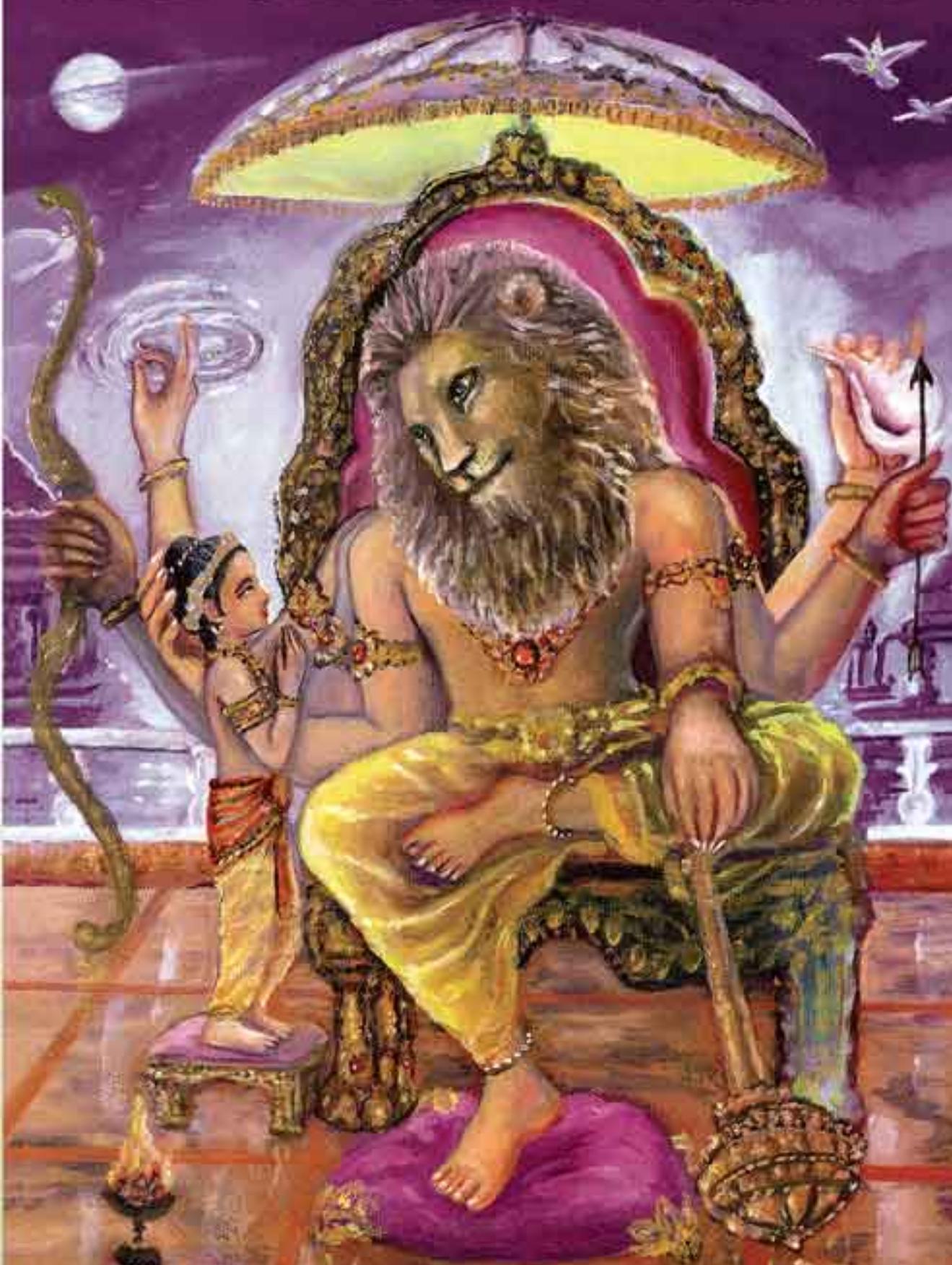


# THE FEARLESS PRINCE



Out of his compassion for all souls, Shri Bhaktivedanta Narayan Goswami Maharaj appeared in this world in 1921, in Bihar, India, near the sacred Ganges River. A self-realized spiritual preceptor coming in the Brahma-Madhva Vaishnava lineage, Shri Maharaj is widely recognized as an authoritative scholar having profound understanding of the essence of the ancient literatures of India. He has translated into Hindi and commented on more than thirty Sanskrit and Bengali classical texts, thus preserving the teachings of the ancient Vedas.

Shri Maharaj taught Vaishnava philosophy throughout India for over forty years before venturing to the West in 1966. Since then, he has circled the globe over fifteen times, following in the footsteps of his instructing spiritual master and intimate friend, Shri AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, who was the first to propagate the pure bhakti mission of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu all over the world. Shri Maharaj's books and classes are being translated into many languages and enlivening people everywhere. As a master spiritual guide, he inspires in the hearts of his disciples the understanding of the highest spiritual truths, thus filling their lives with auspiciousness.

Shri Maharaj was awarded the title "Ambassador of Peace" in Birmingham, UK, in 2002 for his selfless service to mankind in the area of advancing spiritual consciousness. He is also a leader in the restoration of many historical, sacred landmarks in India. His profound affection endears him to his many friends and students, whose lives become transformed by receiving his 'heartly blessings'.

Shri Shrimad Bhaktivedanta Narayan Goswami Maharaj



# THE FEARLESS PRINCE

The Story of Prahlad Maharaj  
from *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*, Seventh Canto

*compiled from lectures by*

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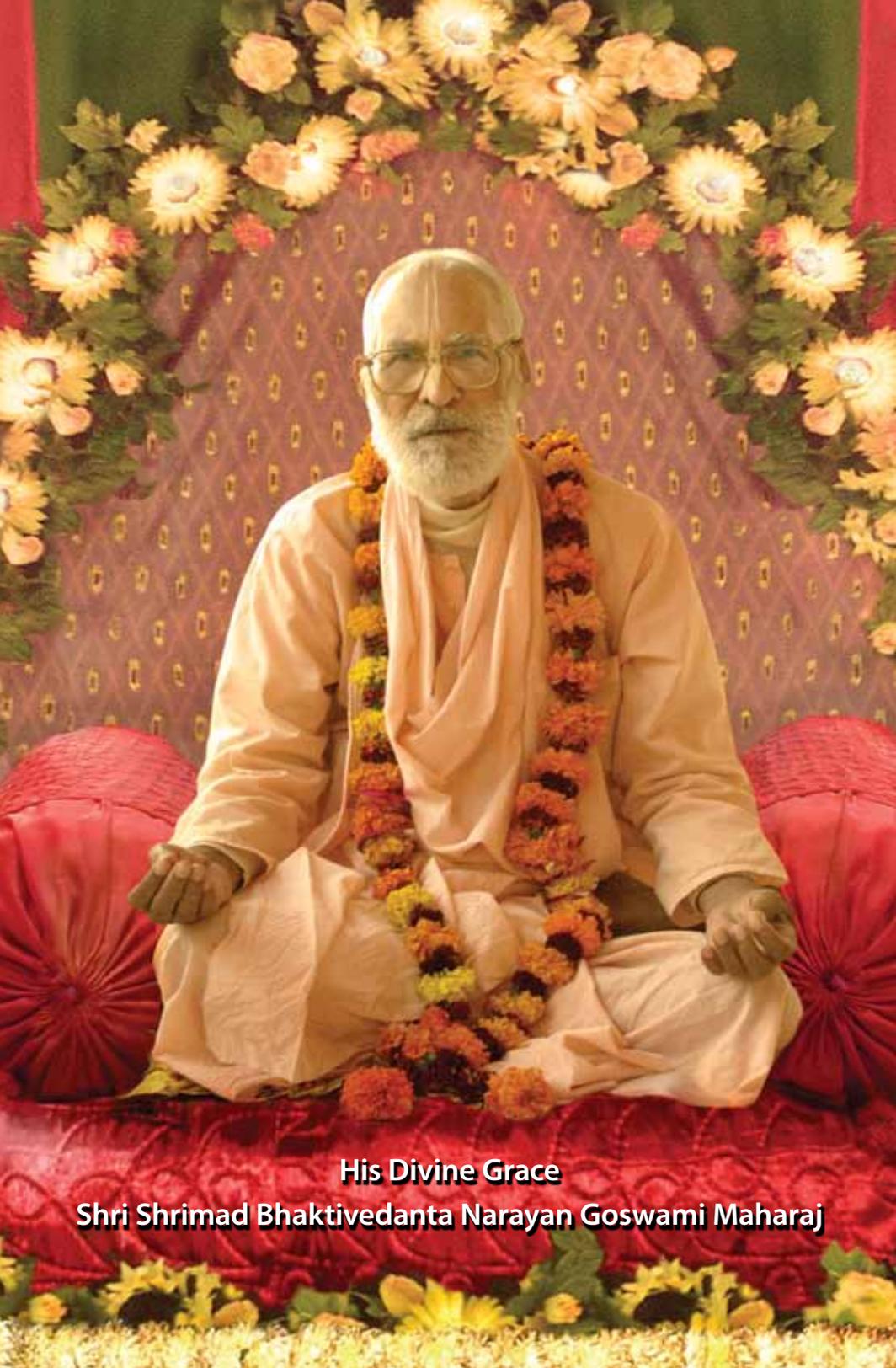
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**His Divine Grace**

**Shri Shrimad Bhaktivedanta Narayan Goswami Maharaj**



The Deity of Prahlad, Narasingha-dev and Lakshmi-devi in Vrindavan

## Foreword

The Vedic scriptures of India are the original literatures of the planet. Recorded 5,000 years ago by a partial incarnation of Godhead, Shrila Veda Vyasa, they give complete knowledge of both the material and spiritual realms. These ancient texts are extremely vast, and amongst them *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* is accepted as the cream. This sublime literature presents the highest truths, explaining that the purpose of human life and the path to achieving real, lasting happiness are found in one-pointed, unmotivated devotional service to the Supreme Lord Shri Krishna. *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* emphatically declares Shri Krishna to be the original form of Godhead – the eternally existing, eternally youthful person and the source of all that be. From Him come many incarnations who, throughout the ages, descend to this planet in a great variety of forms to bless His devotees and to engage in different types of pastimes with them. The wonderful and astonishing pastimes of these partial expansions of the Lord are described in this ancient text. *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* culminates with the Tenth Canto's narrative of the sweet pastimes Lord Shri Krishna performed when He came to this planet 5,000 years ago.

A much earlier history, which took place millions of years ago, is the famous and exciting episode of Lord Narasinghadev – the half-lion, half-man incarnation – who came to save the small boy, Prahlad Maharaj. Prahlad was born into a family

## The Fearless Prince

of big demons, his father and uncle being highly inimical to Shri Krishna. Prahlad, however, much to his father's consternation, was a pure devotee of the Supreme Godhead, who is also known as Vishnu, the all-



pervasive Lord of the cosmic manifestation. Even as a small boy Prahlad's character was exemplary, demonstrating all the good qualities a human being can have. He was humble, tolerant and never envious of others. He was not disturbed when put into danger, and because he was completely devoid of material desires, he considered everything material to be insignificant. Therefore, because his senses were always under control and his intelligence remained steady, he was never plagued by any type of unsavory passions.

His father, Hiranya-kashipu, on the other hand, possessed a demoniac nature, and his father's twin brother, Hiranyaksha, was equally vile. Indeed, at the time of their birth all inauspicious omens were observed in the heavens and on earth – cows yielded blood instead of milk, clouds rained pus, trees fell down for no reason, braying asses ran wildly, birds flew shrieking from their nests, she-jackals vomited fire, misty halos appeared around the sun and the moon, and malefic planets glowed more brightly. As the two boys entered their youth, they began to exhibit uncommon bodily features, developing steel-like frames that began to grow just like two great mountains. They became so tall that they seemed to touch outer space. When they walked, the earth shook and, having profusely decorated

themselves with brilliantly shining gold ornaments, their huge forms were so dazzling that they seemed to block out the sun and all directions.

Desiring to enjoy everything in their sight, the two brothers were keen to take over the whole universe. Incited by his older brother, the hot-tempered Hiranyaksha took a club on his shoulder and traveled all over the creation in a fighting spirit. In his search to find someone who could match him in battle, the proud demon terrified everyone who crossed his path, including the demigods who ran and hid in fear of him. Finally, he was directed to fight with Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Person, who was the only one who could satisfy him in combat. Coming in His boar incarnation as Varaha-dev, the Lord engaged in a long, fierce battle with the arrogant demon, and finally finished him off by simply slapping his ear.

When Hiranya-kashipu learned that Lord Vishnu had killed his brother, he was greatly aggrieved. Thirsty for revenge he vowed to cut off Vishnu's head and offer an oblation of His



gushing blood to his brother, who had been very fond of drinking blood. Thinking that Vishnu lives from the offerings of the sacrificial ceremonies, which were regularly performed by the priests to please the Lord for the auspiciousness of society, he schemed to destroy the Lord by stopping the sacrifices. Thus, he sent out hordes of demons to kill the cows (who supply ghee for the sacrifices) and the Brahmins (the priests who officiate at the sacrifices). He also ordered them to

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destroy all the trees and plants that nourish the cows, and to set fire to all the temples and the residences of the cows, Brahmins and followers of the Vedas. In this way the mighty demon ravaged the earth.

Attempting to rival the Supreme Lord Vishnu, Hiranyakashipu was determined to become immortal and to gain supremacy over the entire universe. With this aim in mind, he performed severe austerities. For one hundred celestial years (22,000 years by earthly calculation), he stood on his toes, held his arms up straight and looked upward. Fire began blazing from his head and spread throughout the universe, causing all the planets to become too hot for habitation. From the birds and beasts to the demigods – all living beings were greatly troubled. Even the mountains



on all the planets trembled and stars and planets fell. Finally, all the demigods appealed to the creator of the material universe, Lord Brahma, who went to speak with Hiranyakashipu. Brahma was amazed to find him completely covered over by an anthill. The demon had been standing there for so long that worms and ants had devoured his flesh; he was remaining alive by circulating the vital air in his bones.

Lord Brahma was so impressed with the demon's determination and extreme austerities that he willingly granted

him any boon that was within his power to give. He sprinkled Hiranya-kashipu with a few drops of divine water from his waterpot, and Hiranya-kashipu stepped out of the anthill completely revitalized. Now his body was fresh and powerful and it glowed like gold. He proceeded to conquer all the planets in the three worlds – upper, middle and lower (heaven, earth and hell). He brought all the living entities under his control and ruled them with a heavy hand. Living in fear, all of the demigods and great sages were, as if by force, steadily coming to worship and glorify him.

In his reign of terror, Hiranya-kashipu oppressed the demigods, the followers of the Vedas, the cows, the Brahmins and the religious, saintly persons. He systematically overturned all the established religious practices within this world, thus creating havoc throughout society. He was so powerful that he even reversed the results of people's pious and impious activities. He awarded suffering to the virtuous and happiness to the miscreants. Everyone, including the rulers of the various planets, suffered extreme distress from Hiranya-kashipu's severe persecution. Only one person remained undisturbed by this terrible demon – his small son Prahlad, who by dint of his pure devotion, was always seeing the Lord everywhere.

The extent of Hiranya-kashipu's power was inconceivable, yet he remained unsatisfied and consumed with envy for Lord Vishnu. The whole universe was under his thumb, but he could not control his own son. Venting his anger and frustration upon the saintly child, he brought about his own demise. Now, please read the wonderful story of the fearless prince, Prahlad Maharaj.

The Editor



## The Lord's Grandeur

Shri Krishna, the Supreme Lord who attracts every living being by His inconceivable beauty and sweetness, is worshiped by different kinds of high class, self-realized devotees. They are distinguished by the degree of their service, intimacy and awareness of Shri Krishna's position as the Supreme Godhead. A devotee in the first stage of development is one whose knowledge of Krishna's majesty and opulences is always in the forefront. Such a lover of God knows all transcendental truths – who Krishna is, what the nature of the soul is, what illusion (Maya) is, what supreme love is, what the various levels of pure devotion to Shri Krishna are, and what nectar exists in the loving exchanges between Shri Krishna and His devotees.

The best example of a devotee on this level, who worships the Supreme Lord in a mood of awe and reverence, is Prahlad Maharaj. He is honored with the title 'Maharaj', meaning 'a king among great personalities endowed with pure love for Shri Krishna'. Today we will explain the *bhakti* (selfless devotion to Shri Krishna) found in the heart of Prahlad Maharaj – how he was an unparalleled devotee of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If you want to become a devotee of the Lord, you must follow Prahlad's example of humility, purity and tolerance. First of all, this will require that you give up your desires for sense gratification and cultivate an exclusive desire for *bhakti*. Your devotion should not be covered by an over-endeavor to

acquire dry knowledge or material happiness, or by performing austerities or other extraneous activities, such as mystic yoga, sacrifices, mundane piety and fulfilling vows. Rather, your devotion should exhibit some tendency to spontaneously serve Shri Krishna with body, mind and words. If you engage all the senses and moods of the heart in serving the Lord in this way, then your endeavors will be considered *bhakti*.

## Prahlad's Demoniatic Father

Prahlad Maharaj was extraordinary – very humble and very tolerant. His father, Hiranya-kashipu, was an erudite scholar of the Vedic scriptures. All the Vedas were on the tip of his tongue, and he was also well versed in Sanskrit grammar. But his nature was demoniac because he was opposed to Lord Krishna. Anyone in this world, whether human or otherwise, surely has a demoniac nature if he is inimical to God. In previous times there were only two or three demons on the planet, like Ravana and Hiranya-kashipu, but nowadays there are demons everywhere, in every country. For no reason they want to destroy the world. So we should be careful of them. How? We can protect ourselves by chanting the sacred names of God under the guidance of any pure devotee of Lord Krishna.

Hiranya-kashipu had received a boon from Lord Brahma, the creator of the material universe, from whom he had cleverly requested, "Please bless me that I will not die in the air, on this earth or on any lower or higher planet. Bless me that I will not be killed by any weapon, by anything living or dead, by any man or animal created by you (Brahma), or by any bird, snake or other such creature. You please further bless me that I will not die during the day or night, during any month of any year, or either

outdoors or indoors.” He thus received a boon that appeared to make him immortal.

Though Hiranya-kashipu and Prahlad were related as father and son, they maintained substantial differences of opinion. Hiranya-kashipu would quarrel with the child, but the young prince always remained humble and tolerant. Hiranya-kashipu was a demon, yet Prahlad Maharaj was a pure hearted devotee and was like a demigod. It is quite unusual for the son of a demon to be a high-class devotee, a godly personality. Of Hiranya-kashipu’s four sons, Prahlad was the youngest. His father favored him because he was very intelligent. He therefore sent him to the school of Sukracharya, the materialistic guru of the demons.



## Teach My Boy to Be Just like Me

At that time Sukracharya was absent, having gone away on a long mission, so his sons Sanda and Amarka were teaching the young

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prince. Sanda means 'bull'. A bull is very lusty and dangerous, and sometimes it goes mad. Arka means 'light', so Amarka means 'where there is no light'. These two brothers were not in the light, meaning they had no realization of the self. Persons who act like bulls and who are always in darkness, ignorant of the fundamental transcendental truths about the Supreme Godhead, are like Sanda and Amarka. Hiranya-kashipu ordered them, "Teach my boy Prahlad about mundane religious duties, economic development, sense gratification and liberation. Especially focus on politics – how to defeat enemies, how to acquire kingdoms, and how to hide the truth by diplomacy."

After four or five months in the school Prahlad returned home. His mother Kayadu decorated him and brought him to his father. When Hiranya-kashipu saw his beautiful and humble son, he kissed him and happily took him on his lap. "My dear son," he said, "you are so intelligent, and I am so pleased with you. What have you been studying? Tell me the best thing you have learned in school."



## Prahlad's Devotion Shines Forth

Prahlad Maharaj replied:

*sravanam kirtanam vishnoh smaranam pada-sevanam  
archanam vandanam dasyam sakhyam atma-nivedanam*

“Nine processes are accepted as pure devotional service: hearing and chanting about the transcendental holy name, form, qualities, paraphernalia and pastimes of Lord Krishna (Vishnu), remembering Him, serving His lotus feet, offering Him respectful worship with many nice items, offering Him prayers, becoming His servant, considering Him one's best friend, and surrendering everything unto Him (in other words, serving Him with body, mind and words). One who has dedicated his life to the service of Shri Krishna through these nine methods should be understood to be the most learned person, as he has acquired complete knowledge.”

## Hiranya-kashipu's Fury

Hearing his son's expression of devotion to the Supreme Lord, Hiranya-kashipu became red hot with anger. Then, laughing at the irony of the situation he shouted, “Prahlad, I brought you into this world. I am the person who maintains you and takes care of you. Everything you have comes from me. How can you be so ungrateful as to not respect me as your father, and instead take the side of our enemy Vishnu?! Prahlad, who has taught you about Vishnu? Your gurus, Sanda and Amarka?” Turning to the boy's teachers, he sharply denounced them, “Is this what you have taught my son? I instructed you to teach him practical matters for his material success. Why have you taught him about

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spirituality and devotion to Vishnu? For this I will punish you! I will cut off your heads!”

Sanda and Amarka began to tremble. “O sir,” they replied, “we have not trained him in devotion to Vishnu. We do not know where he has picked up this foolishness. He just speaks these things instinctively. Ask him where he learned this. Ask him if we taught it to him or if he heard this from someone else.”

Hiranya-kashipu angrily questioned his boy, “Where did you learn this? If these two gurus, Sanda and Amarka, have not taught you this, then where did you learn all this nonsense that you are speaking so boldly? Who visited the school? Narada or any other devotee? Speak the truth; otherwise I will kill you.

Do you think I am foolish? Or your gurus, Sanda, Amarka and Sukracharya – do you think they are foolish? Do you think that they don’t know anything? Is this what you are implying?”

He then ordered the two teachers, “Take Prahlad and again teach him politics and diplomacy – how to control subjects, how to conquer others, and how to be powerful like me. Furthermore, a guard should be kept to



“Where did you learn all this nonsense?”

ensure that no devotee of that Krishna, Vishnu, enters that part of the school.”

Thereupon, Sanda and Amarka took the boy back to school. Some months later Prahlad again returned home. Mother Kayadu decorated her son, and brought him to the lap of his father. Hiranya-kashipu, very happy to see his son, asked the same question as before, “What have you learned in school from your guru?”

## Fixed in Higher Consciousness

Prahlad answered, “O my dear father, those persons whose consciousness is not fixed on Shri Krishna but rather on enjoying material life, cannot actually understand the goal of life and their real self-interest. This human form of life is meant for worshipping the Supreme Lord Krishna, but materialistic persons can never understand this because their senses are uncontrolled. Totally dedicated to satisfying their senses, they are pulled away from pursuing the real goal of life and repeatedly engage in chewing the chewed. The materialistic way of life is like chewing over and over again that which has already been chewed, looking for happiness where there is none to be found. Although there is no profit in such a life, people with uncontrolled senses are enamored by it. Thus, they enter into the darkest regions of ignorance and progress towards a hellish situation filled with untold sufferings.

“Persons who are striving to enjoy material life or who are totally immersed in family affairs, remain unaware that the ultimate goal of our existence is to worship the lotus feet of Lord Vishnu and go back home, back to Godhead. Instead, they focus all their aspirations on the false hope of trying to enjoy their body, wife, children, home, relatives, job and society, convinced that

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“Blind leading the blind”

these things will make them happy. But the truth of the matter is that family and material success actually have nothing to do with their real self-interest. Completely blind to the actual purpose of human life, such persons accept as their guru another blind man who is also attached to materialistic life. Thus, the blind lead the blind. Inevitably all of them stray from the path and fall into a ditch. If the guru does not know the purpose of life, then he is destined for hell, along with his disciples.”

Hiranya-kashipu became furious. “Are you insinuating that I am blind and foolish?” he screamed, “and that my guru, Sukracharya, and his sons Sanda and Amarka are bogus persons? Are you saying that they have no intelligence and that you know more than them? Don’t you know how great my guru is? He is so learned and powerful that just by sprinkling a few drops of water on a dead body he can bring that person back to life. Do you think that my guru and I are so misdirected that you should teach us about spiritual life? I worshiped Lord Brahma for over 20,000 years. Do you think I have simply wasted my time? For disrespecting my guru and my beliefs, prepare to meet your death, for I shall put an end to you and your foolish talk of God!”

Prahlad Maharaj remained totally fearless. He boldly declared, "Yes, both of you are blind – your guru and you. Both of you are demons, and therefore blind to the truth. If you do not humbly approach high class, qualified devotees, whose hearts are immersed in their loving service to the Supreme Lord and who kindly instruct others on devotional service, then you have no intelligence. You must bathe and purify your mind in the dust of the lotus feet of such saintly personalities, meaning that you must hear and follow their instructions. If you accept their guidance, your intelligence will become fixed on Shri Krishna, and all the impure desires in your heart will be removed. Dear father, give up your egotistical ways and take shelter of such a bona fide guru, whose only wealth in life is the Supreme wealth – devoted service to Shri Krishna. Only then can you be freed from your contaminated material consciousness."

## Futile Attempts to Kill Prahlad



Again his wicked father, Hiranya-kashipu, raged in anger, "Oh! I will punish you!" That demon took up his sword and club, intending to kill Prahlad, but mysteriously he found he was powerless to do so. Then he ordered his generals, "This boy should be put to death

at once." The whole army was deputed to kill the young prince, but they also were rendered impotent in front of the child.

## The Fearless Prince

Hiranya-kashipu repeatedly tried to kill Prahlad Maharaj, giving his soldiers one command after another:

“Bring mad elephants and let them attack him.”

“Throw him into a pit of venomous snakes that will bite him to death.”

“Force him to drink strong, vile poison.”

“Put him in a cage with dangerous lions and let them devour him.”

“Bind him to a rock and hurl him from the peak of a mountain into the ocean to drown.”

“Crush him with an onslaught of massive boulders.”

But each and every scheme was foiled by the Lord saving





Prahlaad. The soldiers' swords could not cut him. The mere touch of Prahlaad's body electrified the elephants and as they ran off in fear they crushed so many soldiers and demons. The lions befriended the boy and began to lick him. And as Prahlaad was falling into the ocean, Lord Vishnu Himself came and caught him and gently placed him on the shore.

Hiranya-kashipu tried one more time. He had a very beautiful and powerful sister named Holika. She was so

accomplished in mystic yoga that she could enter blazing fire without getting burnt. Summoning her at once, the great emperor petitioned her, "My dear sister, my darling sister, I am requesting your help. I have tried so hard to kill Prahlad, but it seems impossible. Now I am relying on you to accomplish this task. I know that this will be a simple matter for you. Take him in your arms and enter a big fire. Surely the boy will be destroyed and you will come out untouched. I will reward you very handsomely with so much wealth." Prahlad's dear auntie was most happy to comply, being hungry for riches and having no real affection for her nephew.

A huge fire was ignited, its towering flames appearing like giant tongues touching the sky. Holika decorated herself nicely and, happily taking Prahlad Maharaj in her arms, she entered the fire. But something very mystical happened. The fire could not touch Prahlad Maharaj and Holika was at once burnt to ashes. To Prahlad the flames felt like cool snow and he emerged from the fire blissfully chanting "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare."

Hiranya-kashipu and his whole entourage could do nothing to harm Prahlad, because Shri Krishna never failed to protect the boy. Krishna has promised, "I will always protect those who take shelter of Me. If I want to save My surrendered devotees, no one can hurt them, even if the whole world is bent on doing so." If one takes shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Shri Krishna, or any bona fide guru like Narada, Vyas, Sukadev Goswami, Rupa Goswami and Sanatan Goswami, no one can harm him, even if the whole world is against him. Krishna is bound to save him. Therefore, even though Hiranya-kashipu was inconceivably powerful and desperate to kill his son, his every attempt proved futile.



## The Great Emperor Begins to Worry

Hiranya-kashipu became filled with anxiety. He worried, "I did everything I could to destroy Prahlad, but all my efforts failed. Perhaps this boy has some mystic powers and will end up killing me instead." Previously, Hiranya-kashipu thought that the boon he had received from Lord Brahma made him immortal, but now he became afraid. He who had amassed huge power and taken control of the whole universe now felt puzzled and totally helpless.

Sanda and Amarka reassured him, "Oh, there is nothing to worry about. You are the emperor of the whole universe. Prahlad is just a small child. Why are you so troubled? He is like a mosquito. You can easily squash him with your fingers and kill him.

"Our father Sukracharya is the master of all knowledge. Let us wait until he returns, and he will resolve this problem. Until then, we will continue teaching your son. Our father's power is such that he can revive a dead body just with his glance. And if ever he becomes so angry that his eyes turn red, the mere raising of his eyebrows can burn someone to ashes. By his persuasive logic he will bring Prahlad to his senses, and then the boy will do whatever you tell him. In the meantime let him come with us."

## Back to School

Thus Prahlad Maharaj was forced to return to the school with his gurus. They continued their attempts to divert his propensity for spiritual life and tried to instill in him his father's voracious lust for dominion over material affairs, teaching him

how to cheat others, how to become vastly wealthy, how to make merry and how to be expert in gratifying his senses. But Prahlad was boldly fixed in his faith and was never affected by them. Instead, he was silent and within his mind he remained absorbed in chanting Shri Krishna's names and remembering His pastimes and qualities.

One day the teachers had to go out for some other business. They appointed Prahlad Maharaj as class monitor. "We will return very soon," they said. "Look after the other children. Make sure that they do not quarrel and that they do not spend all their time playing. They should be calm and quiet under your supervision. We will return shortly."

As soon as their gurus left, the children, who were also the sons of demons, started to play. Prahlad Maharaj humbly requested them, "O my friends, O sons of demons, listen to me. I want to tell you something that will make you happy for your whole life. After that you can go and play." Because they had great honor for Prahlad, they assembled before him, even though he was only five years old. He then began to instruct his classmates.

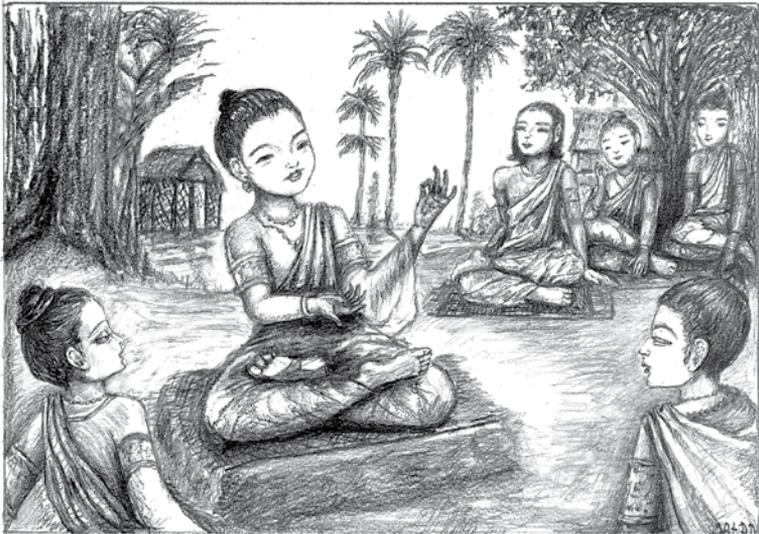
## Prahlad's Instruction – Start Right Now!

"O my brothers, listen! From this early age we should meditate on the Supreme Lord. Nothing in this world exists on its own. Some say that everything has come from nature, but what does 'nature' mean? Whose nature is it? Nature is the power, the energy, of Shri Krishna. He can create and control millions of universes and in a moment He can destroy them. And then, in the next moment He can create them again. He is

supremely powerful. Furthermore, He knows each and every one of you, but you do not know Him. Through my constant chanting and remembering the Lord, I have been able to learn a little about Him.

“We should begin spiritual life from a young age – from this very moment, right now! Don’t say, ‘I will begin tomorrow.’ It may well be that tomorrow will never come for you. Don’t waste your time in uselessly trying to enjoy temporary material life. Start from today. What you intend to do tomorrow you should begin today, and what you are going to do today, you should begin right now. Chant ‘Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.’ Old age and disease are bound to come. And whatever you collect in this life – be it wealth, reputation or position – you will have to leave behind. You cannot take even one penny with you from this world. Do you agree?”

“Yes, we agree completely,” the boys replied. “You are certainly speaking the truth.”



“My dear friends, O sons of demons, the human form of life is temporary, whereas the soul within is eternal. This human life is meant for discovering one’s real identity – the soul – and for returning home, back to Godhead. Therefore every living entity, especially in the human form of life, should engage in devotional service to the Supreme Lord Krishna. This devotional service is natural, because Lord Krishna is the creator and master of the soul. He is the well-wisher of all living entities and the soul’s most beloved. The duty of everyone is to take shelter of the Supreme Lord and whole-heartedly engage in His service. By this the living being becomes free from all material desires and starts to taste the transcendental bliss that comes from serving the Lord with love. Thus, when one is completely liberated from material existence, one experiences real happiness in life.

“Therefore, my brothers, immediately begin meditating upon and worshiping Lord Krishna, who is supremely attractive. From this very moment begin chanting ‘Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.’ We will all grow old and have to die. Start from the beginning of your life. Don’t waste your time in politics, duplicity, hypocrisy and so on. Remember that Shri Krishna is the Supreme Lord. He is all-powerful and He is so merciful, causelessly merciful. He has invested all His power, all His beauty, all His sweetness and all His causeless mercy in His names. So if you chant and remember these names, you will get so much benefit.”

The leader of the boys, however, challenged, “Why should we chant and meditate on the name of Krishna? We are young; why should we not play? And later we can become expert in making money and in arranging for our material comforts. This will make us happy.”

## Material Life Is Temporary

Prahlad Maharaj retorted, “These activities will not bring you happiness. Who knows if you will even reach old age. And if you do, then disease will come and finally you will die – tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, or even just now. Any minute you could be struck by a thunderbolt and die on the spot.”

If you are going somewhere by airplane, the machine can suddenly fail and all four hundred persons aboard can die. And where your body and bones end up, no one will know.

Prahlad continued, “Even if you do not meet an untimely death and you reach old age, then after eighty you will not even be able to sit straight to meditate and chant. So many diseases will come. Your daughter-in-law will create so many problems – she will beat your back with a broom – oh, she will make you very clean! You will be beset by so many difficulties that you will not be able to chant and remember. It may be that your throat will choke up and you will be unable to speak. You may become mad or senile. So many problems can come and distract you from remembering the Lord.

“Understand that this life is meant only to revive your lost relationship with the Supreme Lord Krishna. You now have the chance to come out of the endless chain of birth and death and to reinstate yourself in the blissful service of the Lord for your eternal, perfect existence. Real happiness lies in spiritual life. Material attachments, especially the illusory happiness of family life, hold one back from taking up devotional practices. If you marry in your old age, then how will you be able to renounce your newly wedded wife and small, weeping children? If your father is too old, how will you give him up? Your children, very small and very sweetly calling out, ‘Papa, Mama’ – how can you give them up? Your beautiful gardens, beautiful dogs – how can you give them up?

“Once a person’s consciousness is awakened to the knowledge that he is an eternal living being who finds his true happiness only in serving the Supreme Lord, these other relationships become insignificant. Better to give up your plans for material enjoyment at this young age and chant and remember Shri Krishna. This human life is rarely achieved, and although temporary, it affords the opportunity to perform devotional service. Even a slight amount of sincere devotional activity can bring complete perfection. If you want to be happy, what should you do? Practice *bhakti yoga*. Begin to serve Lord Shri Krishna.”

## Devotion to Krishna Brings Real Happiness

From boyhood, from the beginning of your life, devote yourselves to Shri Krishna. At whatever point in your life you hear this message, even if you are fifty years old, no harm – you can still start to practice. You are able to hear this message due to previous good association. This means that as a result of spiritual merits accrued in a previous life, you had the good fortune to meet a saint at that time, and as a result you now are receiving this knowledge.

We should not waste our time in sense gratification and other useless activities. Why? In whatever species you take birth, sense gratification is available. In animal life – if you are in the body of a dog or pig, you can collect unlimited wives. You do not have to spend any money on them and there is no bother about divorce. Oh, freely you can enjoy so many new, new wives. You will not have to worry about being taken to court – nothing is required for the maintenance of your children. In the human

form you can have only one son or daughter a year – not more than that. Occasionally someone will have twins, but that is rare. But hogs, pigs and dogs can have eight, ten, twelve, even sixteen babies at a time. So in this respect they are superior to us. At any time, in any species of life you can have all the sense gratification that the animals enjoy. They are more expert in enjoying their senses than you, so do not let yourself become absorbed simply in satisfying your senses. From the beginning of your life chant Shri Krishna's names, remember Him and meditate on Him.

Furthermore, as everyone knows, suffering comes without invitation. All kinds of problems – death, old age, disease, quarreling with neighbors and so many other difficulties come, and the government also creates so many problems. Hardships come without invitation and without warning. This holds true also for our happiness. By our previous pious activities we are entitled to a certain amount of happiness. It will come automatically. There is no need to work for it.

If we believe in God, automatically all kinds of happiness will come without invitation. Why should we be so anxious for our enjoyment? In this life we need not endeavor for any material happiness, and we need not worry about removing our difficulties. To do so is not the aim and object of our life. Difficulties will come regardless, whether we like it or not. They will force themselves upon us and we will have to taste them. We are bound to taste the reactions from all our past activities, so why are we wasting our time, worrying over our happiness and distress? Instead, we should chant the holy name of Krishna – it is very powerful. Krishna has made His name more merciful and more beautiful than He Himself! All of His sweet pastimes are in His name. We should not think that His name is merely a mundane sound vibration. It is extremely powerful, so from the beginning of our lives we should chant His holy name.

## Human Life Is Precious

Suppose in Kali Yuga (the present age of hypocrisy and quarrel) one lives for 100 years. In previous ages, millions of years ago, people lived inconceivably long lives. In Satya Yuga (the age when truth and goodness prevailed everywhere) people lived to be more than 100,000 years old. Some were practically immortal. In Treta Yuga, people lived about 10,000 years, and in Dvarapa Yuga they lived nearly 1,000 years. Now in Kali Yuga people do not control their senses – taking whiskey, cigarettes, eggs, meat and wine. These things shorten one's life span. People suffer from tuberculosis, cancer and so many kinds of new diseases that cannot be cured in hospitals or controlled by the scientists or anyone else. New, new diseases arise, like AIDS. We do not know where all the diseases are coming from, but there is no doubt that they are the result of excessive indulgence.

Prahlad continued speaking to his schoolmates: "If you live one hundred years, half of your time is lost in sleep. Thus fifty years remain. And if you are not disciplined and regulated in your habits, then your life will be even shorter. Childhood, up to age twenty, goes in vain, playing, studying and then becoming expert in a skill so that you can maintain yourself. And for most people the years from 80-100 are useless – you cannot sit, you cannot meditate or do practically anything. Whatever time is left is spent in marriage."

These days people get married not just once – so many people get divorced and again marry how many times! There is no gain in this. And marriage brings children, who need to be provided an education and other necessities. And to keep up with the rest of society, a car is essential, as are all the furnishings for the house – television and so many newer and newer gadgets – especially computers. So when will there be

time to remember Shri Krishna and worship Him? There will be no time at all.

Hearing Prahlad's message, the other boys asked him, "What should we do?"

"Do not worry about making money or anything else," Prahlad replied. "Achieving material happiness and avoiding suffering is not our business in life. Whatever happiness or distress will come to us is already written in our fate. We have our destinies mapped out from our previous lives. We do not want suffering, but it comes. We do not want old age, but it will come. We do not want to die, but death will come. We do not want our husbands or wives to divorce us, but it happens anyway. We want to be happy, but automatically suffering comes of its own accord. No one can avoid it. Similarly, the happiness in our lives will come without any effort on our part, so we should not be so concerned about it. We should put our energy into chanting and remembering Krishna, and by doing so we will be happy forever. Chanting Hare Krishna is the panacea for all miseries. It is so powerful that even our endless cycle of birth and death will be broken. This is the way."

His schoolmates said to him, "What you have said is very good. Please tell us how we can serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead. What is the process?"

Prahlad answered, "You must take shelter of a bona fide guru and serve him like your dear-most friend. See him as your very close family member – more dear to you than your father, your mother or your best friend. And to receive knowledge from the guru you must serve him. This will give you the intelligence and capacity to understand how to serve Krishna."

The young prince asked his schoolmates, "Are you convinced?" After hearing Prahlad Maharaj's instructions, the boys were astonished. "Oh yes, we are convinced. But where did you learn all these things?"

He explained that when his father had gone away to perform austerities to attain his power, his mother, Kayadhu, was pregnant with him. At that time she was staying in the hermitage of the exalted saint Narada Muni, who instructed her in the eternal process of serving the lotus feet of Shri Krishna. While in the womb, Prahlad Maharaj heard all the teachings of the Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads and *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*. Thus, when he took birth he was already a realized soul due to his association with the great saint Narada.

## Prahlad Convinces the Sons of the Demons

Prahlad Maharaj told his friends, "So, if you are convinced, come with me and together we will loudly and joyfully sing out the names of God." Thus, all the students began the congregational chanting of the Maha-mantra:

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



## The Fearless Prince

Somehow from the distance Hiranya-kashipu heard the school children singing. With great displeasure he thought, "My son has deliberately defied me, and he has made all the other boys rebellious like him. Now all of them have become wicked and dangerous." He summoned Prahlad and his schoolmates to his court. "Prahlad, why are you doing this?" Seeing that all the boys were joyfully smiling, He angrily chastized them. "Don't laugh, all you children. Why are you so happy? Are you now following Lord Krishna's devotees? Don't you know who I am? I am Hiranya-kashipu – the controller of the whole universe. Have you no fear?"



Then what happened? Hiranya-kashipu at once took his sword and club in hand, and threatening Prahlad he said, "Are you not afraid of death? Why not? Where does your strength come from? Who keeps saving you?"

Very politely Prahlad answered, "O my dear father, that person who saves me is the same person who saves you and everyone else. He is everywhere, and everything is in Him. Shri Krishna is your strength, my strength and the strength of all living beings."

"Where is your Krishna? Where is your Vishnu?"

"My Vishnu is everywhere."

"Is He in this pillar?"

"Oh, yes! There is no place He is not. He is in every atom, in the heart of all living beings, in that pillar, here, there and everywhere."

"I do not see Him."

"But I do see Him – my Vishnu is there."

"I will test whether your Vishnu is in this pillar or not. I am going to kill you, and we will see if He comes to save you. If He does, then I will see who He is."

## The Startling Appearance of Lord Narasingha-dev

Hiranya-kashipu picked up his sword in a challenging spirit, and with great anger struck the pillar with his bare fist. At once a tumultuous roaring sound was heard. He looked around to see from where the sound was coming. Then, from the pillar burst forth the most amazing and wonderful creature. The Supreme Lord appeared there as Lord Narasingha-dev. He was neither man nor lion; rather, He was a mixture of the two. He had the

## The Fearless Prince



head of a lion – huge, ferocious and dangerous; and the body of a man – very beautiful and strong.

Lord Narasingha-dev became extremely furious and menacing. Flames were coming out of His mane, which was flying in the air and touching the sky. It seemed as if the whole world was on fire. Hiranya-kashipu wondered, “Is this a man or a lion?” And then he attacked that extraordinary creature, beating Him

with his club. They fought like two giant wrestlers, locking arms in combat and rolling from corner to corner. Narasingha-dev tightly grabbed hold of Hiranya-kashipu. As he was struggling to get free, the Lord loosened His grip and let that demon slip out of His clutches. Watching the fierce combat and seeing how Hiranya-kashipu escaped from Narasingha-dev's hands, all the demigods became nervous. They feared that if Hiranya-kashipu would not be killed, he would continue to harass them, as well as all the other living entities in the universe. In great anxiety they cried out, "Alas, alas, now Hiranya-kashipu will kill the Lord, and then he will kill all of us!"

But there was no need to worry. Narasingha-dev was playing with Hiranya-kashipu just as the eagle Garuda plays with snakes. After resting briefly, Hiranya-kashipu took his sword and shield, and with great force attacked the Lord again. Lord Narasingha-dev easily captured Hiranya-kashipu and took him on His lap. More ferocious than a lion, Narasingha-dev roared loudly as He ripped open Hiranya-kashipu's stomach with His large nails. He pulled out all of the demon's intestines and draped them around His neck like a garland while blood spattered here and there. That demon was killed in a moment. The Lord continued roaring in anger and everyone was scared.

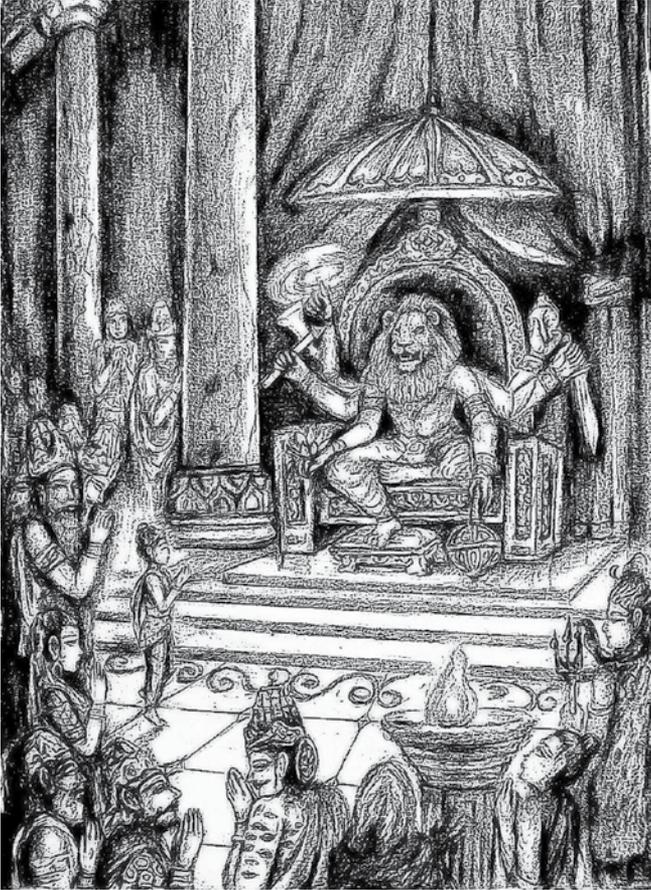
To respect the words of the creator Brahma, the Lord came in this form. Brahma had given Hiranya-kashipu the benediction that he would not be killed by any man or any animal. He would not be killed in the daytime or the nighttime, nor in any of the twelve months of the year. He would not be killed outside or inside, not on the earth and not in the sky, not by an arrow, club, sword or any other weapon, and not by anything living or dead. Thus, Lord Narasingha-dev – who was half-man, half-lion – killed the demon in the evening as the sun was setting – it was neither daytime nor nighttime; during a leap year – it was not a regular

year; in the doorway – not inside or outside; on His lap – not on the earth or in the sky; and using only His very, very huge and beautiful nails – not any weapon nor anything living or dead.

## The Lord's Love for Prahlad

Narasingha-dev was so angry at that time that no one could go near Him. Many, many demigods, including Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma, were there, standing in front of the Lord but at a distance. Laksmi, the Goddess of Fortune, had come and wanted to pacify Narasingha-dev with Brahma and Shiva, but none of them dared to come close. They turned to Prahlad Maharaj, saying, "Dear boy, you should go and pacify Narasingha-dev." Smiling, Prahlad Maharaj gladly ran to Lord Narasingha-dev and jumped on His lap. The Lord's anger vanished at once and He became calm and quiet. With melted heart Narasingha-dev caressed Prahlad Maharaj, and with tears in His eyes, He said, "O Prahlad, My dear boy! Excuse Me for taking so long to come. I wanted to come sooner, but I could not come until now. Lord Brahma promised your father that he would not be killed in any regular year or any month, so I had to wait for the proper moment. And I wanted the world to bear witness to the exalted nature and power of your devotion. Your father was giving you so many difficulties and problems. Because you had to tolerate so much, I want to reward you with a benediction."

To test Prahlad, the Lord offered to award him the liberation that was given to the demon Shishupal – merging into the Lord's transcendental body. So many impersonalist sages in the line of Shankaracarya strived for this type of salvation but could not achieve it even after thousands and thousands of births. Narasingha-dev was ready to give this easily to Prahlad,



but he rejected it. The Lord requested him again and again, "You should take a boon from Me." But Prahlad refused.

The boy smiled and replied, "What to speak of this impersonal liberation, I don't even want to be in Vaikuntha, Your eternal abode in the Spiritual Sky. I will not ask You for anything. I am not a business man who takes something in exchange for Your service. I have not served You in order to get a benediction from You. I am not that type of person. I have served You only to satisfy You. I am not that type of person. I have served You only to satisfy You. I only ask that You be pleased with me."

“Prahlad, you must take a boon so that My appearance here does not go in vain. Only to please Me, you must ask for something; otherwise I will not be happy. Ask for any boon.”

“If You want to give me a boon, I request You to remove any worldly desires that I may have.”

Narasingha-dev answered, “You have no worldly desires, none. Ask for something else.”

“If you want to give something, then there is one thing I would like. My father has performed so many heinous atrocities and committed untold offenses to saintly persons. Nonetheless, I request that he be liberated.”

The Lord said, “He has already been liberated. For a high level, pure devotee who is serving Krishna, chanting His names and remembering Him, twenty-one previous generations in his dynasty are automatically liberated. For a second-class devotee, fourteen generations are easily liberated. And for the neophyte devotee who takes shelter of the lotus feet of a pure hearted guru and who is chanting God’s names and remembering His activities, seven generations are freed. So, surely your father has been given salvation. Ask for something else.”

## Prahlad’s Humble Prayer – Please Liberate All

Prahlad replied, “I know that I am very near and very dear to You. If You are pleased with the way I have served You, then in exchange I request You to liberate everyone in the material universe. You are so affectionate to Your devotees. All living beings are Your parts and parcels and, therefore, Your eternal servants. Everyone in this world is suffering. I will take all their sins and reactions – everything. I want to suffer for them. I will

stay here for as many births as necessary and I am even willing to go to hell forever for them. Please be merciful and grant me this boon for the benefit of all.

“O my Lord, O infallible one. I am prepared to take thousands and thousands of births. I only request that wherever You place me, I receive the association of great saints and always worship You.”

Narasingha-dev answered, “O Prahlad, you have indeed purchased Me. Now I am yours. I cannot cheat you with material benedictions and I cannot possibly allow you to suffer. But I will agree to this – those who hear or tell others this pastime will be easily liberated. Not only will they be liberated, but they will receive pure devotion for Me. How will this happen? They must first take shelter of a bona fide guru – this means accepting initiation and agreeing to live under his guidance according to his instructions. In this way living entities will be gradually liberated.”

Thus, Prahlad Maharaj received a wonderful benediction to help all the living beings suffering in the material world. Steeped in pure devotion for the Supreme Lord, he had no care for his own welfare, because he knew that the Lord was always looking after him. He was free from worldly desires, and he never accepted salvation, that is, merging into the form of the Lord. He knew that the Supreme Lord is everywhere and is all-powerful. As the possessor of all energies the Lord can create whole universes in a second and just as easily destroy them. And again He can recreate them. He is supremely powerful, supremely charming, supremely sweet, supremely handsome and supremely wonderful. And He is also very humble and always satisfied. When in danger, Prahlad never worried because he had firm faith. He knew, “My Lord is supporting and maintaining me, and He will always protect me. He has the power to do this.”

Why did he have that faith? Because Narasingha-dev manifests great opulences and His devotees worship Him with knowledge of His unlimited powers.

## Unwavering Faith – The Source of Prahlad’s Strength

So many difficulties came in Prahlad’s life, but he tolerated all of them and never protested. He never even thought to curse his father, and he never replied to him in harsh words. Rather, he was always polite and respectful. Like Prahlad Maharaj, we should try to practice *bhakti yoga*, the science of pure devotional service to the Supreme Lord. Prahlad was always praying to the Lord and meditating on Him, because he understood that Krishna is the Supreme Transcendental Being. Narasingha-dev, one of Krishna’s manifestations, is also supremely transcendental, and that is why He is so powerful. Hiranya-kashipu tried to kill Him, but no one can kill the Supreme Lord.

In this way Prahlad Maharaj was always thinking about the opulence and majesty of the Supreme Lord Shri Vishnu. He knew that his Lord is all-pervading. He is everywhere, He can appear anywhere at any moment, and He is all-powerful. Because Prahlad had perfect realization of Shri Krishna’s powers, he knew that He would protect him. He was never worried in the slightest. He could see his Lord everywhere – in every atom and in everyone’s heart. Even when in danger, he felt happily situated. He simply prayed to Krishna and had no fear whatsoever. He always saw that his Lord was with him and that He was coming and saving him. Because Prahlad’s faith was so strong, Krishna constantly protected him against any kind of threat. Death could not approach him at all.

If it is your time to die, death will surely come, and if you are not meant to die, then no one and nothing can kill you. Prahlad's faith made him very bold. You should also be very bold like him. I am telling this story for everyone's benefit. If death is approaching and so many problems are coming, try to rise above all your troubles. Do not become disturbed, but rather try to be fixed in your chanting the names of God and remembering Him regardless of any obstacles. Do not hesitate in continuing your worship of Shri Krishna. These are the teachings of Prahlad Maharaj.

If you are aware of Krishna's opulences, that He is the supreme power and that He creates the whole material manifestation, then you will be peaceful. You will understand that Krishna is the original cause of all causes. He has a transcendental form and endless transcendental qualities. Krishna is like the transcendental sun, and the individual living beings, who are all His eternal servants, are like the particles in the sun rays. All souls are specks of Krishna's energies, minute atoms of His power. This means that we are made of the same divine essence that God is made of – eternity, bliss and knowledge. And the purpose of our existence is to share loving exchanges with the Supreme Person, who, whether we realize it or not, is always showering us with His love and mercy. Because Prahlad Maharaj had this vision of the Lord, his life and teachings are very helpful for all who want to develop their spiritual lives.

After Hiranya-kashipu's demise Prahlad Maharaj became the king, and he preached *bhakti* everywhere in his kingdom. He encouraged everyone to chant Krishna's names, to remember the Lord, to engage in the congregational singing of God's holy names, and to hear discourses on the Supreme Lord. Thus his kingdom became like the spiritual world, the realm of perfection beyond all anxiety.



*tava kara-kamala-vare nakham adbhuta-shringam  
dalita-hiranya-kashipu-tanu-bhringam  
keshava! dhrita-narahari-rupa! jaya jagadisha! hare*

(from *Gita Govinda*, by Shri Jayadeva Goswami)

O Keshava! O You who assume the form of a half-man, half-lion!  
O Jagadish! O controller of the universe! O You who remove  
Your devotees' suffering! All glories to You, because with one  
of the wonderful, petal-like nails of Your beautiful lotus hands  
You rip asunder the bumblebee-like body of Hiranya-kashipu.  
The astonishing thing about this is that ordinarily it is the  
bumblebee which rips the petals of the lotus, but here the  
petal rips apart the bumblebee.

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



Lord Narasingha-dev Kills  
Hiranya-kashipu



SHRI LAKSHMI NARASINGHA

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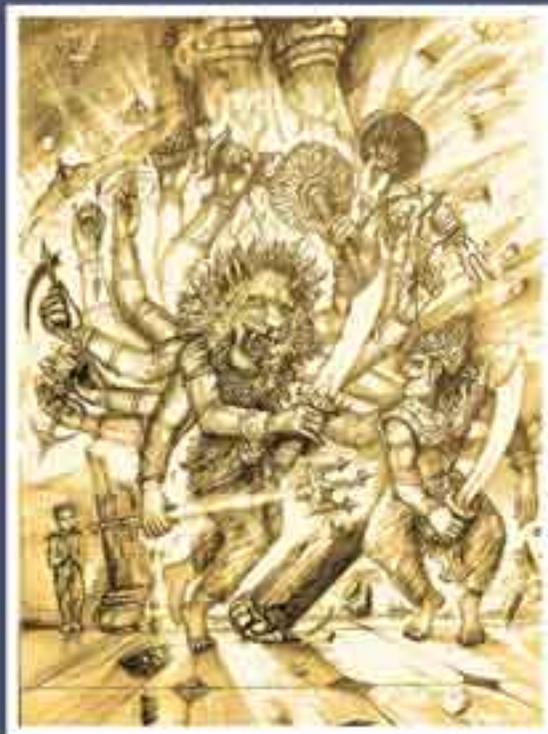
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Lord Narasimha-dev became extremely furious and menacing. Flames were coming out of His mane, which was flying in the air and touching the sky. It seemed as if the whole world was on fire. Hiranya-kashipu wondered, "Is this a man or a lion?" And then he attacked that extraordinary creature.

They fought like two giant wrestlers, locking arms in combat and rolling from corner to corner. Narasimha-dev tightly grabbed hold of Hiranya-kashipu. As he was struggling to get free, the Lord loosened His grip and let that demon slip out of His clutches.

Watching the fierce combat and seeing how Hiranya-kashipu escaped from Narasimha-dev's hands, all the demigods became nervous. They feared that if Hiranya-kashipu would not be killed, he would continue to harass them as well as all the other living entities in the universe. In great anxiety they cried out, "Alas, alas, now Hiranya-kashipu will kill the Lord, and then he will kill all of us!"



## The Fearless Prince

From the ancient Vedic scriptures of India comes the famous epic of Prince Prahlad.

In a previous era – long, long ago – there was an evil monarch named Hiranya-kashipu, who succeeded in seizing control of the entire universe. He was extremely cruel, and due to his darkened heart he

made life impossible for everyone – from the animals to the demigods. Only his son Prahlad, who was always absorbed in meditating on the Lord, remained undisturbed by his father's reign of terror. Seeing the boy's natural predilection for spiritual life, and thus taking him as an archenemy, he tried to kill his own child, but was unsuccessful every time.

Through his resolute faith and constant meditation, the young prince conquered fear and remained untouched by death.



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