

HAPPINESS IN A FOOL'S PARADISE

**SRI SRIMAD BHAKTIVEDANTA
NARAYANA MAHARAJA**

CHAPTER ONE

PURE LOVE AND AFFECTION

THE ORIGINAL MESSAGE

I'm very happy to be travelling and preaching in the Western countries, but I have not come to give anything new. I am simply following Srila Bhaktivedanta Svami Maharaja, and giving the same thing that he came to the West to give. Svami Maharaja is my bosom friend and instructing *guru*. He also did not come to this world to give anything new; rather, he has simply given what he received from his Gurudeva and from all the teachers in our disciplic succession, which goes back to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is actually the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna Himself. However, He came in the form of His own devotee to teach us the process of transcendental devotional service, by which we can develop pure love and affection for Him.

WE CANNOT FIND HAPPINESS IN THIS WORLD

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and all the teachers in His line want us to be happy. Everyone wants to be happy, but generally we can only find a very little happiness and affection in this world, and even then it is mixed with sorrows and suffering.

Why is it that we are unhappy, even though we have so many possessions? We should consider this. Napoleon was not a street beggar, and neither was President Kennedy. Princess Diana was also not a street beggar; she was not at all ugly, foolish, or ignorant. On the contrary, she had name, fame, beauty and everything one could desire, and she was married to Charles, but she was still not happy.

Why is it that even people who seem to have everything are unhappy, in spite of their wealth and opulence? We should think about this very seriously. If we don't, we are no

better than animals. You have heard of Mussolini. His political power made him quite a giant, and Hitler was more than a giant, but they were not happy.

We should reflect on the way that we are living at present, and look into the future, asking ourselves, "Will I be happy in the future, if I continue doing what I am doing now, and following the process that I am following now?" When we ask ourselves this question, we will see that we are going in the same direction as those people have gone. They were all unhappy, and if we go in that direction, we will also be unhappy.

There are many very rich people — for example presidents and prime ministers — who are unhappy, even though they have plenty of opulence, and facility for enjoyment. One day, they, too, will become old and die, and they will lose everything that they have in this world.

Nowadays we have become very advanced in material life, from the kitchen department to medical science. We have produced many wonderful inventions, especially in the areas of communication, transportation and medicine. If a limb or an organ is damaged, we can change it for another. A dead man's eyes can be removed and given to a blind person, so that he can see. Surgeons can even replace a defective heart with a new one. Nonetheless, we still have to become old, and we still have to die.

As far as the advancement of material science is concerned, America is at the forefront, but are Americans happy? If they are, why are they all quarrelling with each other? Why do so many of them commit suicide? We should see that material advancement cannot make us happy.

OLD AGE WILL MARRY US BY FORCE

We don't want to be old, and we don't want our hair to become white. We don't want our eyesight to become worse; and we certainly don't want to become blind. We

want to remain young and very beautiful forever, but after some time we will be forced to become old.

Generally, men do not want to marry women who are old and no longer beautiful. Old age is ugly, and who wants to marry someone who is ugly?

No one wants to marry Old Age, but she will force us to marry her, whether we want to or not. Old Age will take away your teeth, and you'll have to use false teeth instead. We can make some artificial arrangement to make our white hair black, and our teeth beautiful. In the end, though, we'll have so many wrinkles, like all other old people.

You'll have to marry Old Age and become old. Perhaps you won't be able to walk. Finally, many people will come and help you go to the last resting place of the body: to the cemetery or the crematorium. In India, thousands of people take the dead body to the crematorium, and there they burn it to ashes. Other people bury dead bodies; in that case, worms and insects eat some of the body, and the rest rots. If your body is not burned or buried, many wild dogs, jackals and hogs may come and quarrel over it: "Oh, that's my piece. Why did you take it?" Then the body will become stool.

Ultimately, the body is bound to rot, or to become ashes or stool. This is the truth about the body, to which we are so attached. The body will die and disappear forever, but we don't want to think that we will die and disappear forever.

WE ARE REFUGEES HERE

We should consider whether in fact we are this body, or the soul within the body. It is a fundamental truth that there is all the difference in the world between our real self, which is the soul, and this body. Knowing this, we have to be detached from this body, and from worldly, lusty desires. We should also inquire where the soul has come from.

We are parts and parcel of God, of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This material world is not our homeland; it is a place for refugees. We have come to this

world as refugees, and one day we'll have to give it up at a moment's notice. Then where will we go?

WE NEED PURE LOVE AND AFFECTION

Modern scientists have discovered nuclear weapons, and they are continuing with their research. They want to discover weapons of destruction that are so powerful that the whole world can be finished in a moment. But this is not progress and advancement. Where is the love and affection between husband and wife? Where is the love and affection between father and children? Where is the love between one country and another? Why do we have to have such complicated and difficult systems with passports and visas? Why? I often come and go between India and different countries in the world. My only business is to teach people about Krishna consciousness, but the officials make it so difficult. Why?

Inventions and the advancement of material science are bringing the different parts of the world much closer to each other. Unfortunately, they are also creating many problems. The main problem is that love and affection is disappearing from everyone's heart. That is why everyone is unhappy. That is why they quarrel amongst themselves, and want to control each other.

People are obviously not happy in their married life, or in their life outside the home. If their standard of happiness has advanced so much, why do they change wives three, four, twelve, or even twenty times, like dogs changing their mates? Why?

Everyone wants peace and happiness in their lives, but I don't think that the advancement of material science has actually made any one happy. Happiness really depends on love. We cannot find happiness without *prema*, or love and affection. This is our real necessity: happiness and love. We want pure happiness, and pure love and affection, but we can't find them here.

Nevertheless, they do exist.

We are trying to find happiness by developing impure love and affection for imperfect personalities. The Vedic literatures tell us that we can only be happy by developing pure love and affection for the supremely pure personality, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Throughout the *Vedas* and *Upanisads* we read that we are parts and parcels of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna. Our constitutional nature is to serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead with love and affection. Unfortunately we have forgotten this, and that is why we are bound by *maya* in this material world. *Maya* has imprisoned us, and she is giving us the sorrows and sufferings of life: birth, death, old age, disease, and so on. This is just so that we will understand that we cannot be happy in this world. We cannot become happy by making material arrangements, or by trying to fulfill material desires, or by collecting material possessions. We can only be happy in this world and the next by serving the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna. We should chant and remember His holy names and glories.

GENERATOR, OPERATOR AND DESTROYER

We have to develop affection for the Supreme Personality of Godhead who has created this world. He has created it and brought it into being; He is supporting it; and when this world becomes old, it goes back to Him.

What is the significance of the word God?

G stands for Generator, the one who creates this world.

O stands for Operator, the one who is maintaining and supporting this whole world. Without this support, the whole world would have no basis, and would cease to exist.

D stands for Destroyer.

ETERNAL, AUSPICIOUS AND BEAUTIFUL

God is *satyam sivam sundaram*. *Satyam* means that He does not die or take birth. He is eternal. God is one, not many. All the

scriptures in our ancient Vedic tradition say that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, although He also has many other names.

God is *sundaram*, very beautiful. There is no one as beautiful as Krishna. His form is eternally youthful, like that of a very beautiful young boy.

His body curves elegantly in three places — His ankles, His waist and His neck. He smiles and

plays on His flute, and His transcendental body has

a most alluring fragrance. He attracts everyone in the spiritual world — including His beloved cows —and He attracts everyone in this world as well.

Everyone likes beautiful things, but we cannot love a beautiful man if he has some poison in him. God must therefore be *sivam*, auspicious.

Krishna has all auspicious qualities in full. That means that He has infinite power, and besides being almighty, he is also supremely merciful.

LOVING RELATIONSHIP WITH KRISHNA

Krishna is *satyam*, eternal; *sivam*, very merciful; and *sundaram*, very beautiful. Everything is in Krishna, and that is why He can fulfill all kinds of desires. You may know of Nrsimhadeva. Nrsimha Bhagavan is another form of Krishna, and He is also God; He has a head like a lion, and He is very powerful and dangerous, but He is not as beautiful as Krishna. Rama, Lord Ramacandra, is very beautiful, but He cannot fulfill all desires.

Jesus Christ is powerful, and he will protect us like a father or mother, but we cannot play with him like a *sakha*, an intimate friend, and we cannot relate to him as we would to a husband. Nrsimha Bhagavan protects everyone, but He cannot be like a friend, because He is so dangerous.

Krishna is the only Personality in whom we can find everything. His beauty and His mercy are unparalleled; He is omnipotent and omniscient; and He has all the good qualities.

He will relate to us according to our own inner heart's desire. We can be like His servant or His intimate friend. We can care for Him in a parental mood, and we can even have the mood of His beloved.

If you have a little affection for Krishna, He can fulfil whatever wishes or desires you may have.

He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the origin of all other forms of Godhead, and He can give what even Rama cannot. If we have just a little love and affection for Krishna, we can be so happy, for all time. We can be happy in this world, and we can be happy in our next birth as well, and birth after birth. Even if we have liberation, affection for Krishna will make us happy.

CAITANYA MAHAPRABHU'S MISSION

We should develop an affectionate relationship with Krishna, who is the embodiment of love and affection. Caitanya Mahaprabhu came to this world to teach us this [and to tell us that the best way to love Krishna is to follow the *gopis* of Vraja]. Caitanya Mahaprabhu is Krishna Himself, and He came because He is causelessly merciful. He loves everyone in this world, because we are all parts and parcels of Krishna. He came to give love and affection for Krishna.

Caitanya Mahaprabhu came to this world to bring us closer to Krishna, and to wean us away from worldly affairs, worldly enjoyment, worldly false ego and from the false happiness of this world. He gives us eternal bliss, and eternal love and affection, so that we can be happy and peaceful. And it is not possible unless we have what He has come to give.

Caitanya Mahaprabhu came to this world and gave a new message by which everyone could be happy. We can know all this by reading *Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta*. He gave the advanced philosophy of *prema* to very elevated devotees. He preached in a simple way for people who were not so advanced, and while He was traveling through the forest

towards Vrindavana, He even gave divine love to tigers, bears, elephants and other animals.

HAPPINESS BY CHANTING THE HOLY NAME

If you want to be happy, and to have love and affection for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, you should chant Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Then you will be eternally happy. There is no other means. Caitanya Mahaprabhu taught us this verse from the ancient scriptures:

*harer nama harer nama, harer nama eva kevalam
kalanu nasy eva nasy eva, nasy eva gatir anyatba*

“In this Kali-yuga, the age of quarrel and hypocrisy, one should simply chant the holy name, chant the holy name, chant the holy name. There is no other, no other way, no other way.”

We have come to the Western countries only to give the same message that Caitanya Mahaprabhu came to give. We are giving it in brief, and in a very simple way, because the message of love and affection is so deep.

To understand this profound philosophy and to put it into practice, people must first chant *Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare*. At first they can understand this message in a simple way. Then they will gradually understand it more deeply and broadly as they develop through the steady practice of Krishna consciousness, and especially by chanting the holy names. There is a systematic process of development from faith, to firm devotion, taste for devotional practice, transcendental attachment to Sri Krishna and His associates, ecstatic moods and then full transcendental love and affection for Krishna (*prema*). This is Caitanya Mahaprabhu’s method of developing love of

Godhead through the process of congregational chanting of the holy names.

CHAPTER TWO MY MISSION

INTRODUCTION

In this section, Srila Narayana Maharaja explains to his disciples what his mission is. To understand what he is saying here, we have to know something about the disciplic succession.

The particular group of Vaisnavas to which Srila Narayana Maharaja belongs are called Gaudiya Vaisnavas. The Gaudiya Vaisnavas are in The disciplic succession from an extraordinary devotee called Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu — or Lord Caitanya — who appeared a little more than 500 years ago. Lord Caitanya inspired and renewed the practice and teaching of Krishna consciousness, and there is irrefutable evidence that He is actually none other than the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna Himself. Sri Krishna appeared as His own devotee to teach us the ultimate conclusions of Krishna consciousness by His own example. Vaisnavas who follow Lord Caitanya's teachings and practice, and who worship Him as Krishna Himself, are called Gaudiya Vaisnavas.

All Vaisnavas aspire for pure devotional service to Krishna or Visnu. The speciality of the Gaudiya Vaisnavas is their emphasis on the service moods of Vraja (or Vrindavana). The residents of Vraja are so deeply in love with Krishna, that they have no desire to worship Him in awe and reverence. Instead, they worship His most attractive feature informally, with pure transcendental love and affection.

OUR MISSION

Someone was asking me, “What is your mission? What have you come here to give?” My mission is the same as the mission of Lord Caitanya and the teachers in His disciplic succession. Our mission is to give love and affection to all living beings, regardless of their caste, creed and qualification.

The topmost perfection of love and affection is the service mood that the residents of Vraja have towards

Krishna. We are giving this most excellent love and affection to those who want it, and who are qualified for it. But you should recognize that if anyone has real love and affection for Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he must also have love and affection for all living beings. He will not kill any animal, or eat fish, meat, or eggs. He will not harm any living creature at all; he will not even crush the grass unnecessarily. One who has love and affection for Krishna will try to please Him by showing love and affection to all living entities.

LOVE, AFFECTION AND MERCY

How can we have genuine love and affection for Krishna, if we do not show mercy to His parts and parcels? Sometimes, when I go out for a walk in the West, I think, “I should not come this way.” Why? Because the calves and cows grazing in the fields run away in fear, trembling when they see me. They are thinking, “These people have no mercy on us. They are keeping us in jail, and after some time, they will take us to the slaughter-house and kill us.”

How can anyone think they have the right to attack animals and kill them? If people are not merciful to animals, how will Krishna be merciful to them?

We see that there are prominent religious leaders and yet they are responsible for the deaths of very small calves, so that they can eat their flesh. Those small calves will cry out at the time of death. Where will that crying go? Where will it go? Does Krishna have no ears?

Such religious leaders are thinking that they are very elevated religious persons and servants of God, but what do the calves think about that? We realise that such people have no love and affection for the animals. Yet the animals are also sons and daughters of Krishna, and eternal servants of Krishna. That is why we chant Krishna’s holy name to them — Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna.

NO DUPLICITY

A *guru* must be a pure devotee with no self interest, who is not duplicitous, and who is full of this kind of mercy. My mission is to give love and affection for Krishna. When people have that, they will automatically have love and affection for all living beings. You should all come to this stage. This is my mission.

My disciples should listen to these instructions. Try to develop these qualities of love & affection, and obtain *prema* for Krishna. Then try to be merciful to everyone, and give this message to all by distributing transcendental literature, and by chanting the holy name in public places. Everyone — including ignorant people, and even the calves and other innocent animals — should hear Krishna's holy name and be benefited. Even if they have no desire for it, the holy name will purify them in any case. Caitanya Mahaprabhu has said, "Perform the chanting of the holy name in public, and don't worry if people laugh at you, or insult you. Don't worry what they do."

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has established the movement for preaching Krishna consciousness to people where they live. You should try to follow his instructions and example. Develop love and affection for Krishna, and help others to develop it as well. If you are really doing this, I will be pleased, and Krishna will be pleased. Then you will really be disciples, otherwise not.

Gaura-premanande! Haribol!

CHAPTER THREE SUDAMA BRAHMANA

INTRODUCTION

Modern material civilisation has failed to produce happiness. The pastime of Sudama Brahmana teaches us that though one may be in an impoverished position, he can nevertheless be happy by practicing spiritual principles which are the exact opposite of those that we learn in material society. This pastime also illustrates that Krishna is fully capable of supplying the needs of His surrendered devotees even beyond our wildest imaginations.

KRISHNA IS VERY MERCIFUL

Krishna is so powerful. He is the ocean of the essence of all bliss in transcendental relationships in pure love and affection. He is the God of all Gods. He is even the root cause of other forms of Godhead such as Rama, Nrsingha and all the other incarnations.

At the same time, Krishna is very kind and merciful. If anyone offers Him even just a leaf, fruit or water, He will accept it. One may be so poor that he has nothing to offer Krishna, but Krishna says, “Don’t be hopeless. You can offer me a leaf.” This really means a leaf from the *tulasi* plant, which is so dear to Krishna. But if you don’t have a *tulasi* leaf, you can offer any leaf or even a bud from a tree.

If you don’t have that, then you can even just offer some grass — no harm. Or you can offer Krishna some water, which is available everywhere free of charge. And when you make the offering with love, Krishna will think, “Oh! I cannot repay this offering of love.” He is so merciful. If you give Him such a very little thing, He will think, “He has given Me so much.”

In *Srimad Bhagavatam*, we find a delightful pastime, which shows that Krishna is so grateful and merciful that no one else in the whole of the creation can be compared with Him.

THE BRAHMANA AND HIS WIFE

Once there was a *brahmana* named Sudama. A *brahmana* is someone who is spiritually realised, and who knows Brahman, the spiritual basis of the whole creation. Sudama *brahmana* was also a Vaisnava, which means that He worshipped Krishna as the Supreme Brahman, the source and basis of Brahman. Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but He appeared on Earth about 5,000 years ago, and performed pastimes to defeat the demons and to delight His devotees. Sudama knew this, and was always engaged in chanting and remembering Krishna's names and glories, He lived near Dvaraka, Krishna's wonderful city, which was full of inconceivable, mystical opulence.

Sudama was married and his wife was very chaste. *Brahmanas* are expected to devote their lives to spiritual development, and to live very simply, by begging if necessary. Sudama and his wife were very poor, but he never took much trouble to go here and there begging. He was satisfied with what he got.

Some people think, "I am so poor, so I should do something to make more money, but Sudama was satisfied in himself. He had realised the soul and Supersoul, the expansion of the Supreme Lord who resides in every atom, and in the heart of every living entity. He was also a most elevated devotee of Sri Krishna. That is why he was never worried about making money, even though he was poor and had to support himself and his wife. He was always absorbed in chanting and remembering. Sometimes he used to go and beg, but he would only go to two or three doors and then come back.

Sudama did not have fine clothes himself, nor could he give his wife ornaments and new clothes. Her clothes were

very old, worn and torn. She was quite young, but her breasts were dry, like those of an old woman, and her belly was sunken. She was quite weak, but she was still satisfied with whatever her husband brought.

I hear that in Western countries, the husband sometimes does nothing, and the wife goes

out to make money. It is not like that in Indian

culture, although India is also becoming like that. Sudama's wife was always in the house, serving her husband. She used to cook whatever her husband brought home, and she would give most of it to her husband, but he was intelligent and kind, so he used to take some and leave at least half. There was not enough for either of them to eat, but they were satisfied.

Sudama's wife never disturbed him, because she knew that he was a very exalted *brahmana* and devotee, always chanting and remembering. She always helped her husband, and served him obediently. She never quarrelled with him, or chastised him: "Why don't you bring me any nice food, clothing and ornaments? Why did you marry me if you can't support me properly?" She was not like this, but very obedient and humble.

KRISHNA, THE WONDERFUL FRIEND

One day she went to her husband while he was absorbed in his spiritual practices. Speaking very humbly with folded hands, she said, "This is the third day that we are fasting. I am not worried for myself, but I am so worried for you. There is nothing for me to cook. I used to beg from the neighbours, but I have been going to them every day, so now I am too ashamed to go any more.

"I have been thinking that Krishna is your very wonderful friend, He is very generous because He is Parabrahman, the Supreme Absolute Truth. Because your friend is Parabrahman, if a *brahmana* goes and meets Him, He will at

once donate more wealth than he can even imagine. Why don't you go and visit your friend?"

"I cannot do that," Sudama replied. "I cannot beg anything from my holy master Krishna. I am not the sort of servant who will go and take something from Him. Never."

Then his wife said, "You don't have to beg anything from Him. He will see that you are a poor

brahmana, and He will give you more than you can imagine, even without your asking Him. He is

known to be very affectionate to His devotees. When He sees you, He will give you a donation automatically.

"In any case, You should go there just to meet Him, and for no other reason. You won't have to tell Him anything, because He knows your heart anyway."

Sudama's wife kept speaking to him like this for some days, and finally he thought, "I should go, but not to beg anything. If He gives me something, I will be satisfied. Let me just see the lotus feet of my Lord and Master Krishnacandra and this will be of benefit for me. So I must go."

Then he smiled and said to his wife, "Please give me something to present to Him. When I go there, He will ask, 'Have you brought any present for me?' Then what will I say?"

There was no rice in the house to give Krishna as a present, so Sudama's wife begged two or three handfuls of broken rice from a neighbour. She didn't have a clean cloth to wrap it in, so she had to put it in a very old piece of cloth. She gave it to her husband, and he left, absorbed in chanting and thinking of his friend.

THE WONDERFUL CITY OF DVARAKA

While he was on the road, he thought, "When I get to Dvaraka, how will I manage to meet Krishna? He is the King of kings; He is Dvarakadhisa, the Lord of Dvaraka, and I am

just like a poor street beggar. Will He remember when we were students together in Sandipani Muni's school?" He was absorbed in this way for the whole journey.

He walked all day and in the evening he finally arrived at the great and wonderful city of Dvaraka. There was a palace for each of Krishna's 16,108 queens, and there were more palaces for their beautiful maidservants. When he reached the city, he passed through thirty or more gates, one after another. Everyone showed him respect and honour and offered obeisances to him, because they could see his sacred thread (worn by Brahmana priests), and knew that he was a *brahmana*. There was no restriction on him, although the guards checked others very strictly, just as they do at Singapore Airport.

Sudama asked which way to go to meet Krishna, and he was advised to go to Rukmini's palace. She was Krishna's chief queen in Dvaraka. When he reached her palace, they took him to Rukmini's room. There he saw Krishna sitting on a very opulent and luxurious bed made of gold and studded with jewels, and his queens serving Him and fanning Him with beautiful whisks of white hair. As soon as Krishna saw Sudama, he immediately ran towards him barefoot and embraced him. "How merciful He is," thought the *brahmana*, and he began to weep.

KRISHNA RECEIVES THE BRAHMANA

Krishna gave Sudama His own seat on Rukmini's bed, where no one else ever sat except Krishna and Rukmini. Krishna took a seat on the lower level and sent for golden bowls and golden jugs of rose-water to bathe Sudama's feet. "He is my master," Krishna told His queens, "and He is as worshipable as the Supreme Lord Himself. You should fan him with the whisks and give Me the water to wash his feet."

Sudama's feet were dirty and full of cracks, because he had no money for shoes. He was wearing an old, worn and torn *dhobi* and an old piece of cloth around his neck because

he did not have a proper top-cloth. He felt ashamed and embarrassed to be sitting on Rukmini's bed with Krishna washing his feet.

Everybody was wondering, "What is Krishna doing, and who is this *brahmana* to whom He is giving so much honour?" Meanwhile, Sri Krishna took the foot-bath water, and poured it all over His own transcendental body. Then He distributed it amongst His queens, saying, "Sprinkle this water everywhere. Today we have all become purified".

We should understand the glory of devotees. This understanding and practice is coming from the

Vedic period in ancient times, but we don't know the power and glory of these sublime traditions.

But Krishna did this Himself to teach us, and He gave instructions for the water to be given to all his sons and daughters.

When they had received Sudama very nicely, Krishna put His hands on his shoulders, and began to talk to him just like a close friend. Meanwhile, Sudama began looking at the inconceivable opulence around him. The walls and pillars were made of gold, studded with jewels, and decorated with the finest coral and silks. Now Krishna said to Himself, "This *brahmana* is thinking, 'Has Krishna recognised me? Does He know that I am the same Sudama who was His school friend? Perhaps He has forgotten me, and He is honouring me just because I am a *brahmana*.'"

To reassure his friend, Krishna began to recall their past friendship. "Oh My friend, do you remember when we were just small boys in the school of our Gurudeva Sandipani Muni? We spent many days studying together, and we became bosom friends. One day, our guru's wife said, 'O my dear sons, I have no dry wood for cooking.'"

Then both Krishna and Sudama remembered what had happened when they went out to fetch wood.

LOST IN THE STORM

It was evening, and there were clouds in the sky. The two friends went together to the nearby forest and collected dry sticks and branches. While they were doing so, heavy clouds gathered and torrents of rain began to fall without stopping. Everywhere was Hooded, and there was no way of telling where the water was deep and where it was shallow. Meanwhile, night fell, and it was impossible to see anything.

The two boys huddled together all night in the shelter of a tree, unable to go anywhere else because of the deep water. Krishna is the Supreme Lord Bhagavan Himself, but by the influence of His mystic pastime potency He had forgotten that He is all-powerful and all-knowing, and He had become just like an ordinary boy.

In the morning, their *guru* Sandipani Muni began to search everywhere for them. When he heard where they had gone, he immediately went to the forest and began to call out, “O Krishna! O Sudama! Where are you?”

At last Sandipani Muni found the boys, and spoke to them very affectionately. “Have you spent the whole night here? You have given up everything for my happiness. You are surrendered souls. I want disciples like you.” He placed his hands on both their heads and blessed them: “Your lives will be successful. Whatever you came to me for, you will have. May all learning, all the arts, and all the knowledge of all the *Vedas* and *Upanisads* come to you at once.” As he spoke, it was so. In an instant, they had complete realisation of all knowledge.

After this, Sandipani Muni took their hands and brought them back to his *asrama*, where his wife was waiting for them.

When Krishna related this story of their boyhood, Sudama realised that He was just not respecting him because he was a *brahmana*. Krishna actually remembered him, and was honouring him because he was His old friend.

KRISHNA APPRECIATES A HUMBLE OFFERING

Now Krishna smiled at Sudama and said, “My dear friend, I know that you could not have come empty-handed. My sister-in-law must have given you something to present to me. Where is it?”

Then Sudama remembered the broken rice that he had brought with him, and which he was keeping in its wrapper under his arm. “How can I present that to Krishna?” he thought. “Krishna is so soft, but that rice is very hard tasteless. Besides, it is wrapped up in a dirty old cloth. How can I give it to Krishna?”

But Krishna knew exactly what He was thinking, and playfully snatched the broken rice from him. He opened the wrapping and quickly ate a handful of the rice.

“This is the most delicious offering I have ever tasted,” He said in delight. He was about to take a second handful, but Rukmini and the other queens stopped Him.

“Please don’t take any more! You have already given all kinds of opulence and all that you have in return for that one handful of rice. If You take a second handful, You will have to give us to this *brahmana* as well. You have given enough. Please don’t take any more, otherwise we will die.” And Krishna stopped tasting the broken rice.

SUDAMA RETURNS

After this, Krishna massaged the *brahmana’s* feet with His own hands, talked to him very

affectionately, and served him all sorts of delicious *prasad*. He massaged the *brahmana’s* feet the whole night, even while he slept, until the *brahma muhurta*, the auspicious time before sunrise. Then Sudama awoke, took bath, chanted his *gayatri mantras*, and performed all his devotional activities. When he had done this, he said, “O Krishna, my *sakha*, my very dear friend, now I want to return to my home.”

Krishna replied, “I am so happy that you came. You are my friend. I request you, please come again and again, and I may also visit you.”

When Sudama left the palace, Krishna followed him. (When any Vaisnava or *brahmana* comes, we should stand up and go to meet them, and when they leave we should follow them to the border of the village or the town.) Krishna was saying very sweet things to His friend, and bade him farewell, but He did not give him any gifts, although a wealthy householder normally offers lavish presentations in charity to a worthy *brahmana*.

When they reached the border, Krishna returned, and Sudama went on by himself just as he had come — in dirty, old, worn and torn clothes. He thought happily to himself, “Krishna is so merciful! If He had given me wealth, I would have become absorbed in thinking about my opulence, and I would have forgotten Him. He saw that I am not qualified, and that is why He did not give me anything.” Thinking how kind and merciful Krishna is, Sudama began to cry.

TRANSFORMATION AT HOME

It was evening when he reached his village. But as he came close to his house, he was puzzled. “Where is my hut, which always leaks when it rains and which has no rats because we have no food-grains? Where is my cow, which is as thin as a skeleton? Where is my old meditation seat of *kusa* grass? It has all disappeared!”

And indeed, everything had changed. In place of what he had known before, there were 16,108 royal palaces. People were riding horses and royal elephants along the splendid roads. There were very beautiful gardens full of lovely flowers and berries, and decorated with attractive ponds of cool water. Peacocks danced madly, and doves and cuckoos called melodiously.

“What has happened?” thought Sudama. “Where have I come? Am I in heaven?”

Meanwhile, someone told his wife, “Your husband has returned.” Oh, she was so happy. She came out very joyfully to meet her husband. She was just like an angel, for during the night Krishna had made her as beautiful as a young, teenage girl. She was surrounded by thousands of maidservants, for each of Krishna’s 16,108 queens had given something to Sudama and his wife. Now they had all the wealth and opulence that one could ever imagine. That is why he could not believe that he had come to his own house.

Sudama’s wife saw her husband coming, with his stick in his hand. He had not changed. He still wore the same dirty, old clothes, and looked like a poor, old person, although he was still young. Then she came out with her whole party of 16, 108 maidservants, singing and playing drums and many other musical instruments.

Sudama saw the party coming with golden water pots to welcome him. He was surprised. “Why are they coming towards me? Perhaps they have mistaken me for someone else.” But there was no mistake. If Krishna had changed Sudama as well as his wife, she would not have recognised him when he came back. That is why Krishna left him in his original form.

When she came towards Sudama with her arms outstretched, he became alarmed and began to run away, but they detained him. Immediately his wife touched him, he became as young and beautiful as she was, and very strong. Then Sudama said out loud, “O Krishna, you are wonderful. I never wanted anything, but during the night while we were asleep, You gave me so much wealth and opulence!” and he began to weep. “How kind and merciful Krishna is. We thought that He might give some donation, but we cannot believe what He has given.”

KRISHNA LOOKS AFTER HIS DEVOTEES

We should understand that Krishna is very merciful. If you chant His name, Hare Krishna, He will provide enough for

you if you have some requirements or even if you don't have any requirement. So don't be afraid. If you have a job, you can donate one thousand or ten thousand dollars a month. But if Krishna is pleased, then hundreds and millions of dollars may come without your having to do anything. Krishna will give so much. He will break open a hole in the ceiling and he will pour it in.