honor her request. He was also well aware of his father-in-law Sukracharya's mystic potency, but destiny brought them together and Sarmistha became pregnant. In this way Devayani gave birth to two sons and Sarmistha gave birth to three sons from the king. When Devayani learnt of Sarmistha having received sons from her husband, she became angry, returned to her father and told him what had happened. Sukracharya cursed the king to immediately become an old man. Upon hearing of the curse, Yayati reached Sukracharya and begged pardon from him saying, "I am not yet satisfied with my lusty desire for your daughter, therefore please retract your curse so I can remain youthful." To this Sukracharya said, "If a young man willingly accepts your old age in exchange for his youth, then you can again become youthful." The king told his sons about this, where Puru, the youngest through Sarmistha, accepted the old age for his youth. Being youthful again, Yayati enjoyed for a long time, but when he was still not satisfied he said:

*yat prthiviyam vrihi yavam hiranyam pasavah striyah
na duhyanti manah pritim pumsah kama-hatasya te
na jatu kamah kamanam upabhogena samyati
havisa krsna vartmeva bhuya evabhivardhate*

“Even if all types of wholesome foods, all the wealth, all the young ladies and every other facility available on earth are supplied to a man infatuated with lust, he will

not be satisfied within his mind. Because by enjoying the sense objects one can never satisfy the hankering desire for sense pleasure. Rather than becoming satisfied by enjoying the sense objects, cravings for them intensify, just as fire increases when fuel is supplied to it.”

For this reason Srimad Bhagavatam states that no man should sit in a secluded place with his mother, sister or daughter, because the senses are so powerful that they can even infatuate a thoughtful man. Thinking this, Yayati enthroned his son, Puru, and left for the forest to perform austerity.

In Yayati’s dynasty there was a king named Usinar that fed his own flesh to an eagle to save a pigeon. He was very famous for protecting those who came to take shelter of him. One day when King Usinar was sitting near the sacrificial arena discussing a topic with his ministers, a pigeon came and sat on his lap. The merciful king pet the pigeon because it seemed very tired and was shaking in fear. Then an eagle arrived and sat before the king and fearlessly said in a human voice, “O king, this pigeon is my food, please give it to me.” The king responded, “I cannot give it to you to kill and eat because it has come to my shelter. Protecting those who take shelter of me is my main duty.” The eagle then said, “By taking my food you are doing me an injustice. Lord Brahma made the rule that one living entity survives by eating another, like big fish maintain their lives by eating small fish and lions and tigers live by eating other animals in the jungle. Similarly I live by eating other birds. Therefore, please give me my food.” The king said, “We are human beings, not animals. If a human being cannot bring any living entity back to life, he/she is not authorized to eat meat and should not suggest eating meat to others. Human beings should show mercy towards other living entities. Every entity has a soul just like human beings; only the external body is different. The soul driving the body is the same in quality and quantity in all living entities. The body is the vehicle of the soul. Therefore, killing any living entity is unjustly forcing the soul out of its body. Every human being should extend mercy towards other living entities. A human being that does not show mercy towards other living entities is grossly filled with sin. I cannot give you this pigeon to kill and eat. If you want to eat only meat, I shall arrange for meat for you to eat.” To this the eagle said, “If you love this pigeon so much, please give me your own flesh equal in weight to the pigeon to eat.” The king then ordered a scale to be brought there. He placed the pigeon on one side and started cutting his own body, placing the severed pieces of his flesh on the other side of the scale. The king cut flesh from parts of almost his whole body, but could not tip the scale from the weight of the pigeon, so he sat on the scale himself. Seeing such a surprising act from the king, the eagle laughed and transformed himself into his Indra form and spoke in a thundering voice, “O king, I am not an eagle, I am Indra, the king of all the demigods living in heaven. This is not a pigeon, he is Agni, the Firegod. We have come here incognito to examine the strength of your devotional service and your dedication to showing mercy towards other creatures. We have found you fixed in your duty, therefore we bless you to be famous in human society until the annihilation.” Then after rejuvenating his body, they both disappeared.

King Usinar had a son named Sivi whose sacrificing nature is praiseworthy. Once when sitting in the assembly hall, a bright faced Brahmana that looked like a follower of Lord Siva entered and said to king Usinar, “I am very hungry and I want to eat the cooked flesh of your son.” Hearing this from the Brahmana, without hesitation the king accepted the demand and went to cut up and cook his only son. The king took more time

than ordinarily needed to cook because he was not used to cooking. Because of this delay, the Brahmana started a fire in the palace. Then the king arrived with the cooked flesh of his only son. The Brahmana then angrily told the king to eat the flesh himself. When the king was just about to eat his own son's flesh, the Brahmana displayed his real form as Lord Brahma and while blessing the king, said, "Your tolerance is even glorified in heaven." Lord Brahma then returned his son back to life and then disappeared. In previous ages Brahmanas were very spiritually potent and people in general were very pious.

Then Sri Sukadeva Goswami speaks about King Yadu. He was born from King Yayati and Devayani, from whom the Yadava Dynasty began. Lord Krsna appeared in this dynasty. Later this dynasty became known as the Vr̥ṇi Dynasty, in which Vasudev was born from King Surasena and acted as Lord Krsna's father. The Vrsni Dynasty got divided into two, namely the Vrsni and Andhaka Dynasties. Ugrasena and Devaka were born in the Andhaka Dynasty. Devaka had seven daughters, six of whom they married to Vasudeva; and Kamsa demanded the seventh to be married only to Vasudev and no one else. After Devaki and Vasudev's marriage celebration, Kamsa himself escorted Devaki to her in-law's house. While he was taking her there, an unseen voice from the sky said, "O fool, the eighth child of the person you are taking to her in-law's house will kill you." Upon hearing this, Kamsa got very angry at Devaki and raised his sword to kill her when Vasudev intervened, but was not able to convince Kamsa to spare Devaki until he said, "Devaki is your youngest sister, almost equal to your daughter, which is why you should not kill her. She does not pose any threat, your danger is from her issues. Please give me her life in donation, and I promise to hand each child over to you as soon as they are born. You can kill them." Kamsa knew Vasudev always spoke the truth, which is why he let Devaki live and waited for her to give birth. When the first child was born, Vasudev brought the child to Kamsa as he said he would, but when Kamsa saw the infant he was overcome with mercy and told Vasudev, "I shall not kill this child, please take it back." Alarmed by Kamsa's merciful act, Narada Muni thought, "Kamsa's mercy will cause him to become less sinful and then it will take longer for the Lord to appear in this world. Therefore I must devise a plan that impels Kamsa to perform more sin, from which the Lord will appear sooner." With this in mind, Narada Muni reached Kamsa and said, "O Kamsa, why did you return Vasudev's child? Is it because you thought your danger is from her eighth child? Didn't you think the eighth child could be any of them?" While saying this Narada Muni made a diagram of eight lines radiating from a central point in eight different directions. Directing Kamsa's attention to the diagram he continued, "Any of these lines could be the eighth line. It does not matter from where you begin, any of these lines I drew could be the eighth line. Like these lines, demigods' words are also deceptive. Do not leave any of the children alive because no one knows which is the eighth one. Narada Muni's words brought the question to Kamsa's mind that the demigods can mislead him at any moment. Thus, Kamsa imprisoned Vasudev and Devaki and one-by-one killed their children. When the news spread that Devaki's seventh pregnancy was a miscarriage, Kamsa was defamed because rumor was that he had Devaki's child aborted. The scriptures state that abortion is a grievous sin unless the mother's life is in serious danger, but nowadays people have abortions without considering the consequences. Many sins are being committed nowadays of which killing cows and aborting children are paramount. Reaction to such sins returns in the form of

great calamities that cause great suffering. Even Kamsa did not favor abortion and did not abort Devaki's child, but because he held her and Vasudev captive, he was suspect. Today people are more degraded than Kamsa and will shamelessly do anything, which is seen in the selfishness of abortion.

Devaki's seventh pregnancy was not aborted or miscarried, but was transferred by Yogamaya, the internal potency of God, from Mother Devaki's womb to Mother Rohini's womb. Rohini was one of Vasudev's seven wives, but after Vasudev and Devaki were imprisoned, she lived at Nanda Maharaja's residence in Gokul Village where she gave birth to Balaram. The time had come for the Lord Himself to come to the womb of Devaki as her eighth pregnancy. First the Lord came to Vasudev's heart and then he transferred the Lord to Devaki. The method living entities use to conceive offspring is different than the method Vasudev used to impregnate Devaki the eighth time. The seed of the Lord is given from the mouth and taken through the ears. Vasudev and Devaki followed this process. In other words, Vasudev spoke about the Supreme Lord and Devaki heard it, by which she was impregnated with the Lord.

When the narration of the Supreme Lord is properly heard, one day it transforms into perfect faith in the heart of the listener and makes him/her feel, "I shall chant the holy names of the Lord faithfully." This longing delivers the chanter before the Lord to see Him face to face, which is why the scriptures state that the pathways of giving and taking the seed of the Supreme Lord are through the mouth and ears. Thus, just by Devaki's continuously listening to the narration of the Supreme Lord, the Lord came to her womb. Soon after, Devaki's body was illumined with transcendental effulgence and she looked as bright as the moon. While Devaki was pregnant with the Lord, demigoddesses of heaven came incognito to serve her. When the Lord appears in the heart of a devotee he/she becomes very jubilant and does not notice the ups and downs of this world. This was the condition of Devaki and Vasudev. When time for the Lord's taking birth arrived, Lord Brahma, Lord Siva, Lord Indra, Varuna, Kubera, Chandra, Narada, Vasistha, Atri, Bharadvaja, Visvamitra, Agastya, and many other leading demigods and sages arrived in Kamsa's jailhouse to pray for the Lord's arrival. After everyone finished praying and left, the Lord appeared. It was midnight of the eighth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Bhadrapada (July-August). At that time the demigods showered flowers from the sky and praised the Lord for His appearance and all the devotees were loudly chanting the Lord's names. This all happened while the demons were in deep sleep due to Yogamaya's influence.

Srimad Bhagavatam states, *nisithe tama udbhute jayamane janardane*, "When the Lord appeared, the jailhouse was filled with bright light, completely dissipating darkness." By seeing the Lord, Vasudev and Devaki became very happy and filled with the ultimate pleasure. They both paid their homage to the Lord and after praying in many ways said, "O Lord, we had prayed to see You in a baby form. We did not hope to see You appear with four arms." To this the Lord said, "I am your son and also your worshippable Lord. To remind you of this I have appeared in this form. You must take Me across the Yamuna to Gokul Village, leave Me in the house of Nanda Maharaja and bring his daughter back here." After saying this, the Lord immediately turned Himself into an infant. As soon as Vasudev lifted and cradled the Lord in his arms, the shackles that bound his arms and legs fell from his body and the gates to the prison swung open. This signifies that when a person accepts the Lord in his/her heart the tie to this material

world becomes severed. With Vasudev now freed and the guards in deep sleep, he left the jailhouse. As he proceeded towards Gokul Village it was very dark and was raining very hard. The Yamuna River was overflowing its banks and formed whirlpools. Vasudev found his way by lightning from the clouds and came upon Yogamaya, in the form of a jackal, who guided him to Gokul. Lord Sesa (an incarnation of the Lord appearing as a serpent with unlimited hoods) also came and used his hoods as an umbrella to shield the Lord from the rain. Vasudev was so overwhelmed with love for the Lord that he forgot about the water in the Yamuna and steadfast walked into the flowing water. Yamunadevi (personification of the Yamuna River) thought, “The Lord is passing across me. If I do not touch Him there is no benefit from my existence in this world.” Thinking this, Yamuna River rose to Vasudev’s head, causing him to hold the Lord above his head to keep Him from getting wet. When Vasudev began choking, the Lord hung one leg down touching the Yamuna, thus satisfying her and she reduced the water level. Vasudev succeeded in crossing the Yamuna and reached Gokul while everyone was sleeping. On that night Mother Yasoda also gave birth to Lord Krsna and Ambika.

According to Vaisnava philosophy Lord Krsna did not take birth from Devaki in Mathura, but appeared in Mathura with four arms holding His weapons. Lord Krsna took His birth in Gokul from the womb of Mother Yasoda. In this way the Lord took two births. Lord Siva states in the Harivamsa:

*yasoda nanda-patni ca sisuvate samam tada
govindakhya kumar kanya’mbika mathuram gata*

“Nanda Maharaja’s wife gave birth to two children, of which the son’s name was Govinda and the daughter’s name was Ambika. Ambika was brought to Mathura.”

In the Srimad Bhagavatam Yogamaya is called *visnoranuja* (the Lord’s younger sister). Generally anyone’s daughter can be addressed as sister, but a real sister is born from the same parents. Yogamaya (as Ambika) was born from the same womb as Lord Krsna, which is why she is addressed as His real younger sister in Srimad Bhagavatam. Mother Devaki did not give birth to a daughter, whereas Mother Yasoda did.

The question arises, when Vasudev brought Devaki’s Krsna to Gokul, where did that Krsna go? The answer to this is stated by Lord Siva in the Harivamsa thus:

*vasudeva sutah sriman vasudevo’khillatmani
lino nanda-sute rajan ghane sodamini yatha*

“Vasudev’s son merged into Yasoda’s son as lightning merges into clouds. Lightning emanates from clouds and also disappears in them as well. Similarly Lord Krsna appeared from Devaki and then merged in Krsna born from Yasoda. ”

First the Lord appeared before Devaki having four arms and then changed Himself into an infant form, but He appeared from Yasoda as a baby. Therefore the Lord is called Yasodanandana, the son of Mother Yasoda. Yasoda is a more superior devotee than Devaki, which is why the Lord appeared as a baby from Mother Yasoda.

Vasudev quietly left Lord Krsna on Yasoda’s bed, took her daughter and proceeded back to Mathura. There he handed her to Devaki. Then he was mysteriously shackled and the gates to the jailhouse automatically locked. The reason Devaki and Vasudev were again bound is because now they held Maya in their hands, whereas when they held Krsna they were freed.

As soon as Devaki took the girl in her arms the baby started crying, which woke the gatekeepers, who informed Kamsa of the birth. Kamsa ran to the jailhouse and

snatched the girl from Devaki's arms, wanting to kill her by grabbing her legs and hitting her against a stone. But the child slipped from his hands, kicked Kamsa on his head and reached the sky. She then took a matured Durga form with eight arms, wore a red dress, a garland and ornaments and sat atop a lion and said, "O Kamsa, what will you gain by killing me? Your killer is already born in Vraja land." Hearing this, Kamsa almost went mad and reached Vasudev and Devaki to beg pardon and released them from jail.

Sri Sukadeva Goswami continued, Kamsa came to know that he was the demon Kalanemi in his past life and was killed by Lord Visnu, which is why he considered and dealt with the Yadavas as his enemies.

At that time Ugrasena was king of Mathura and was very religious by nature. He was married to Padmavati, the daughter of Satyaketu, the king of Vidarbha province. Padmavati was an only daughter, therefore she often visited her parents. One day while she was playing with her girlfriends in her parents' garden, Gobhil, one of Kubera's sons, was passing through that area. As soon as he saw Padmavati's beauty he became infatuated with lust. He knew Padmavati was married to the king of Mathura and was the daughter of the king of Vidarbha. He also knew that Padmavati would not touch anyone other than her husband, therefore he changed his form to look exactly like King Ugrasena. Because of the demon's deceit, Padmavati did not recognize the impostor. Gobhil took Padmavati from her friends to a secluded place and fulfilled his desire. Then Padmavati, not seeing the specific bodily mark of her husband on this person, asked him, "Who are you, disguised as my husband? You must tell me now." Then he introduced himself as the son of Kubera, the treasurer of heaven. Padmavati could not do anything at this point and her father sent her to Mathura. At the end of her pregnancy she gave birth to a son named Kamsa, who performed many atrocities in Mathura.

Thus ends the fourth day's lecture of Srimad Bhagavatam by the Scripturally Authentic Guru, Mahamandaleshwar Mahant Sri Krsna Balaram Swamiji.

Hari Om Tat Sat

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