|| Shrimad Bhagawata ||

BY

VAISHNAVACHARY DR. SHRI DWARKESHLALJI MAHODAYSHRI

(KADI - AHMEDABAD)



BHAKTIDHAM

(Bopal - Ahmedabad)





Maṅgalācaraṇam

cintāsantānahantāro yatpādāmbujareṇavaḥ |
svīyānāṁtān nijācāryān praṇamāmi muhurmuhuḥ ||1||

yadanugrahatojantuḥ sarvaduḥkhātigo bhavet |
tamahaṁ sarvadā vande śrīmadvallabha-nandanam ||2||

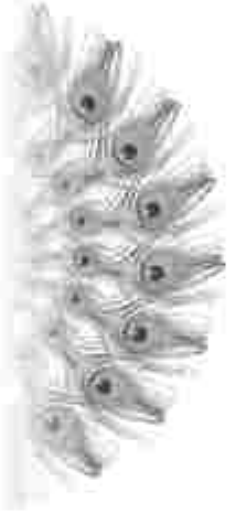
ajñānatimirāndhasya jñānāñjanaśalākayā|
cakṣurunmīlitaṁ yena tasmai śrīgurave namaḥ ||3||

namāmi hṛdaye śeṣe līlā-kṣīrābdhi-śāyinam |
lakṣmī-sahasra-līlābhiḥ sevyamānaṁ kalānidhim ||4||

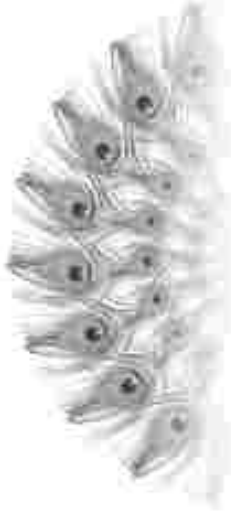
caturbhiśca caturbhiśca caturbhiśca tribhistathā |
ṣaḍbhir virājate yo'sau pañcadhā hṛdaye mama ||5||

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|| Shrimad Bhagawata ||



DAY - 1

Shrimad Bhagavata Purana is such a grantha (a holy scripture) that has every mantra to make one's life happy and peaceful. May the person be of any age or at any position, may the person be living a life of a family man, a devotee, a worldly man, a businessman, or may the one be leading the life of a devoted wife, a husband, a father, or a son, how one can lead a peaceful and great life is given there in Shrimad Bhagavata. It has all the aphorisms to make one's life peaceful. For us, Vaishnavas, it is Srinath ji Himself defined in words! It is truly a felicitous life that we have got being Vaishnavas.

It is said that every vaishnava should arrange for the "Shrimad Bhagavata Saptah" (Seven days in which Shrimad Bhagavata Puran is narrated and listened to.) at least once in his life. It is considered a highly virtuous deed in our religion. It is nothing but an offering to the path of spiritual knowledge that provides satisfaction to everyone. It offers satisfaction to mother earth, gods, pilgrimages, godly incarnations and above all to that Supreme One too! It is considered the only 'sat-karma' (a pious, holy deed) and Shrimad Bhagavata proves it in itself. Therefore, arranging for the Bhagavata Katha is considered the biggest sat-karma in the life of a Vaishnava. But, in our Pushti-marga (the holy path to reach the Supreme), one believes in giving away the reward too! Being a Vaishnava, one does not keep even the reward obtained through a good deed. The one who can easily let go the reward of a good deed is a true Vaishnava. Our family also believes in this custom of spreading the happiness which we have

got as a reward. We had the wish to spread happiness in other's life too and the way to do this was by arranging for Shrimad Bhagavata Katha.

Anything offered or given to someone doesn't assure their well-being. It becomes a curse in the lack of enlightenment. Therefore, if you wish to ask something from that Supreme One, ask for enlightenment and self - awareness. Many times, even after getting all the worldly pleasures, people don't understand and get into the miseries themselves. They act as the reason for their misery. It is nothing but a lack of enlightenment. So, pray to Him for enlightenment. People with a good understanding can easily pass through adversities but a bad one can create a mess during good times too!

Because when one gets all the worldly pleasures from God, they become the reason for the misery of their own. It seems that they are the reason behind their miseries. It is an example of one's lack of self-awareness. Pray to Him for self-awareness and enlightenment only. And you won't know when your bad time has passed away. One can easily pass through adversities with self-awareness, but a bad one can create a mess during good times too. Therefore, in these times of worldly pleasures, when the capabilities and facilities are abundant, a better understanding is needed and, Shrimad Bhagavata gives society what is needed!

Listening to Shrimad Bhagavata doesn't imply to use of brain or ears but, every sentence, every word of it has the power of God. It works like God himself enters your heart and purifies your mind and soul. Shrimad Bhagavata has a saying, 'हरिश्चित्तं समाश्रयेत्'। **('harishchitam samāśrayet')**, means God Himself enters your heart. It is written there in "Shrimad Bhagavata Mahatmyam" (the text that describes how glorious is Shrimad Bhagavata) and to experience this advantage, you don't need to do anything other than listening to it. God himself will reach to you. Now, what's does "Shrimad Bhagavata Katha" implies? When God reaches to his devotee himself, it means Katha". Katha doesn't only means the story of God. 'कं नाम सुखं'। सुखं स्थापयति इति कथा। **("kaṁ nāma sukhaṁ? sukhaṁ sthāpayati iti kathā")**

That, which establishes you in contentment is named as "Katha" and we have got that "Katha" for a period of seven days!

We have already heard that listening to "Shrimad Bhagavata Katha" destroys all our sins and it is true. It works in a manner that if you are listening to it on a Sunday, then it will eradicate all

the sins that you may have done on all the past Sundays of your life, it will work similarly for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and so on...., but remember, if you take a break on a day, it will be left for the that day in the past too! Because "katha" has not been stopped, it is you who has taken a break. It is Sunday today and all of you who are here in the "Katha" have become free from their sins or mistakes of all the past Sundays.

It is therefore the glory or superiority of Shrimad Bhagavata, the literary form of God, the written semblance of God, is much higher than God himself. It is so, because in Kaliyuga, there remains no value of spoken words, the written words are more important. For example, if you say someone, "From now onwards, my home belongs to you", s/he will ask you to give your promise in writing. Who will trust your words? In the same way in this 'Kaliyuga', the literary form of God is more trusted than God himself. Shrimad Bhagavata is literary form of God, the written form of God, and the speaker reveals it through his voice. It is the divinity of this 'grantha' (book). It is understandable that we are here to listen to Shrimad Bhagavata Katha, but let us decide that we will hear it as the katha of our own, we will listen to it in a manner that God Himself has come here to tell us something. Why so? Because till today whenever we went to God, only one person spoke and another listened. The speaker was 'us' and the listener was God! But now, in coming seven days, God, present in Shrimad Bhagavata, will speak and we will be listening to Him. The God in Shrimad Bhagavata is going to speak and we are to listen to him. And, listening to Him is also a type of 'seva' (Service). It is so, because to disrespect someone's words is the disrespect done to that person. Whenever we went to the temple, we didn't give Him a chance to speak, and therefore, katha is more valuable then going to a temple. It is so, because in temple, we speak and God listens, but during 'Katha' God speaks and we listen. Here, we are listening to God's voice and that's why we will listen to it in such a spontaneous and unpretentious way that it won't appear as an grand epic written thousands of years ago or as an epic of great devotees or for great devotees of God. Instead, it we will listen to it considering the thought as, 'it's describing my own story, I am getting solutions to the problems of my life'. We will listen to it in a way that it will be seen as a medicine for us. And, in this way we will listen to it and learn from it.

In this katha of seven days, I want to emphasize ten important words based on which I want to harness the epic and make you understand those ten simple yet philosophical words. I believe those ten words to be the gems for one's life!

The first gem is, **"Family"**. On this word, what we would learn from the katha? As a human being, we all are social animals, we live in a society and that too in a family. And the problem is, we don't know how to live in the family or society! Whereas, we know it very well to run a computer, use a mobile, handle the customers in our business or job. But we don't know how to handle only five members at home! Even, we don't learn to live with love among those five people! Just think once whom did you fight with the most in your past life? With a known one or an unknown one? Whom did you become angry with? With a person who is closer to you or anyone else? It is what that should be learned!

So, the first element that we need to discuss here is 'family'. Why so? Because in Shrimad Bhagavata, there are only a few stories of those who are 'sannyasi' (an ascetic). Instead, it has lot many stories of people who lead a worldly life, of people who live in a family. It has kathas about Chandravamsha, Suryavamsha, Ikshvakuvamsha and many other ancestries. When we listen about the doctrine of an ascetic, we naturally think, 'we are living in a worldly manner, we are doing business or job for a family and we are fulfilling the responsibility towards our family and it means that we are doing sins continuously'..... but, no! we are not doing a sin by handling our worldly life! They are the doctrines of worldly people. So, in our katha, the first thing to be emphasized is 'Family'. You look at the whole Mahabharata or whole of the Ramayana, look at Shri Krishna's whole life, is there any story outside the family? They are all the stories of the family only! What gist should we take out of those stories?

The least thing you should learn from the Mahabharata is to live lovingly and peacefully with each other. Even, the warriors after the whole day's fight talked to each other lovingly and peacefully at the night. During the war, even the enemies talked to each other after the sunset. It means whatever has happened in the day during the war, they considered it natural, but after the sunset..... rest you are intelligent enough to understand.

So, it is all about the family! Shri Mahaprabhu ji has added one more member in my family and that is my 'Thakur ji' who is with me at my home. He lives with us at our home as a member of our family. Whenever we pray Him we say, ''त्वमेव माता च पिता त्वमेव, त्वमेव बन्धुश्च सखा त्वमेव।'' **("tvam eva mātā ca pitā tvam eva, tvam eva bandhuś ca sakhā tvam eva")**. It means we always consider Him as a relative, not as God. While praying to Him, we always consider Him as father or mother, brother or friend! We all connect with Him with love and affection and therefore

everyone who listens to it may feel that, "I want to learn living in a family, I want to be happy'. And if you really think that, then do come here with your family. If your family together listens to it once they could change their perspective to be in a family. And once we understand the perspectives of each other then why would there be disputes?

The second element that is to be understood from Shrimad Bhagavata is **'Hard Work'**. Don't run away from doing hard work. According to Gandhi ji, there exist seven sins in Kaliyuga (The Black Age). He says, "to earn without working hard is also a sin". So, don't run away from working hard. Be it in your family or in your business or in the role of a student, you need to complete your responsibility and if you don't do that, you lose everything you have.

Just remember the hard work that Shri Krishna did! When you listen to the story of Shri Krishna's life, note that He has not taken rest for a minute. He was born in a jail and just after the birth he had to sit in a basket and reach Gokul! He kept running continuously, he kept working hard continuously. Look at the katha of each incarnation of Him, did any one got any rest? Look at the lives of great people, learn from the life of Shri Mahaprabhu ji ! He left his home for his journey bare footed just in the age of eleven years. And places he visited are beyond our imagination even in this era! Such was the hard work, that he did. So, the second word is; 'Hard Work'

The third element is '**benevolence**'. It is very easy to enjoy, to hoard that you have earned, but welfare is a 'vaishnavite instinct'. The word benevolence should always be connected with your personality, your character. If you want to see its proof, just look around you. If God showers happiness, peace and satisfaction, that is 'Sukha', upon you, then you must think that He has given you the chance for benevolence. Just consider, "God has given me a chance to do that", and it's not always the matter of money! You can motivate or consol, or simply you can give a blessing. The instinct of giving is the root cause of benevolence. Things or means are not important, only the instinct to give is important.

We think that God gives us means. If that means is... money then give money, if you are healthy then give time but the instinct to help others is the most important and necessary for it. Without the instinct to give, one cannot reach near God. Because, the one who has not got the habit of giving, what he will do to express himself to God? That's why Shri Mahaprabhu ji has first taught us to give!

Till now, people thought to become happy by asking for the happiness from God. But Shri Mahaprabhu ji reversed it, we don't get happiness by demanding, we get it by offering to Shri Thakur ji and by offering again and again during Seva our hearts get habitual of getting happiness through giving only. Seva (a way to serve God in which we consider that we are caring for Him and living with God as if he is a member of our family) and an appropriation of the things and emotions, is the practice for mind. By offering to God, we gradually become habitual of seeing Thakur ji everywhere, in every human being and then gradually we develop the instinct to give, to offer. I always say that, "worldly conditions of a person do not make him/her a King and a medicant but it is the attitude of a man that makes him a king or a medicant. king and Medicant are the names of attitudes that a man behaves according to. It doesn't matter how powerful a man is, he is a bagger if he always wants to take from others. And, no matter how ordinary, a cottager a man is, but if he says if you need a table during Katha, you can take from me, he is a King by heart. This attitude is a King's attitude! A person who has an attitude to give, is a truly a king.

The fourth element in Shri Bhagavata ji is **'Love'**, 'Affection'. Shri Bhagvataji is an epic of love. The love for God emerges from Shri Bhagvataji. The five outcomes of Shrimad Bhagavata, which will be discussed later, also include Love in them. It is said that Shri Bhagavata ji gives us five flowers of wisdom and one of them is 'Supreme Love'. A person full of love finds love wherever he goes. When a person rises through practice, he attains love.

The fifth element is Satisfaction, Contentment. It is said that, '**जब आवे संतोष धन, सब धन धूल समान**' **("jab aave santosh dhan, sab dhan dhool samaan")**. It means when a person learns to be satisfied, s/he considers all the wealth as a mere stone! When you listen to Shri Bhagvataji, you gain Supreme Satisfaction. You will start thinking that whatever Shri Thakur ji is doing, he is doing that right, he has already planned it. In this way, you develop a trust on Him and you become contented. Because, wishes don't have an end. Shrimad Bhagvataji will transform our wishes into emotions. In present times, there exist many wishes in the world. Listening to Shrimad Bhagvataji will transform them into emotions. Because wishes give pleasure to the person himself but the emotion becomes the reason of happiness for all. And the person gets Supreme love, Supreme Satisfaction.

The sixth element of Shrimad Bhagvataji is **holiness**. Not only the purity of behavior is done, but the mind also becomes pure and when the mind is pure, we are left with no desire to harm anyone. The one whose mind is pure, never needs to be directed for doing good deeds or Satkarmas. Instead, he couldn't live without good deeds. So, the sixth element of Shri Bhagvataji is this! Holiness! The life will attain Supreme Purity. We know many people in our life, among them, we can easily distinguish those who seem pure to us and the blessing of pure people never proves to be useless. We always seek for the blessings of other people like a saint or a holy man, but I ask you to be the one yourself by listening to Shrimad Bhagvataji! Upon listening to Bhagvataji we seek for the blessings of others who are holy but by listening to Shrimad Bhagvataji let us become holy ourselves and then our blessings too will work! And then, whenever you say someone, "I give you blessings", your words will work with a power.

The seventh element of Shri Bhagvataji is **'limit'**. Limit means our 'line of control' or 'The Lakshaman Rekha'.

Everyone must know their limits. Do whatever you want, enjoy yourself. No religion stops you from enjoying and being happy but you must be cautious about your limits. Don't cross your limits. Why? Because whenever pleasure crosses its limits, it becomes the biggest reason of the biggest suffering of life. We always blame Ravana for kidnapping Sitaji, but we also forget that Sitaji also did cross 'The Lakshman Rekha' So, everyone has a Lakshaman Rekha in their life. And it is us, who must decide that limit.Because if others decide, we feel bounded. But our rules, our boundaries are not actually the bonds, they are our security, if we go beyond them, we give a chance to Kaliyuga. And therefore, decide the limits for yourself – boundaries for yourself. We all have heard; we all know and we all have read a lot about it but we haven't applied it yet! We have to decide about applying it. We should always guide and say to our children that, "dear, enjoy your life and do what you want but don't forget the limit of your Samskaras and don't cross it. Just think who were our ancestors? What family tradition do we belong to? What religion do we follow? A single step taken by us should not tarnish our religion, our family line and staying in our limits is a matter of pride, not of bonds. Even I feel pride to be in the limits decided by Shri Mahaprabhuji. It is not a matter of bond or sorrow for me. It is indeed a matter of pride that we try to live within the limits of agna (orders) of Shri Mahaprabhuji.

The eighth element is the **accumulation of merits.** Don't push yourself back whenever you get an opportunity to do good. Don't mind if you do less than you might but don't lose the opportunity to do good. If there is anything to be worth gathering, it is virtue. We would die leaving the things behind, but the virtues will continue to give happiness in our next birth too! And therefore, don't fall back whenever God gives the opportunities to do virtue. Seize the opportunities and don't give much time if you get any idea of doing good.

It was a few days ago that a lady who was residing in America came to meet me. I asked her, "Why are you here?" she answered, "I left everything and came here". I wondered, "why? What happened?" she said, "During your Katha there (in America), you did a little discussion about parents and then you advised us to serve our parents whenever we get a chance otherwise, we would regret it and would remember it painfully. There must have been some discussion during the Katha and at the same time she decided!Her eighty-five years old mother was here alone in India and she left everything and came here to serve her mother. Further, the lady said, "I came here and started living with my mother, within 3 months my mother passed away. It seems if I had not come here, I wouldn't have got the chance to be with her' I wouldn't have got the chance to serve her during her last time. I really thank you Je – Je for giving me such insight". So, it is an example of how a thought can change one's life, how a thought affects it! A true vaishnava is the one who grabs opportunities! It would never happen that people would come and tell you that go and do the good, we won't disturb you further. Go and do the good, do seva. Will it happen? No! you only get the chances to do good and you have to grab them. The one who can handle the adversities too, is a vaishnav! It is never going to happen that everyone and every condition will turn into favorable one and then we show mercy and do the seva.... The one who has acceptance in them, is a vaishnava.

The ninth element is the **fulfilment and maintenance of tradition**. We, as a vaishnava, fall under two traditions. First, our family tradition and second, the Vaishnavite Tradition. I consider you all very lucky! People often don't appreciate it, but consider yourself fortunate to have someone in your home as a wife or husband who reminds you that, "today is a festival, take blessings of God and then go'. Consider yourself lucky if you have someone at home who says, "today is a festival, come and take some 'Mishri' (a type of sugar cubes that is offered to God and then consumed by us as holy eatables or Prasada). If you have someone like this at

your home, then consider yourself fortunate enough. But then we don't value them, we don't even know their importance.

But, consider it a grace of God that we have got people who make us remember Him. I would say to children that God has showered Grace upon you that you have parents who hold your hand and took you to Haveli (a Pushtimargiya Temple) when you learnt to walk. You are fortunate to have such parents who gave you 'Prasadi Sakhadi' (cooked rice offered to Shri Thakurji and then taken as prasada) at the time of your Annaprashan (a ritual in which external food is given to a baby for the first time.). You are fortunate that when you learnt to speak, your parents told to speak 'Radhe-radhe' and when you learnt to clap, you clapped saying radhe-radhe. It is all your good luck that you are related to such a family by the relation of a son, by the relation of daughter, by the relation of son in law, or daughter in law. It is all your luck.

There are many who may take you to different places, who may tell you to enjoy and pass your time. But you got the people who took you to Haveli, made you do dandvata or bow before Gurudev and Thakurji and you grew up with these insights and samskaras. It is your luck and therefore don't consider it ordinary. It is you who have to maintain your family tradition; it is your identity and it is the pride of your family. Let us all understand all the above discussed nine elements as the conclusion of Shri Bhagavataji.

The tenth element is **prabhu seva**. We did everything, i.e., we learnt to live in this world, we improved our nature, did good and accumulated merits or maintained traditions, but if we forget God, everything is zero. If we couldn't return the happiness to the One by whose grace and blessings we have got our happiness, then somewhere we are missing our duty. If we couldn't give a small space to the One who has given us everything then there is no one unfortunate then us. If we couldn't offer a small bowl of Mishri to the One who is responsible for the meals of everyone in this world then no one else is as unfortunate as we are. And therefore, Prabhu seva is the most important aspect of the life of a Pushtimargiya Vaishnav and it is also the most important element of Shrimad Bhagavata ji. So, we will understand and discuss these ten elements by any way. By focusing on every story of Shrimad Bhagavata we have to see them with the perspective that all these ten elements should enter in our life and we live our life like an ideal person and an ideal Vaishnava.

The glory of Shrimad Bhagvata is given in the six chapters of Padma Purana. The greatness or the glory of Shrimad Bhagavata is given in Skanda Purana and Padma Purana both. It is given in six chapters because God has six virtues. Some people may think why do we carry Bhagavata ji on our head and carry out a procession with it? When we carry Shrimad bhagavata on our head and bring it in the place with a 'Shobhayatra' (A pompous procession), it signifies that from now on, we will take every step of life according to Shrimad Bhagavata ji. That's the bhavana (the emotional connection) behind the shobhayatra. So, it is the indication of our devotion towards Bhagavata. It shows our emotion that, "now I have come under their shelter and now I have to walk on the path it has shown. I have to make my life a success. Till now, I wanted to make my life happy in terms of worldly pleasure, but now I will get a new perspective with the help of Bhagavata ji. Now, I want to make my life a true success and it is possible only when it is lived with appropriation. So, we all are very fortunate that Shri Bhagavata Bhagavan has come into our focus for seven continuous days.

God has come to our home in the form of Shri Bhagavata and lucky is this Manorathi family who has become a medium of bringing God himself in the form of Bhagavata ji in this town. Such a family is called "Mahad Sadbhagi" (the one who has a good fortune). 'जन्मान्तरे भवेत् पुण्यं तदा भागवतं लभेत् ।' **('janmāntare bhavet puṇyaṁ tadā bhāgavataṁ labhet')** It is called as "तः" **("taḥ")** in the glory of Shrimad Bhagavata. Why? Because Shrimad Bhagavata is not ordinary.

All the twenty-four incarnations are present in it. You can think of visiting the temples of twenty-four incarnations. It can take many months and visiting temples of twenty-four incarnations is not possible all the times but when you perform parikrama (a clockwise circumambulation of a deity) of Shri Bhagavata ji you get the punya (the result of a Sat karma) of all the temples of twenty-four incarnations. You can think of circumambulation of all the tirthas (sacred places) of Bharata, but it is not possible to call all the gods at a single place. But when you arrange for Shrimad Bhagavata Katha, then all the tirthas come there, all the gods (devatas) come there to listen to it and when you sit there, all the deities bless you saying 'तथास्तु, तथास्तु, तथास्तु' **('tathāstu, tathāstu, tathāstu...'** e.i. so be it, so be it, so be it....). And my dear, all your wishes come true with that word.

We are fortunate to be here for listening to Shri Bhagavata ji. It is the Kalpavruksha i.e. the tree

that fulfills all our wishes. 'निगम कल्पतरोर्गलितं फलम् ।' **('nigama-kalpataror galitam phalam')** it is Kalpavruksha, whatever you wish before it, gets fulfilled. We are going to listen to Shri Bhagvataji and take its essence through our ears. You are going to experience God Himself; He is going to come to your heart and therefore it is a matter of big fortune. It is a Maha-purana, 'पुरा भवं इति पुराणम् ।' **('purā bhavam iti purāṇam')**, that which has happened earlier or 'पुरा नवं इति पुराणम् ।' **('purā navam iti purāṇam')** which will be new again and again. Our holy scriptures never get old. Many people may ask, "what's the need to listen thousand years old stories"? Then, tell me has the illness of anger from our minds vanished? Has jealousy gone? Has greed from our hearts gone away? Has the emotion of revenge gone away? No, they are still present, and therefore we have to take the same medicine and if you feel that these flaws of human character have increased more, then the more medicine is needed. It is eternal forever. I have travelled to many places of the world and have seen the influence of Shri Bhagavata ji that even the people who didn't believe in God became believers after listening to it for seven days. And therefore, before starting the Katha every time, I always ask people to take selfies because after seven days their eyes will be different. It is the influence of Bhagavata ji. Here, in these words God is present. These words are not ordinary. It is not an imagination of an author,it is 'भगवता प्रोक्तं भागवतम् ।' **('bhagavatā proktam bhāgavatam')**, it is told by God himself. And, there is no difference between God and His words. Therefore, whenever you praise words of God, He comes in your words, there is no difference. So, don't consider these seven days festival as any ordinary worldly festival. This place is a divine place now because Shrimad Bhagavata ji is here now.

You will get the same peace and satisfaction after doing dandvata to Shri Bhagavata ji that you get in Nathdwara after doing dandvata (a way of bowing) to Shrinathji. It is such a divine epic that has been given the supreme importance by all acharyas and our Mahaprabhuji has established it as a proof in Hinduism. Before that, they didn't consider it as a proof scripture. It is the contribution of Shri Mahaprabhu ji that he made them accept Shri Bhagavata ji as a proof.

The thing which are there in Vedas, are present there in Geetaji and the same has been told in Shrimad Bhagavata. Shri Mahaprabhuji has seen Shrimad Bhagavata ji through seven different perspectives.

शास्त्रे स्कन्धे प्रकरणेऽध्याये वाक्ये पदेऽक्षरे ।
एकार्थं सप्तधा जानन्नविरोधेन् मुच्यते ॥

śāstre skandhe prakaraṇe'dhyāye vākye pade'kṣare |
ekārthaṁ saptadhā jānann avirodhena mucyate ||

Shri Mahaprabhuji has explained these seven perspectives in 'Bhagavatarth Prakarana' and 'Shri Subodhiniji' and we will put focus on both of these during the Katha in these seven days.

There is a ritual in the Katha that the glory or the essence of Shri Bhagvataji, that is given in the six chapters of Padmapurana, is sung first. Why so? Because, only after understanding the essence comes the wisdom of practice and appropriation. If you don't know the greatness and importance of a thing, you cannot take the advantage of it even though it is great. It is because you remain unaware of its essence. So, the essence or the importance is sung first.

Once there was a washerman who went to wash the cloths near a river daily. A saint who had a philosopher's stone thought "the washerman is very poor and if I give him the stone, he will be happier. So, he gave the stone to the washerman and left the village. A year passes and saint returns. He again sees that washerman in the same condition. He asks him, "what happened to the stone that I gave you...."? The Washerman said, "Oh..Yes! It is a very nice stone I bathe with it every day...." The saint says, "It's the philosopher's stone, it turns iron into gold." Then, the Washerman says, "you must have told about it first.., you didn't tell its importance and I couldn't use it!" So, before starting the Katha, we are made to understand its essence and importance. The essence of Shri Bhagavataji is told in six chapters.

Let us start with listening to the essence, 'the Mahatmya'. Vyasa ji (Shri Krishna Dvaipayan Vyasa, writer of Shrimad Bhagvata) has done 'Mangalacharana' in the very first shloka. Now, what is Mangalacharana? It's been made up of two Sanskrit words, Mangala and Acharana Mangla means auspicious or propitious and acharana means the conduct. The auspicious conduct is the Mangalachrana. Whose form is auspicious? 'मंगलं भगवान् विष्णु, मंगलं गरुडध्वज ।' **('maṅgalaṁ bhagavān viṣṇuḥ, maṅgalaṁ garuḍa-dhvajaḥ')**. If there is anyone who is auspicious in this whole world, it is only Paramatma (the divine soul i.e. Ishwara, God), His name. So, if you want to achieve true happiness, take the refuge of His name. You will unknowingly do good for yourself! Whenever you think of starting any work, just try and remember Him. If you can do, just remember Him for only five times in a day. Recite

Ashtakshara Mantra three times whenever you wake-up. It is the mangalacharana of your day. Before taking the first bite of your meal, remember him and recite Ashtakshara three times, it is your mangalacharana. Before putting the first step out of your home, remember Him three times.While returning home, enter into your home after remembering Him for three times, your Home is also a tirtha. We often say 'Home sweet home!' why? Because we can't find comfort anywhere else even if it is a shrine. After a week or ten or fifteen days, you will start finding faults there too. So, the one who doesn't find comfort and peace with Thakurji at home, he can't get peace anywhere in the world. And therefore, whenever you enter your home, enter with an auspiciousness emotion that you are entering in a temple. And then while going to the bed, just remember Him three times before closing your eyes. Can't you do it? Do you need to learn Sanskrit for it? Do you need to learn any Raga (a classical music composition)? Do you need to read any grantha (a spiritual book)? Can you do it or not? Yes? Yes! Keep your words in future. You all have accepted it before Shri Bhagavataji. So, start it from today itself! It is specially for youngsters and gentlemen and for those who say, "we are very busy, we don't have time to recite His name, to do His seva, to recite His name on beads." That's all right, I have told you the other ways to do it. Now tell me, is it so that the one who gives more time is a more important devotee? Does a devotee become more important when he devotes more time? Is it so that the devotee who gives more time is a bigger one and the devotee who gives the lesser time is the smaller one. Is it so? The one who devotes the more time is not important but the one who gives more importance to God is important. If you accept His importance for every aspect, every work and every event of your life then you are his true devotee. You can't be a devotee just by giving your time. There are many people who don't do anything and just sit idle outside the temple, it doesn't mean that they are true devotees. It depends totally upon the importance given to Him by us. Do we accept and approve His importance for us? He is the only one who does everything for us in this world.

Every breath we take is a beneficence of Him that He showers upon us and the one who has gratitude towards Him is a true devotee. So, devotion should be there in your instincts not only in your acts. Do we have instinct of a devotee in us? and if that instinct grows then it doesn't matter that how busy you are.

You can take examples from Varta Sahitya (the literature that has biographies of devotees of Shri Mahaprabhuji and Gusaiji). It has the life description of Narayandas ji. He used to be so busy in state affairs that he couldn't get any free time. So, he kept a person whose work was to

ask after every two ghadi (Ghadi is a 24 minutes' span of time), "bhaiyaji, when would we go to Gokul?" after hearing this, Narayandas ji would fall unconscious everytime and his mind would reach to Gokul. So, conditions wouldn't turn favorable, we would have to find the ways. A Vaishnava must have the cleverness to reach to Him while facing the conditions and situations he is living in. That's the smartness! it has been said very well that, "सोही कुशल दास परमानन्द, जो हरि सन्मुख थाय" **("sohi kushala daasa paramaananda, jo hari sanmukha thaaya")** i.e. the one who can reach to Hari (God, Thakurji) is smarter than others. Who's smart? Who's clever? The one who can find the ways to do seva or find Thakurji even while living among the worldly things. The one, who doesn't forget his name even while living in this world, is clever. We often consider those people clever who can easily befool or manipulate others, we introduce them as clever but the one who doesn't know all this is a man of God for us. But, a truly smart and clever person is the one who can find few moments to remember Him from this laukik (worldly) daily life. And this cleverness must be there in bhakta (devotee) himself. The world won't turn favourable but we have to make it favourable for us.

So, do the Mangalacharana in the following five ways. Mangal acharana in life is "मंगल रूप निधान साँवरो, मंगल रूप निधान" **("mangala-rupa-nidhaana saanvaro, mangala-rupa-nidhaana")** Paramatma (God, The Supreme Soul) is the treasure of mangal. Therefore, if you want your good, if you want your mangal, if you want true happiness in your life, then go to Him. The root cause of all three is Paramatma. It is written in our shastras (holy scriputures). And if you really want them, reach there where they emerge and that place is Thakurji's Charanarvinda (reach under His shelter) so, let us understand and dive into the mangalacharana:

Vyasa ji, saluting the God, says

सच्चिदानन्द रूपाय विश्वोत्पत्त्यादि हेतवे ।
तापत्रयविनाशाय श्रीकृष्णाय वयं नुमः ॥

sac-cid-ānanda-rūpāya viśvotpatt-y-ādi-hetave |
tāpatraya-vināśāya śrī-kṛṣṇāya vayaṁ numaḥ ||

Vyas ji did the mangalacharana. In mangalacharana, he introduces us with the swaroopa (the form, character), the samarthya (the potentiality, power, capability) and the svabhava (the nature) of Him first. He explains, "who is Parmatma, whose katha you are going to listen? What

is His Swaroopa? How much is His samarthya? How is His nature? Because, without recognizing Him, how would we understand him? So, first of all he asks, do you know Him to whom we are asking you to pray, to whom we are asking you to submit yourselves, to the Katha of whom we are asking you to listen to, do you listen to Him? The reason behind it is, until you understand your Ishta (the form God in which you have interest in praying) the omnipotent, you won't develop faith in Him. So, he introduces Him first as 'सच्चिदानन्द रूपाय' **('sac-cid-ānanda-rūpāya')**. Now, first of all he said 'रूपाय' **('rūpāya')**. It is not about the 'Nirakar Brahma', ethereal God. It is about the most beautiful form of Parmatma, only by looking at which you submit your soul to Him and you don't need to concentrate your senses for it. It is the katha of that beautiful, Sakar Paramatma. So, you don't need to close your eyes and focus on Him who is there in every atom, who is omnipresent and mighty. You don't need to search for it. Just bring 'Lalan' (a lovable form of God) at home and when will you see His face, you will lose your heart to Him. 'कर्षति इति कृष्णः' **('karṣati iti kṛṣṇaḥ')** The one who attracts, who captivates is 'Krishna'. Parmatma in that form! But how is that form? It is 'Sat, Chitta, Ananda' ! Parmatma, has these three virtues, the virtue of sat means 'भू सत्तायाम्' **('bhū sattāyām')** i.e. He exists in every atom, every molecule, He is the only one who is omnipresent. Brahma ji is the one who created this Srushti (the universe) and God is also the creator. Both of them have been mentioned as creators. The only difference is God became everything and Brahmaji took everything to create. Here are the two differences between creations :

Think of a potter, who makes earthen pots when he gets the soil, the wood, the wheel from other sources. So, the potter here is the 'nimitt karana' (the agent cause) and the soil is the 'upadaan karana' (material cause). That is how 'Brahma' creates but how does God create?

'एकोऽहं बहुस्याम प्रजायेय ।' **('eko'ham bahu syāma prajāyeya')** He is the one who becomes everything! He becomes the soil, the wheel and the potter too! Then, He becomes the pot by changing His form on his own! That is known as 'Advaitvada'! Advaitvada is about only 'One' not two! The creator and the creation both are 'Him'!It is about Him, who is the material and becomes the product too! It is the 'Sat tatva', entire power and authority belongs to God. So, there is no particle that exists without God and God takes the form of particle. Therefore, he is everywhere. If you can't feel Him, first probe of Godliness! You see the sunlight not the Sun to believe that it is the daytime, similarly it is not needed to search for God in 'Mandira' or

'Devalaya', you just have to see and identify His all-pervading Godliness to believe on Him. Is it possible for anyone to possess Godliness other than Him? Even for a needle, we don't believe that it is made on its own, then how can we believe that for entire universe? Just see your face in the mirror, you would believe that it is the God only who can do it!Just see the connection, the thinking, the vision, the eyes, the legs, the hands, the heart and the mind that you have got! Even today, human body is the biggest wonder for scientists. The biggest astonishment! The human mind, the inventor of the computer, mobile, and many other technologies, is still posing a question before scientists. Even the most intelligent doctors and scientists cannot answer it! So, science is not a rival or opponent of dharma!In today's world, if there is any closest friend of dharma exists, then it is science. See! How easy it has made the dharma for us.

Today, this katha will reach to India through faith and till the end of January, it will reach America, England and whole of the world when it will be telecasted worldwide. Millions of people in the world will see it. See this microphone! I speak here and my voice reaches to the last person sitting there in this hall! Thus, science helps dharma. We can see many more examples of it. Science and dharma are not enemies anymore. Both have become close friends and if we accept them as a pair, dharma can do more welfare of the world. See, I am telling you the basics of Sat Tatva, Parmatma, who is omnipresent.

The second virtue of paramatma is "chitt tattva", 'चिति ज्ञाने' **('citi jñāne'),** consciousness! The consciousness is the virtue of Paramatma. If there is consciousness anywhere, it belongs to Paramatma. If there is knowledge anywhere, there exists Paramatma too, prabhu himself exists in the form of knowledge. 'सत्यं ज्ञान अनन्तं ब्रह्म' **('satyaṁ jñānam anantam brahma')**, say scriptures. He is omniscient while jeeva is ignorant. No matter how much we know, we have limitations. And there is nothing in this world out of His knowledge. He knows everything. And the one who knows everything, knows our heart too! So, he actually knows what and when to give! He knows our heart. And that is why Shri Mahaprabhuji tells us not to ask for anything because He knows it already! But he does not give us what we wish, he gives us what is good for us.

The third virtue of Paramatma is, 'Anand Tattva'. Paramatma is made of all the three. Prabhu is 'Ananda'. Which we get by getting something is 'sukha', happiness but that which we get after giving is joy. We get happiness by eating food but we get joy after feeding the hungry. How

different are these feelings! Whenever we do the 'atm-dharma' (the things that are meant for our soul's welfare), we feel a different kind of joy. It is the feeling beyond our physical senses. We cannot get the peace and contentment in other things that we can get through listening to the Katha, helping the others and doing good. Many times, I ponder over the feeling of happiness:

We feel happy when someone appreciates our physical features, our physical virtues. Think about it! We feel very happy when someone praises our physical virtues, then what will be the level of our joy while listening to praise of our soul! But, whenever we get the enlightenment that atma (us) and Paramatma (He) are one and the same, then the joy we get upon listening to His praise is similar to listening to the praise of ours. It happens because we feel that whoever I am praising is the same as me. It is the time, when we feel oneness with him and then we feel His praise as ours. We don't stop anyone while they praise us, we don't feel tired listening them. We say them that it was God who made us to do that, it was His mercy but yes, we accept it. We don't object it and we also like it. Then just think how happy we feel while listening to our worldly praise then what will be the level of joy when we listen the praise of our soul – Paramatma! So, whenever you listen to His praise, listen it as the praise of your soul, **'आत्मनस्तु कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति' ('ātmanas tu kāmāya sarvaṁ priyaṁ bhavati')** because there is only one soul that is present in all. That is the 'Aananda tattva'. And it is the reason behind the saying that a person seeks outside for the happiness but joy is present within him by birth.

Even for Paramatma, we say, 'Nand gher anand bhayo' (joy has manifested at Nanda's home) It is the manifestation of joy at Nanda's home. In this way, Paramatma has the three virtues of 'Sat, Chitta and Ananda' and that is the form of paramatma i.e. **'रूपाय' ('rūpāya')**. Because we, who love krishna, who are Pushtimargiya Vaishnavas, are devotees of Sakar Brahma (God within a form). We all are bhakts (devotees)of Krishna, devotees of Sakar brahma. No doubt He is formless, omnipresent and resides as the soul of everyone but our love is Yashoda's son. We love Radha's swami. Our affection is in Thakurji who does Chhakleela (The act of Krishna in which he eats and enjoys with his friends in jungle) with gopas (cowherds). Our affection is in Thakurji who dances for a handful of buttermilk in front of 'gopis' (females of gopas). We love Krishna who walks behind cows while taking them to jungle for grazing. We all are Krishna lovers. Krishna is everything, brahma-Ishwara-Parmatma for us and we all move forward with his love and therefore, here, he is said as **'सच्चिदानन्द रूपाय' ('sac-cid-ānanda-rūpāya')**, such is

His form! Then, they asked that no doubt His form is the best, but what does He do? He does such a thing that no one can do. So, what does He do? They said, '**विश्वोत्पत्त्यादि हेतवे' ('višvotpatt-y-ādi-hetave')** i.e. his work is to create, foster and dissolve the world. There is nothing wrong in starting, playing and destroying a game! It is the misfortune of a man to get afflicted by doshas, negativities! A man develops attachment, when he creates, he develops ego, when he fosters and he becomes sad when he loses.

But God! He is different, He feels joy in all the three i.e. in creation, in fostering and in dissolving the world. He feels joy in the same way as a child feels while making a sand house at a beach, then playing with it and then breaking it. He feels joy in all the three instances. He doesn't differentiate. For Him, creation is as easy as a game, fostering is also similar and He accepts his own act of dissolving the world as easy as the other two! He doesn't feel love or hatred.He is far beyond it. He is the Paramatma, the Supreme one! So, Paramatma has created this whole world from Himself and He is fostering it. He is the one who runs it and when the time comes, He dissolves it. So, Paramatma creates, fosters and dissolves everything.

Now, the one who does great works tends to be very harsh in nature, then what is the nature of Him? They say, there is no one in the world with such a kind nature. Telling about His nature, they said, '**तापत्रयविनाशाय', ('tāpatraya-vināśāya')** i.e. He is the destroyer of 'trividh taapa'. (three types of afflictions) He destroys all of them.The Parmatma is the one who destroys all the three afllictions, 'Adhibhautik', 'Adhyatmik' and 'Adhidaivik' and therefore there is only one solution, only one medicine to be taken while facing any problem or sorrow and that is 'His Ashray' (His Refuge). At the time of any crisis, many people may come to help but nobody can bring happiness in our life. No one can guarantee you the happiness. People can help us but they cannot make us happy and therefore they said, '**प्रणतक्लेशनाशाय गोविंदाय नमो नमः ।' ('praṇata-kleśa-nāśāya govindāya namo namaḥ')** and that's why it is said that Parmatma is the destroyer of misery. And it is the infallible and unerring medicine whenever you seek refuge in God, fold your hands and pray that, "Prabhu! I am yours, devoted to you and incapable but you are 'Sarvasamartha' (the Almighty). '**प्रभु सर्वसमर्थो हि ततो निश्चिन्ततां व्रजेत् ।' ('prabhuḥ sarva-samartho hi tato niścintatāṁ vrajet')**. The destroyer of all afflictions, 'Paramatma' takes all the 'Adhibhautik', 'Adhyatmik',and 'Adhidaivik' miseries away, in simple words He eliminates all the psychic disturbances due to ignorance, agony and misery. All the

three are present in the life of everyone.It is not possible to stop them. It is a continuous process. Everyone has good and bad days in life. But, Bhagvana protects those who have strong faith in Him.Who is that Bhagvana? The one who is the protecter! Then here they said, 'तापत्रयविनाशाय श्रीकृष्णाय वयं नुमः ।' **('tāpatraya-vināśāya, śrī-kṛṣṇāya vayaṁ numaḥ')** Shri Krishna is such a protector who eliminates the three afflictions and therefore we bow to Him, and we praise Him. We bow to Shri Krishna, here, the root word 'नुम् ' **('numaḥ')** is used to pray God and we can also take its meaning as veneration to God i.e. we bow to Him.

'Pranam', prostration, a special gesture to show respect, is the natural way to get rid of all the difficulties and dangers, it is 'Vandan Bhakti', one of 'Navadha Bhakti'

श्रवणं कीर्तनं विष्णोः स्मरणं पादसेवनम् ।
अर्चनं वन्दनं दास्यं सख्यमात्मनिवेदनम् ॥

śravaṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ viṣṇoḥ smaraṇaṁ pāda-sevanam |
arcanaṁ vandanaṁ dāsyaṁ sakhyam ātma-nivedanam ||

If you cannot do anything special, then atleast bow to Him! Fold your hands, and do veneration. It is also a kind of Bhakti i.e. 'Vandan' is also a kind of bhakti. Gopis also say in Gopi-Geeta that

प्रणतदेहिनां पापकर्षणं तृणचरानुगं श्रीनिकेतनम् ।
फणिफणार्पितं ते पदाम्बुजं कृणु कुचेषु नः कृन्धि हृच्छयम् ॥

praṇata-dehināṁ pāpa-karṣaṇaṁ tṛṇa-carānugaṁ śrī-niketanam |
phaṇi-phaṇārpitaṁ te padāmbujaṁ kṛṇu kuceṣu naḥ kṛndhi hṛc-chayam ||

Praying prabhu gopi-jan told, 'प्रणतदेहिनां पापकर्षणं' **('praṇata-dehināṁ pāpa-karṣaṇaṁ')**, whoever bows to You, you eliminate his sins. So, the one and only way to get rid of sins is doing 'vandan' to Him.It is possible that we couldn't do great yajnas, give donations or chant big mantras, then Shri Bhagavataji shows us this simple way. Do prostrate before him daily. It is indeed a great way to get free from all the sins. 'तृणचरानुगं श्रीनिकेतनम् ।' **('tṛṇa-carānugaṁ śrī-niketanam')** The 'charanarvinda' (lotus feet) of thakurji are like Lakshmi ji's residence. Lakshmi ji lives near 'Thakurji's charanarvinda' i.e. thakurji's lotus feet. And therefore, we must do the charansparsh of Thakur ji daily. It is the vandan shakti (power of veneration). And

that's why they said, ' श्रीकृष्णाय वयं नुमः ' **('śrī-kṛṣṇāya vayaṁ numaḥ')**, we venerate and the true veneration or 'naman' happens when it is done with Sampoorna Sharanagati (by seeking total refuge in him, by devoting totally to him). So, in every 'stuti' in Shrimad bhagavata, you find that everyone has venerated Prabhu, and it is our culture too!

In the present times, all the schools in India teach to shake hands, is there any place that teaches to do 'Pranama'? On the other hand, India is identified by 'Pranam' (way of greeting with respect by folding hands, in other words, veneration). Even a foreigner will do 'namaskar' or 'pranam' while addressing you!

But no school in our country teaches to do pranama. In every other country they always stick to their way of greeting, and we think we should do pranam only to God or Guru.It is not like that, we can do pranama to each and every person we meet. That is so because our culture teaches that Parmatma is present in every being and it is a mudra (a symbolic hand gesture) too!Just try to be angry or try to speak loudly while doing pranam, or try to run, you will find yourself unable to do that. In fact, you won't be able to do any negative thing while doing pranama. There is a rule for it in Yogashastra that how does Sushumna Nadi operates? it operates by pranama. But, It is a whole process and it connects spiritualism with our behaviour and therefore Samskaras must be followed at a Vishnava's Home. We do Jai Shree Krishna when someone visits our home which implies that hail Shri Krishna residing in your heart, May He win. That is the bhavana (emotion) behind it. So, to meet someone in this great way is also important. So after listening Bhagavata katha, do Jai Shree Krishna whenever you meet someone. we have met someone and remembered God. ' श्रीकृष्णाय वयं नुमः ' **('śrī-kṛṣṇāya vayaṁ numaḥ')**. We do the veneration before God but not as a tradition or a rule, also not as a process, we bow to him offering our hearts to his feet and that is the true veneration. My heart is yours now. I have become yours! total refuge! After doing many Bhagavata katha, I have personally experienced that whenever we start taking Ashraya (refuge) of Shri Bhagavataji, four things start getting eliminated from our life. I feel that these four things have gone from my personality. That is what I feel.

First, we start thinking that we have lost Ashcharya bhava i.e. the feeling of astonishment! You stop feeling surprised about whatever new or awkward or absurd you see. I actually don't feel surprised! When someone comes to surprise me, I have to pretend to be astonished. But I actually don't feel it.

Second, we stop being attracted. The feeling of attraction fades away and we start feeling equal for everything. We neither feel attraction nor hatred. Anyway, it's a different matter but here in this condition, we don't feel attraction towards anyone or anything. We start feeling that God is everywhere and everything is for us and we accept everything and everybody as they are.

Third, we become free form expectations. We stop thinking about doing this and that to get something. We don't expect anything from anyone. We start feeling gratitude towards Him. We feel Thakurji has given us everything. We stop complaining about what we don't have. We don't even think about what we haven't got. We start feeling that we have got more than what we are capable of. And it is felt continuously. Such is the effect of shri bhagavata ji.

And And the fourth, the feeling of attachment fades away. There remains the same value and the same love for everyone and everything in our heart and we don't think about loving someone more or less. In other words, we stop being discriminative. Such is the effect of Shri Bhagavata ji. By chanting and meditating on the shlokas of Shree Bhagavata ji we realize that we are losing these four tendencies gradually. And then we also realise that we are doing veneration. It is the time when we venerate before him truly, before this it was only our body that prostrated but now our soul also prostrates and venerates. And it is then when we offer our everything to Him in a true manner, it gives us true happiness which we continuously feel. Such is the effect of Shri Bhagavata ji.

We believe that King Parikshit got 'Moksha', the salvation, but 'moksha' is a very simple thing. King Parikshit lived his life meaningfully before dying. He had to die as he got cursed for it. It was compulsory to die, because he was cursed by a muni. But due to the influence of Shri Bhagavataji, he got the essence of his life before death. So, we don't have to leave the world by dying only, we would leave it after getting the true essence of life. Shri Bhagavata ji teaches us that only. We don't want to leave the world by death, we want to leave it after living our life joyfully, with all its essence. We have to live the life to its fullest. "God has given us a chance by making us a human being, by sending us in a Vaishnav family where Shri Thakurji resides, by blessing us with his bhakti and we are going after enjoying our life". If this is how you think of your life then consider that you have lived your life to the fullest otherwise all others live and die normally. In this way the veneration is done '**श्रीकृष्णाय वयं नुमः ।' ('śrī-kṛṣṇāya vayaṁ numaḥ')**

And that is what Arjuna did in Geeta. When you observe whole of the Geeta ji, you find that Bhagavan touched almost all subjects in it. He talked about yoga in it, but He didn't want Arjuna to do it immediately there. He also taught about dhyana but he didn't tell Arjuna to perform it then and there. Then what did He actually want Arjun to do? The answer to this question is the conclusion of Geeta ji. Bhagavana talks about Yoga, Sankhya, Gnana, yagna all, but does he want Arjun to do all that immediately? No! What does He want? He wants, 'युद्धाय कृत निश्चय' **('yuddhāya kṛta-niścaya')**. He wants Arjun to fulfill his duty first i.e. to fight. He tells, 'get your duties fulfill, that is the meaning of my words and that is the result! And at last Arjun also said,

नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाच्युत ।
स्थितोऽस्मि गतसन्देहः करिष्ये वचनं तव ॥

naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtir labdhā tvat-prasādān mayācyuta |
sthito'smi gata-sandehaḥ kariṣye vacanaṁ tava ||

Now, I will act as you say. And that is what we call 'sharanagati'. What is 'sharanagati? Currently We live as per our wish. But when we submit ourselves to God, we belong to Him, and that's why after taking Sharanagati, we will live as per His wish. After sharanagati, we will do and live as He will motivate us. This is what we call Sharanagati. 'अब सौंप दिया इस जीवन का सब भार तुम्हारे हाथों में, है जीत तुम्हारे हाथों में और हार तुम्हारे हाथों में, अब सौंप दिया इस जीवन का सब भार तुम्हारे हाथों में' **('Ab saunp diya is jeevan ka sab bhaar tumhare haathon mein, hai jeet tumhare hathon mein aur haar tumhare hathon mein, ab saunp diya is jeevan ka sb bhar tumhare hatho mein'** i.e. I have surrendered all my life in your hands, now you will decide to make it a success or a failure) O God! 'करिष्ये वचनं तव' **("kariṣye vacanaṁ tava")**, now I will do as you direct me.I am retiring my brains aside and now I will do as per your order, from now on you direct me! order me!Now, I have understood the meaning of my life. If I would fight, I would get stuck in the cycle of Pap and Punya (Vice and Virtue). And if I follow your orders, I will overcome them. 'मेरा निश्चय अब एक यही, एक बार तुम्हें मैं पा जाऊँ, अर्पण कर दूँ दुनियाभर का सब प्यार तुम्हारे हाथों में ।' **('Mera nishchay ab ek yahi, ek baar tumhein main paa jaaun, arpan kar dun duniyabhar ka sab pyar tumhare hatho mein'** i.e. If I get to you once, I want to submit all my love and affection to you.!) 'श्रीकृष्णाय वयं नुमः ।' **('śrī-kṛṣṇāya vayaṁ numaḥ')**. Dear Shri Krishna! We venerate you and therefore Shri Mahaprabhuji has given us the Ashtakshar Mantra 'श्री कृष्णः शरणं मम'

('śrī kṛṣṇaḥ śaraṇaṁ mama') That is what Arjuna accepted in Geeta ji, that is the esscence of Geetaji, and it is our Mahamantra.That, which is the esscence of Shri Bhagavata ji, is our Mahamantra and it is the last acceptation that we have to made before Him! 'I surrender to You'. **'शरण आये सोही तारे जे जन, शरण आये सो ही तारे' ('Sharan aaye sohi taare je jana, sharan aaye so hi taare')** God has taken the vow to set those souls free from this world who have surrendered to him. Many people ask that if God wishes good for all then why doesn't it happen?

Once a man went to a barber's to get his hair cut. He was a learned person and therefore the barber asked him that you talk about God and if He wishes good for everyone then why don't all of us get happy and contented? Why their happiness looks incomplete? When he asked such a question the learned person thought deeply for some time and then said, come with me. He took the barber outside and stood on a road where they saw many people. While crossing the road, the learned person asked, what do you do? The barber said, I shave people's beard and do the hair. Then the learned one said, oh! Then why did you not shave that man's beard who passed by? why did you not cut that man's hair?

The barber said, it is not my responsibility to shave beards of all the people! I can only help those who come to me! "Here you are!", the man said. "that's not my responsibility to set all free! I set only those free in their life who surrender before me.

मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ।
अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।
तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥

māṁ eva ye prapadyante māyāṁ etāṁ taranti te |
ananyāś cintayanto māṁ ye janāḥ paryupāsate |
teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānāṁ yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham ||

I will do their Yoga and Kshema i.e. I will secure for them what they do not possess and I will secure what they already possess. **'जो जग में रहे तो ऐसे रहे, जैसे जल में कमल का फूल रहे, मेरे सब गुण दोष समर्पित हो, करतार तुम्हारे हाथों में, अब सौंप दिया इस जीव का सब भार तुम्हारे हाथों में ' ('Jo jag mein rahein to aise rahein, jaise jal mein kamal ka phool rahe, mere sab gun dosh samarpt ho, karataar tumhare hathon mein, ab saunp diya is jeevan ka sab bhar tumhare hathon mein'** i.e. may we live in this

world as a lotus blooms in the pond, I submit all my vices and virtues, O Lord! In your hands, Now I surrender my life in your hands.) **'श्रीकृष्णाय वयं नुमः' ('śrī-kṛṣṇāya vayaṁ numaḥ')** We venerate to that God. We venerate Shri Krishna!

So, first He attracted us through our eyes, eyes can see only the form and that's why, **'सच्चिदानन्दरूपाय' ('sac-cid-ānanda-rūpāya')**, is said. Our wisdom, intellect gets attracted towards capabilities, so **'विश्वोत्पत्त्यादि हेतवे' ('Viśhwapatyāādi Hetwe')** is said. He can create, foster and dissolve the world. And when our intellect knows his capability, we surrender to Him. In this world too, wherever our intellect would find more capability than us, it gets surrender to that. And, our heart wants love and affection. And therefore, Vyasaji told us about His virtue to capture our hearts as **'तापत्रयविनाशाय' ('tāpatraya-vināśāya')**, He is so affectionate, compassionate and kind that He is unable to see anyone's pain. So, if you also go under His sharana, he will remove all your pains and problems! So, kind and compassionate He is. And when someone hear this, he loses his heart to him.

In this way, Shukdev ji venerated by going under His sharanagati in three ways. Shukdev ji is the best narrator of Shri Bhagavataji. Shukdev ji has a wonderful character. Praising and venerating Shukdev ji, vyasji says in the mangalacharana,

यं प्रव्रजन्तमनुपेतमुपेतकृत्यं, द्वैपायनो विरहकातर आजुहाव।
पुत्रेति तन्मयतया तरवोऽभिनेदुः तं सर्वभूतहृदयं मुनिमानतोऽस्मि ॥

yaṁ pravrajantam anupetam upetakṛtyaṁ dvaipāyano viraha-kātara ājuhāva |
putreti tan-mayataya taravo'bhineduḥ taṁ sarva-bhūta-hṛdayaṁ munim ānato'smi ||

When Vyas ji writes these shlokas of managalacharana for Shri Shukdev ji, he praises Shukdev ji as a being who is running away. Shukdev ji is **'यं प्रव्रजन्तं' ('yaṁ pravrajantam')**, he praised Shukdevji's movement around the world. Why? Because the great men always keep moving! They don't sit at a place. They continuously travel the world. Therefore, it is the character of a great man that they have moist eyes but hard soles. They have compassion in their eyes but they have worked so hard that their feet become hard. The katha of Shri Shukdeev ji who is continuously doing the efforts, and there are many other Kathas of Shukdev ji in which their character is different. Kaushiki Samhita and Devi Bhagavata also discusses about him.

Once Parvati ji (Shiva's Consort) askes Mahadevji (Shiva) that, "you are unborn and immortal and I am your consort, your better half, then why I had to go through many cycles of births and deaths? Why do we have this difference? And then Mahadev ji told, I have Kathamrut in my heart and I constantly savour it, therefore I don't fall in the cycle of births and deaths. Then joining both the hands in namaskara mudra, Rani Sati tells, "Nath I am your consort and I have right over half of all your belongings. So, please let me also savour Kathamruta". Listening to this, Mahadev ji gets happy. If someone asks about seva or shri Thakurji, don't send them away, make them understand and learn it with love.

Many times, when I go for "padharavani" (visit of vallabhkul balak at a Vainshnav's home) ladies try to keep gentlemen away from us by saying them that you don't know what and how to speak, you don't know anything. So, be quite and stay away. Then, even if I call them they don't come to me as they have got the instructions to do so. If someone tries to come to us, you must motivate them. It is also an art to motivate one's emotion, feeling. You can say, "you do it very nicely, please do it" to motivate them.

So, Mahadev ji gets happy and claps three time to order all the beings in vicinity to leave. They all leave the vicinity there and then Mahadevji sits under a Banyan tree and says, "it is the Katha of Samadhi (the eighth and last phase of ashtang yoga), and so I will tell you bhagavata katha in samadhi and while listening to it, give me the indication that you are listening to it. Now, when Mahadev ji clapped, the premises were emptied by all the beings but there was left a parrot's egg on the banyan tree under which they were sitting. It was about to hatch. Now, Mahadev ji is narrating the katha and Parvati ji is making the humming sound to indicate. Meanwhile, by the blessings of katha, the egg gets hatched and a chick comes out of it. It feels very happy that he is listening to Bhagavata katha at the time of his birth which is a boon for him as generally people find this in the last stage of their lives. He thinks, "I am so fortunate that I am listening to Shri Bhagavata ji from the very first moment of my life. I am so fortunate and I don't want to miss out on this Kathamruta! " Meanwhile, Parvati ji gets asleep. A parrot is famous for his mimicking abilities, and it thinks that if Mahadevji will come to know about Parvati ji's sleep, I would miss out this katha. So, it flies and sits into Parvati ji's lap and starts mimicking the indication of Parvatiji. Mahadev ji was in the thought that Parvati ji is listening to him. But, when Mahadev ji opens his eyes, he finds Parvati ji asleep and the parrot in her lap is giving the indication.

Hey! This divine story should not fall in the hand of any unauthorized one, thinking this, he takes the trident and runs to catch the bird. Now, Parrot is flying away and Mahadev ji is running behind it crying stop, stop.....! and our scriptures say that the parrot gets into the Ashram and when Vyasaji's wife yawns, it gets into her womb thorough her mouth. So, even if you yawn during the katha, consider that the shlokas of Shri Bhagavata ji enter in you. And therefore, even if a person gets asleep here, God showers his blessing upon him. A boat always takes passengers from one shore to other even if they get asleep in it. Consider this Pandal of Katha as a boat which is descending from the ocean of life and even if you sit here and fall asleep it will take you to the opposite shore. Such is the impact of this katha and this place is no longer remains a common place.

Often many people have a small intellect, a small capacity but if they take the shelter of someone great, they easily cross this ocean of life. The place, the time and the katha of which you have taken the shelter, are not common. They have the power to set free a sleeping person from too! An intellectual gets free, a learned also gets free, a listener listens to it, but a slept one also crosses this ocean of life. Such is the impact of Shri Bhagavata ji. It is said, that parrot, Shukdev ji remains inside her womb for sixteen years. Vyas ji prays to him to get out of it because he thinks there must be some divine soul inside. Whenever he prays it to come out, he listens a voice that says I will come out on a condition that God must come and promise me that after getting out of here, His Maya (worldly illusions) won't affect me! Then, Vyasa ji requests God to come and God promises the same. Just think about the best narrator and the best listener of Shri Bhagavat ji! Both have found God in the womb itself! The best listener is King Parikshit.

When Aswatthama released Brahmastra (A weapon) and it went into Uttara's (Arjuna's Daughter in law) womb, Paramatma himself enters the womb taking the size of a thumb and protects it. King Parikshit has witnessed God in the womb and God has given Darshan to shri Shukdev ji in the womb itself and promised him. Just think! Even after getting God they have the same deep indulgence in Katha as before. So, the object of Katha is not getting God, because even after getting God Katha is there to be listened to because it gives true happiness.

Here, God made the promise and there Shri Shukdev ji came out of the womb. As soon as he came out, he left his house and ran away. Vyasji got a son after years and he is going away '**पुत्रेति तन्मयतया तरवोऽभिनेदुः ।' ('putreti tanmayatayā taravo'bhineduḥ')**. He went after his son crying

putra – putra. **यं प्रव्रजन्तमनुपेतमुपेतकृत्यं, (yaṁ pravrajantam anupetam upetakṛtyaṁ putreti tan-mayataya taravo'bhineduḥ)** here, '**व्रजगतौ' ('vrajagatau')** - is the root verb and '**प्र' ('pra')** is the prefix, so the word means accepting sannyasa and going. He has accepted sannyasa and going away. '**अनुपेतमपेत कृत्यं' ('anupetam upetakṛtyaṁ')** means the one whose Janoi and other samskaras have not been performed yet. Acharyas say, samskaras are required where there are vikaras or peccancy. But here, there is no vikara, then what's the need of samskara? Also, he has not any cloth on his body. It is said that a brahmin must have four knots with him. In choti (shikha), in dhoti (loin cloth), in pothi (books) and in Janeu (a sacred thread that hangs from a shoulder to waist in cross manner and which is worn by orthodox Hindu males as a part of upnayana samskara). Each brahmin must have these.But Shri Shukdev ji is free from all these knots. He has no choti, no dhoti, no pothi and no janeu with him. He has left in 'Digambara' form. Digambara means the one who has directions as his cloths. So, the Directions are Shukdev ji's cloths. It seems that he doesn't see anything except God. The one who sees God everywhere, doesn't bother to wear cloths and the one who has Vikara in his eyes, bothers.The one who doesn't have any vikara, doesn't need anything. And therefore, Shukdev ji doesn't answer to Vyas ji who is coming behind him. '**तरवोऽभिनेदुः' ('taravo'bhineduḥ')** — there are many trees around. Shri Shukdevji dosen't answer but the trees around seem to tell something to Vyas ji by waving themselves. They say, "look at us! we bear winters, summers and monsoon, and develop fruits. Even after that, we donate our fruits to others. Similarly, Shukdevji is the fruit of your austerities. Don't feel attachment towards him and let him go, set him free for wellbeing of society.

''मन रे तूँ वृषन को मत ले । कांटे ता पर स्नेह नहीं और सींचे ता नहीं स्नेह ।।''

"Man re tu vrushan ko mat le | kaante ta par sneh nahi aur seenche ta nahi sneh ||"

Surdasji in these lines suggests to take the advice of trees. If you couldn't find anyone for Satsanga (an association with good people) daily, just come out of your home, and you will find a tree. There is no one as great as a tree. It gets planted as a seed, holds up against harsh weather and when it get fruits, it doesn't consume them, it donates! It doesn't hate if someone throws stone on it and if someone waters it, it doesn't love. It treats everyone equally! Where would you find such a great Vaishnava?. 'Shri Mahaprabhu ji says, '**वनस्पतयः वै वैष्णवाः' ('vanaspatayaḥ vai vaiṣṇavāḥ')** means, whole of the vegetation is also Vaishnava because they have all the characteristics of a Vaishnava. Shri Shukdevji is running and Vyasji

is chasing. Therefore, they said 'सर्वभूतहृदयं मुनिमानतोऽस्मि' **('sarva-bhūta-hṛdayaṁ munim ānato'smi')**, we venerate Shukdeva ji who sees all-pervading god in every being and everything. He has been called as Sarvabhuta (the one who sees God everywhere). There is a story in 'Purana' that says when Shukdev ji was running away, there came a beautiful pond in the way, in which celestial nymphs were bathing. When Shukdev ji passed by they didn't get distracted. But, when Vyasa ji came there, they covered themselves. Vyasa ji angrily asks them when my sixteen- year- old naked son passed by, you didn't get distracted but when I, who is old and aged, came here, you felt shy, why is it so?

Then, nymphs apologize and say 'mahatman! even though you are old enough, but you still have vikara in your eyes! You still differentiate between male and female but, your son! He sees God everywhere and in every being. There was no biasness in his eyes so, we didn't feel awkward. The feeling of shyness is there where there exist Vikara. So, they have venerated Shukdev ji who sees god everywhere.

Further, the katha is taken to Naimisharanya. In the Naimisharanya, many sages headed by Shaunaka are present. They have started a thousand-year sacrifice (yagna) there. They went to Brahmaji and asked him about the place where they could perform this yagna. Brahmaji released a disk from his heart (Manomaya Chakra) and the middle of the axis of that chakra where the mind gets focused is called Naimisharanya. There they have started yagna. They have called Suta ji for satsanga because they have got some free time during the yagna and instead of talking about worldly matters they prefer listening to Bhagvata katha. They invite Suta ji and offer him the highest asana (Seat). Shuanak and other sages also take their seats and start enquiring many things. But first of all, they do the veneration.

'सूताख्याहि कथासारं मम कर्णरसायणम् ।' **('sūtākhyā hi kathā-sāraṁ mama karṇa-rasāyaṇam')**, tell us the essence of the katha that is like the elixir to our ears. And they ask many beautiful questions and then Shaunak ji tells

भक्तिज्ञानविरागाप्तौ विवेको वर्धते महान् ।
मायामोहनिरासश्च वैष्णवैः क्रियते कथम् ॥

bhakti-jñāna-virāgāptau viveko vardhate mahān |
māyā-mohana-nirāśaś ca vaiṣṇavaiḥ kriyate katham ||

O Gurudev! How does the wisdom gained through devotion, knowledge and renunciation increase? How a Vaishnav could be free from the worldly attachement and the illusive nature of the world? In this age of iron i.e. Kaliyuga, evil tendencies are grown in them. So, please tell us the ways that can help a soul to be free from the sufferings. Please tell us the ways that are the best among those that do the best. Tell us the way that can take us to God. And so on. Whenever you meet a great man or a saint or a sage, then what should you talk about? What should you ask? What should you speak about? In India, we already know about it. Before a man of materialistic world, talk of worldly matters, and before a saint or bhakta, always talk about God. Try to talk only about God in sacred places, satsanga, before great men and avoid talking worldly matters before them. Try to avoid the materialistic matters as much as you can.

They asked the questions and Shaunak ji venerates his Guru,

चिंतामणिर्लोकसुखं सुरद्रुः स्वर्ग संपदम् ।
प्रयच्छति गुरुः प्रीतो वैकुण्ठं योगि दुर्लभम् ॥

cintāmaṇir loka-sukhaṁ suradruḥ svarga-saṁpadam |
prayacchati guruḥ prīto vaikuṇṭhaṁ yogi durlabham ||

When Chintamani bless us, it gives all the worldly happiness. When kalpavruksha bless us, it gives us heavenly happiness and if Guru gets happy, he gives us Vaikunthdham which is difficult to get for great yogis too! Therefore, getting a Guru it is far better then finding Chintamani and Kalpavruksha as they can only give us the worldly pleasures and heavenly pleasures but by the blessings of guru we can find the happiness of vaikuntha here on this earth too!A normal guru can take us to Vaikuntha but a great guru takes us to the vaikuntha bhakta. They make the life of a bhakta so great that after meeting him, people feel happiness of seeing God himself. There are many souls, great men, acharyas and elderly people whose company feels like the company of God. We feel God in their speech, in their thoughts and in their personality. The company of such people is far better than vaikuntha itself.Chintamani gives us worldly pleasures. But, if we have a Guru, we can get all our wishes fulfilled,they have such a great capability. It is their nature that they cannot see a bhakta in sorrow. You don't have to ask for anything from them, you just get what you wish.

It is like the Kalpavruksha (the Wish Fulfilling Tree) 'श्री वल्लभ कल्पद्रुप फल्यो, फल लाग्यो विट्ठलेश, शाखा सब बालक भए, ताको पार न पावत शेष' **('Shri Vallabha kalpadrup falyo, fal lagyo Vitthalesh,**

shakha sab balak bhaye, tako par na pavata shesh'), Shri Hariray ji Mahahaprabhu ji said in Vallabh Sakhi" What is the Kalpavruksha for a Vaishnava? He answers, the ashraya (taking refuge) of shri Mahaprabhuji is like Kalpavruksha. But, **'गुरुः प्रीतो वैकुण्ठं योगि-दुर्लभम्' ('guruḥ prīto vaikuṇṭhaṁ yogi durlabham')**, a Guru can make his shishya reach Vaikuntha and therefore everybody should take ashraya of a sadguru during their lifetime. Going in ashraya of a guru is not an act of doing pooja of a person, but it is the act of adoring a great man, it is the act of adoring guru-bhava and when that guru-bhava (it means considering a person as our teacher and believing in him whole-heartedly) touches the heart, the life starts to change.

What does a guru do? When a person carves a stone, he is trying to make an idol. When he has completed the half of it, someone says, "it is so beautiful", then the sculptor says, "I haven't made the statue, it was there in the stone, I only have removed the extra stone. Similarly, all these are Daivi jivas (people having divine connection with God) they belong to His leela (a part of god's will in which God has his presence). Their guru just removes the extra stones they have in their lives. Everyone have Soordas, Kumbhandas, Padmanabhdas in them, the need is to remove the extra stones only. And that's why Bhagavana says in Shri Bhagavad Geeta,

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनः तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥

tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā |
upadekṣanti te jñānaṁ jñāninaḥ tattva-darśinaḥ ||

He tells to Arjun to go in the sharana of that Guru (To surrender himself to a guru), who can make you a tatvadarshi (Tatvadarshi is a person who can understand every stance as an act of God and sees everything as a seer), who can give you knowledge. For this he tells three steps:

First of all, venerate to him. Leave your arrogancy and be polite, surrender yourself to him and be his loved one and talk about wisdom. Because, doing seva melts your arrogancy. If you are able, go to the places of God, go to the places of guru, go to the temples, and if possible, do that seva which attacks on your arrogancy. Why? Because, only you have to break your arrogancy, you wouln't like if anyone else breaks it. Because, we tend to develop distance from those people and acts which break our arrogancy. We tend to criticize him and the work that he made us to do and we feel hurt. So, we don't see the arrogancy of our own, and when others

tell us about it, we don't like, then how can we get rid of it? The only way to do it is to break the arrogancy with the help of the hammer of our wisdom. It is the only way and therefore do that seva about which you feel an insult in it. Why? Because it won't come up when others will insult you. Your wisdom comes up when you insult yourself. So, choose a seva that makes you feel that why should I do it after being such a big personality! For example, the seva of Buhari (cleaning the floor), of vastra (doing cloths), or of Sohini. But we are nothing compared to God. And when we start believing it completely, we find the essence of all the knowledge. It is alright to be arrogant before this world but you should pray to God to make you cautious about your arrogancy in a temple. As, the arrogancy in front of world is forgivable but before Him, it is a sin and no one is powerful enough to save you. After that, the arrogancy of your own will destroy you. Therefore, be always cautious about arrogancy whenever you go to a temple. Be polite there.

They talked how to go to a guru and asked many other questions and then Suta ji replied:

काल व्याल मुखग्रास त्रासनिर्णाशहेतवे ।
श्रीमद् भागवतं शास्त्रं कलौ कीरेण भाषितम् ॥

kāla vyāla mukha-grāsa trāsa-nirṇāśa-hetave |
śrīmad bhāgavataṁ śāstraṁ kalau kīreṇa bhāṣitam ||

Sutaji began, when the dark snake of time started to engulf jeeva, then to make it free, Shri Shukdeva ji gave this shastra (holy book). This dark serpent of time is devouring all of us, eating all of us, swallowing all of us. No one can escape it. It is the destroyer of all. See, how much it has destroyed or eaten! Our age, our capacity, our wisdom and family members! Don't you feel that the time has taken it all from us? It takes away everything and we too are in its clamp! It is pulling us away and we know that have to go with it, but the problem is we are not cautious of it.You can buy a very expensive and beautiful watch but no one gives any guarantee that your good time starts now and now a days it is the prevailing problem that everyone does have a good watch but no one does have time! In the present time, everybody has expensive and fine watches but just tell me who has time? The time is running! No one has the capacity to stop it. It can not be stopped but it can be improved, it can be spent good, it can be converted into good memories. Did you spend your time good? Did you make it successful? That's only what you have in your hands because you can not stop it, no one can stop or change the speed of time!

Here, they said, the dark serpent of time is swallowing us and to be free from it Shri shukdevji has given us this Bhagavata Shashtra. So, what does it do? Does it stop the watch or does it stop time? No! It has the trick to spend your time good. Time doesn't stop, you have to spend it good. And that is what King Pareekshit did. He had a curse upon him. But Shrimad Bhagavta katha is like a thing that can convert a cursed one into a person who is dedicated to Bhagavana. Such is the capability of katha. See, he had the curse to die in seven days but who else is there who gets the eighth day? We all have to depart in these seven days only, i.e. from Monday to Sunday. Who has got the eighth day? Many think it as 'just seven days only?' When Pareekshit met Shukdevji, then Shukdevji said, you still have seven days. He gave a faith to him, he gave him courage and in seven days King Pareekshit got the essence of life! Getting essence of life doesn't mean death. He had to die as a result of the curse, but Shri Bhagavataji gave him the essence of life. It means Shri bhagavata ji has the capacity that makes you able to find God before you die. Just think, if we can find God after death only, then what is the easiest way to find God? Let us all die, and then we will find God but we don't want to find God after death, but we want to die after finding Him. We want to find Him during our lifetime and then we want to happily handover our body to Him in the way He had given it to us.

'वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि ।'

'vāsānsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya navāni gṛhṇāti naro'parāṇi |'

Just like a person gets fresh after changing cloths, the end of life also looks like a new beginning. And such is the capability of Shri Bhagavata ji and that's why it is said that this is such a katha that it purifies the inner self. There is no other way to purify the heart. Listening to this katha purifies truly and that you will also feel in these seven days. You will feel that how your mind and heart have got freshen up after listening to this katha. Such is the impact of Shri Bhagavata ji.

Even gods find it hard to listen to this katha. Why is it so? Because when Shri Shukdev ji was telling it to King Pareekshita, gods from the heaven came there with the pot of elixir in their hand and told Pareekshita, "Do you fear from death? Then have this elixir, you will be immortal", then Pareekshita asked them, "what do you want in exchange of it?", they said, "we don't want anything other than Shukdeva ji. We will take him to heaven and will listen katha". It means there is no katha in heaven. And why there is no katha there? Because there exists no speaker.

The Katha will be there only when there is a speaker. Because, the one who listens to katha and gets its essence, God never traps them into the cycle of heaven and hell! God takes them to his holy abode and that's why even gods in the heaven also want to listen to it.See, devas (gods from heaven) have the elixir that they have got after 'Samudra Manthan', the churning of ocean. Demons i.e. asuras have the knowledge of Sanjeevani (knowledge that makes dead people to live again.) as they have Shukracharya as their Guru. Both of these make a being immortal. So, devas and asuras both have a way to be immortal but the human being is left without any such knowledge. So, What do humas have? Then God says, humans have the elixir of katha that makes them feel immortality during their lifetime. They feel it while they live. So, one has elixir from the ocean, another one has Sanjeevani and humans have the elixir of katha. If someone listens to it once, he gets free from all the sin he has done previously.

There is the story of Dhundhukari. No one has done sins equal to him, and if he can get free, then why can't we? In this way, they have given us a faith.In this way, this Kathamruta (the elixir of katha) is so divine that it frees you up from all the sins even if you don't have done any punya. There are many processes defined in the holy books called shastra that can free you up from your sins.You would have listened about many of them like do shraddha at Gaya ji (Shraddha is a process in which a person does rituals to let his ancestors free from the cycle of birth and death), or do the pooja in Prayag, etc. There are processes to give Sadgati to the person who dies without doing any punya. It means a person can get moksha after the death too!But bhakti can be done during the lifetime only. After death we can't enjoy Bhakti. The kathamruta is also similar to it. The kathamruta is such a medicine that it not only gives the feeling of immortality during the life but it also makes one free after the death too! The story of Dhundhukari is the proof for it!He died, and was subjected to punishment after death but when he listened to the katha, Shrimad bhagavata saptah, he got free!

The glory defined in these six chapters doesn't define the glory of Bhagavata only! It defines the glory of Bhagavata saptaha (a week), they asked, what happens by doing this saptaha? The answer to this question is there in those six chapters.King Pareekshita denied. He said, I don't want the elixir because it can only give me a long life, but katha can give me a meaningful life. I don't want to live long. I want a meaningful and divine life. Even if I get a short life but I want to live it to its full. And in that duration, I want to spread the aroma of spiritality!See the stone that lies on the road for years but no one gets joy by watching it but if there blooms a flower

near it for a day only, everyone enjoys it. I want such a divine life. He considered devas as disbelievers and denied giving Katha-amruta to devatas. If they would have sat in the Pandala then no one was going to stop them but they thought, only we should get it not others. Such was their tendency. And therefore, they didn't get it. They told the ritual to listening to the katha was given buy Sanat-kumaras to Narada ji. Then they argued, "how is it possible that Naradji and Sanat kumaras met each other as both have the tendency to go from one place to another continuously. When did they meet and discuss about the process"?

Then, talking about the meeting Sutaji told:

एकदा हि विशालायां चत्वार ऋषयोऽमलाः ।
सत्संगार्थं समायाता ददृशुस्तत्र नारदम् ॥

Ekadā hi viśālāyāṁ catvāra ṛṣayo'malāḥ |
satsaṅgārthaṁ samāyātā dadṛśus tatra nāradam ||

Once, at Badrivishala, all the four sages Sanank, Sanandan, Sanat and Sanat kumara; collectively known as Sanat kumaras, who are the 'Manasa Putra' (mind-born sons) of Brahma ji, whose age always remain five years, who are reciting God's name since eternal time, means who have not affected by time at all. The karma and time of those who recite the name of Bhagavana all the time do not get affected. Whenever we stop remembering God's name, both time and karma takes on us. The one who is Sharanagata (who has taken refuge in Him) never gets trapped by both, the time and karma.

There comes a story of the old lady who sends back yama-doota seven times. Yama-doota (the representative of the god of death Yama) comes and says, "your time to depart has come, come with me" and she says, "no, the festival of Janam-ashtami is coming, I won't leave my seva of Janam-ashtami" Let me do the Janam-ashtami seva, then I will come. Yama-doota goes back and then comes after Janamashtami. Again, she denies going to yama-loka as the festival of Radhashtami was about to come. In this way, she denies the yama-doota seven times and after it she departs for the holy abode of God. 'તેને કાળ કર્મ ન બાંધે રે, યમ તે શિર ધનુષ ન સાધે રે, એવો માર્ગ શ્રીવલ્લભવરનો, જ્યાં નહીં પ્રવેશ વિધિસરનો.' **('Tene kaal karma na baandhe re, yam te shir dhanush na saadhe re, evo marga Shri Vallabhavar no, jyan nahi pravesh vidhisarno.'** i.e the one who has decided to walk on the path that is suggested by Shri Vallabhacharya ji, can not be bounded by

the karmas) Such is this epic story of Paramatma that opens the bonds of karma and time too!So, to be free from the karma, go in the sharana of God, God removes all the bondages of karma too! There are may who say that you have to pay for karma and no one can change it but when you study this Bhagavata purana, you can say the sentence is partially true. You can be free from your karma as Bhagavana himself declares in Geeta ji that

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुच: ॥

sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja |
ahaṁ tvā sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ ||

'Come into my sharana only, I will make you free from all Karma' so, if you take His sharanagati, God makes you free. And therefore, in our Pushti-marga, the ritual of 'Brahma-sambandha' is performed first. Now, what is 'Brahma-sambandha'? It is the first step to go in His Sharana (refuge). We go in His sharana through a process and the one who goes in sharana, thakruji himself does the yoga and kshema of that person. And therefore, a person should go in His sharana before walking on the path of Bhakti.

Here, Sanat-Kumaras meet Narada ji. When they said it, it was asked that "Narada ji doesn't stop anywhere, he keeps going from one place to another then how he met them?" then telling the story they said, "Sanat-Kumara gathered there for Satasanga and there they saw Narada ji hurrying somewhere. He had tension on his face, so Sanat kuamara asked, "Narada! a bhakta always seems ruminating on something, why do you look tensed? Then Narada ji spoke telling both his distress and story :

अहं तु पृथिविं याता ज्ञात्वा सर्वोत्तमामिति ।
पुष्करं च प्रयागं च काशीं गोदावरीं तथा ॥

ahaṁ tu pṛthiviṁ yātā jñātvā sarvottamāmiti |
puṣkaraṁ ca prayāgaṁ ca kāśī godāvarīṁ tathā ||

He stated, "I came here on this earth for pilgrimage because I heard that the pilgrimage places on the earth are the best for it but when I visited all the places of pilgrimage (teerth) I found that they all have an impact of Kaliyuga over them."

Shri Mahaprabhu ji also says:

सर्वमार्गेषु नष्टेषु कलौ च खल धर्मिणि ।
पाषण्डप्रचुरेलोके कृष्ण एव गतिमर्म ॥

sarva-mārgeṣu naṣṭeṣu kalau ca khala dharmiṇi |
pāṣaṇḍa-pracure-loke kṛṣṇa eva gati-marma ||

So, Narada ji told, I went everywhere to find God, I went to do punya, I went to find eternal peace but I saw the effect of Kaliyuga everywhere.

Kaliyuga means sorrow-discord. Now-a-days there are sorrows everywhere, discord in every home. So, whenever you are sitting peacefully near to Shri Thakur ji, consider it as your Sat-yuga. Even you can experience all four yugas at your home itself. In the morning when you go for seva after bathing, Sata-yuga gets start and whenever you close mandir, the Treta-yuga gets started.

Whenever Treta gets started, peacefulness starts fading away and you start thinking about all your routine tensions. I have to do this and I have to go to office or school etc. etc.. After Treta there comes Dwapar... I am not elaborating all of them here, but yes you experience all of them at your home every day. By the evening, there comes Kaliyuga and it comes with such an intensity that all of the people at home don't want to see each other. 'Don't come before me!' if you listen this then you should understand that Kaliyuga has come there. We definitely experience all the four yugas every single day at our home! So, here Naradaji tells, "I experienced the presence of Kaliyuga everywhere."

What were the symptoms of Kaliyuga? Narada ji tells:

सत्यं नास्ति तप: शौचं दया दानं न विद्यते ।
उदरम्भरिणो जीवा वराका: कूटभाषिण: ॥

satyaṁ nāsti tapaḥ śaucaṁ dayā dānaṁ na vidyate |
udara-mbhariṇo jīvā varākāḥ kūṭabhāṣiṇaḥ ||

Narada ji observed '**सत्यं नास्ति**' (satyaṁ nāsti), "Truth has been disappeared". Just remember, truth is not a merely word, it is the nae of a bhava (emotion). Many times, it happens that we

speak a lie but our intention is pure. Such a lie is called as good as truth in our holy booksFor example, when a person gives a false information about a cow to someone who wants to kill it then that information is as good as truth as the cow was protected through it. And, therefore it is not a lie but a truth as the intention was good. And the words that bring peace and good are always classified as truth.So, it is said that '**सत्यं ब्रूयात् प्रियं ब्रूयात्' ('satyaṁ brūyāt, priyaṁ brūyāt')**. The truth that is so bitter that it can destroy someone is not to be told. We say that we are considered harsh as we speak truth but it is not so! It is our wish to speak bitter and that's why we misuse truth. When we want to insult someone, we speak the truth, when we want to show someone their inferiority, we speak the truth and whenever we want to give someone pain, we speak the truth but we don't speak the truth when we see someone's virtues. We don't intend to speak truth then. And therefore, the truth is being misused in Kaliyuga. And therefore, it is said that the truth has been disappeared in Kaliyuga. It is being misused. We don't speak about someone's virtuesopenly but we speak about flaws. Even when people say that we don't do back bitching, we always say whatever we have in our heart in front of you. Don't mistake to consider it as a virtue! They say it as they can't keep it in their heart. After telling the bitter words they tend to repair it by saying, 'I didn't had it in my mind but I told it as in general, please don't mind'. The after-apologies don't make it good. It breaks the heart and keeps pinching.It doesn't matter how true you are if you are not wise as if you don't know when to speak the truth, you make it ugly, you make it bitter.

Even, we tend to give bitter examples of Satyavrata and Harishchandra for the truth. So, people get to think that 'even after speaking the truth, Harishchandra got only sorrows and pain' and they get afraid of speaking it. So, if you want to inspire someone for speaking the truth, you should say about its positive impacts. Rather, you tell them Harishchandra lost his everything and got himself sold for the truth. And the listener thinks if one gets this much sorrow after speaking the truth, then I must not speak the truth. So, how to give inspiration is also a matter to think about.

If you wish that your kids must be attracted towards Thakur ji, then you should share your own experiences with them. "Dear! We faced many problems and sorrows in our life. Many times, it seemed like we got stuck in sorrows and everything is ruined. But we had faith in Thakurji, Shri Thakurji who lives in our home is the only solace.

We didn't lose the faith and continued to be under His shelter, and it was His miracle that he brought us out of every grief, every sorrow that was there. So, dear you may lose everything but don't lose that faith in Him. Don't leave His shelter in any case."If you will talk in this way, they will also start thinking positively that we don't have to lose faith in Thakur ji. So, How to inspire them? By sharing the experiences of your own, it will give birth to an emotion, a bhava in their hearts. After returning to home people say, "I went to Haveli and no one helped me in getting darshan, and there was a lot of jolting that I couldn't do darshan properly'. If you talk in this manner, no one will be interested in going to temple. In what manner you should speak in front of children? You are not being clever if you move away from Thakur ji due to mis-management. There exist many places where there is mis-management. It is a human born problem. And moving away from haveli is not a solution for it. There are many other places except haveli where the mis-management exists. You can see it at a court, at a school, at a hospital. But, you don't have to go away from them. If a doctor fails in his services then you can't say that every doctor fails and now, I am not going to take any medical help. Who is facing the loss in this case? Obviously, it is you. Many times, a bitter experience of someone else brings us a feeling of disbelief.

If someone goes Ahmedabad for shopping for the first time and a shopkeeper cheats him, he starts thinking he should not go to Ahmedabad for shopping, if someone believes it then it will be a great misunderstanding. Similarly, if due to a bitter experience in a religious or spiritual place you move away from Bhagavana, it will cause you harm. The aim to say you all this is to tell you about what should you talk in front of children. It shows your wisdom.If you talk about mis-management and problems then the people will think that we should not go to temple as there is a lot of mis-management there. In fact, you must say, I got very fine darashana today, I felt like Thakur ji is passing a sweet smile to me. I felt Thakurji blessed me today. Dear! Go to do darshan today, it is a very nice experience today.' It will inspire him to go and get darshan. So, maintain that wisdom while talking.

The truth without wisdom is a lie. '**तपः शौचम्' ('tapaḥ śaucaṁ')** (tapa is a sort of hard work that a person does in pursuit of God, knowledge and wisdom. It is symbolized through sitting alone in a forest and doing meditation but it's true sense lies in the hard work and a person's will to remain on his objective) is disappeared. No one wants to work hard. So, what is tapa? That which people do in a forest? That is totally forbidden by forest department now! You talk

about going into the forest but who will allow you that now? In the present times, your tapa is to live happily with what you have got in this life. In the present times tapa is not about to live into the forest and sacrifice your body. It is about to live happily with whatever you have. That is so, because you can't live continuously complaining about what you have not got. In this way, you will only destroy your own happiness. Instead, just learn to accept what God has given you, whether it is good or bad. No one gets all the desires fulfilled. But when you adopt the tendency to accept everything happily, all your sorrows start being small. Adopting the tendency to run away from the problems will further increase your sorrows. Then, you will lose the courage to fight against it. So, instead of running away, just accept it once. 'Yes, it is there, I have to live in these circumstances only but yes, I also have to live happily, I don't want to lose my life or get it confused.. That only is our tapa. '**सत्यं नास्ति तप: शौचं' ('satyaṁ nāsti tapaḥ śaucaṁ')** - The purity has disappeared.Cleanliness is being marketed, but purity should also be marketed with it.

Pushtimarg is explaining the importance of washing hands for 500 years but you didn't get it. Therefore, now government has to advertise it with Tendulkar and when he says 'Wash your hands', you consider washing the hands important. But, Pushtimargiya acharyas are advising to wash hands for 500 years and still you people consider it orthodox. The same thing when gets surfaced in a new form We tend to accept it but when it is said in the name of religion, we tag it as orthodox.Just accept what is the best. The people who accept the best are called clever.It doesn't matter how old you are when you have a tendency to adopt new because it shows that you are still young. It is so because it shows that your brain and heart have not stopped. You can accept new things and changes. '**शौचं**' (śaucaṁ) The drinking water pot at your home is so pure that you can give water to a brahmin from it. If there is Thakur ji at your home, then you should somewhere mind about purity of your home. You are not general people; you belong to a Vaishnava family. And you live according to Vaishnava samskaras. So, if the females at your home tell you not to touch anything or not to eat something, you must readily learn it. If a matter is related to Shri Thakur ji, put your ego aside for that as it is good for you only. If Thakur ji is centralized in a matter, then you should understand it and shouldn't oppose it. It gives 'shrama' (shrama is a term used by pushtimargiya Vaishnavas to symbolize the acts that are considered as annoying acts to Thakur ji) to Thakur ji You shouldn't accompany those who speak sweet and pull you towards worldly matters, instead you should accompany those who take you to God even though they speak bitter. Those who praise and

pull you in the worldly matters may harm you and if someone is making you cautious about the matters related to God, you should thank them even if they are harsh towards you. Our problem is, we consider a matter true when an unknown sage preaches it but when a person at home advises the same thing, we start making a quarrel. It means we don't accept a good thing if it is said by our closed ones. Just think, isn't it the best thing that our closed ones are advising us! We clearly know that they don't have any hidden interest in it and they are talking only about the happiness of God. It is in the interest of God and therefore, accept it happily. Don't let your ego overcome you. And If gentlemen start could support ladies in this matter, the purity of a Vaishnav home can be maintained in every Vaishnava home. Why? Because we have Thakur ji at our home. So, we should at least maintain the matters of orts, we should be at least cautious about prasadi and an-prasadi (Those things which are not prasada). Why so? Because Thakur ji is there at our home. And it is the only matter that make us proud that our home is a Vaishanava home. 'मेरा ये वैष्णव परिवार, हरी या जाओ एक बार' **('mera ye vaishanava parivar, hari aa jaao ek baar')** A bhakt at this home can request Him that I have a Vaishnav family, please come here once only.

'दया दानं न विद्यते ।' **('dayā dānaṁ na vidyate')** Kindness and charity have faded away. People do charity only keeping themselves in center. 'उदरं भरिणो जीवा' **('udara-mbhariṇo jīvā')** people are living only to earn bread. They study hard and work only to earn money. When we ask them, they say we do it to earn the bread. He has to do it to earn to eat. Dear! Earning bread doesn't bring you tension. It doesn't make you run after money, it is your own jeeva, your will, that makes you run behind money. Otherwise, you can satisfy your hunger with some khichadi too! But our jeeva doesn't like it and therefore it makes us run behind money. You know, it is a common problem! We are so idle that we don't start walking until we get a heart attack. When a person suffers an attack, the doctor advises him to take a walk daily, and then the person understands and decides to walk. But dear, can't you do it before? It happens because humans have a tendency to repair things after the situations get worse, lest they don't bother at all about it. The thinking, the wisdom of people has got shrink. And, again when the wisdom of the elder people gets shrunk the family and the society pays off. The people who are elder or the people who sit at a higher place in the family of in the society must have a big heart. When you take the place of an elderly in your family, you represent it everywhere. You now exist at a higher place in society, and therefore you must behave big- heartedly. As, the act of not forgiving even small mistakes will only increase your tension, anxiety and discord.

You must learn to forgive people and say 'it happens, now don't do it'. Because, you can't make people right in a single attempt, you have to give them many chances. To kids, you have to give many chances and tell,'Don't repeat it, now, be cautious about it', and in this way, they will get trained. They won't understand in the first time because It is a human tendency that they get experience on their own slowly and get trained.

Think of a potter making an earthen pot! The pot doesn't get its perfect shape in just one slap. It needs many to take a nice shape Our life too is like a potter! It slaps us may times and gives our personality a perfect shape and that's why we must not hurry to break our relationships over small matters. We must not hurry to tell others to take their way apart from you. You must give chances to the inferiors and less experienced ones because these chances will only improve them. So, don't hurry in any situation. Whenever you act hurriedly to break something, you deny to give a chance. The superior ones must have a bigger heart. You must make your heart big enough to forgive others. Because, there may happen any event or mistake... Being a human one can face any situation of pain or happiness or both. Dear, such is the life! It may rise or fall, it may build or break! And such is the human being, and humans are like that only. If you try to find a virtuous man, you are left alone. But, if you try to find virtues in human, many will support you. Therefore, don't confine your search to a good person, instead start searching for the virtues in people. You have that quality to search goodness in people. But we try to find a full package! We think, first I must find a virtuous person as defined in this book and then I will accompany him and then I will surely get redemption. Dear, it's a joke! If you are trying to find this full package, then take my words, you can't find them. It isn't easy. Bhagavana also himself says, 'there is one in million' and who can find? If someone searches for a tree that can bear bananas and papayas and sapotas and apples too, then it isn't possible at all! Is it? A tree can not bear all of them but they all can be collected in a bag! So, make your mind a bag that can collect virtues and start collecting them wherever you find. Make your bag of wisdom in a manner that it must be an accepter of virtues. Collect the virtues whenever you find and those will give you happiness. Describing the symptoms of Kaliyuga in many ways he says:

तरुणी प्रभुता गेहे श्यालको बुद्धिदायकः ।
कन्या विक्रयणो लोभात् दम्पतीनां च फल्कनम् ॥

Taruṇī prabhutā gehe śyālako buddhi-dāyakaḥ |
kanyā vikrayaṇo lobhāt dampatīnāṁ ca phal-kanam ||

Every house will be ruled by women. There is nothing wrong with that. There must be the rule of a virtuous wife at home. But, here, Stree-jiva is the name of a personality or instinct that behaves clever for mundane world but indifferent for the heavenly or spiritual matters. So, these personalities are classified as Stree-jiva in our scriptures. But, yes there must be the rule of a virtuous wife at our homes. Today, just decide to follow the advice of a Stree-jiva for the mundane matters and to follow the advice of a purush-jeeva for heavenly matters. Presently, we do it opposite as advised. Why I am telling you to do that? Because the ladies or stree-jiva have biasness. They keep saying, 'it is enough, only that much should be donated, or seva could be done to this limit only. But gentlemen do not think in that way and so, they do it more.and for that they get criticized at home. So, take the advice of gentlemen when you want to do some charity or a good deed and whenever you want to deal with a worldly matter, take consultation from a lady as ladies are wiser in those matters. They clearly know how to deal with whom. Therefore,'तरुणी प्रभुता गेहे श्यालको बुद्धिदायकः ।' **('Taruṇī prabhutā gehe śyālako buddhi-dāyakaḥ')** And, he explains in various ways that, 'पाखण्ड निरता: सन्तो विरक्ता: सपरिग्रहा: ।' **('pākhaṇḍa-niratāḥ santo viraktāḥ saparigrahā')** pretenders have started disguising sages. The people who were neutral for worldly matters, have started following parigraha (being greedy for rewards).

The sages haven't turned into pretenders but many pretenders are behaving like sages and therefore, we must think twice before following a sage. We must enquire for their tradition and their Deeksha. We must enquire about their guru and to which guru tradition do they belong? In earlier times people followed this rule and when we stopped enquiring, we started thinking, that we can do whatever we want as we all have to go to the same place! All of they are same and, in this way, we lost our dignity and arrangement. When this arrangement got destroyed, the pretenders got the chance to infringe, to infilterate our culture and thoughts. The arrangement protected the religion but when the arrangement got destroyed our religion and culture became vulnerable. So, there is a need to maintain and protect our tradition. Now – a- days, anyone who does three to four kathas becomes a sage and when they do something wrong, the religion is blamed.

The religion was protected by the old traditions of guru-shishya Parampara and sect traditions and the isht-parampara. We started breaking all the traditions. People started thinking and doing whatever they considered right. In this way, all our traditions were broken and then

there was no new tradition. As a result, the society got confused. So, the newer generations don't know any of our tradition properly. They don't know what to do? And they don't know how to do the new arrangement. When you destroy the arrangement, you break the society in groups and later these groups annihilate the society. These groups do not bother to organize. And they remain to be free, independent groups that do not have any direction or arrangement. Together, they can push you up and they can also pull you down suddenly. Stop our society from being a herd of cattle let it be arranged. Many times, we make different ques, why? So that there could be no jostling.

I am sitting here on the stage and it is protected by ropes everywhere. What will happen if all these ropes are removed, and all of you come on the stage? It is obvious that the stage will break. So, it is necessary to have an arrangement everywhere. But, we started considering our religious arrangements as discriminating limits. Actually, they were not limits, they were the arrangements of the Hindu religion. And when we started considering these arrangements as discrimination, we started harming our own society. So, first of all, change this perspective. These arrangements are not discriminative limits but they are there to organize the society. So, see the religion as an arrangement.

Here, Narada Ji has described Kaliyuga with different perspectives. Once in Vrindavana while moving along the banks of Yamuna ji, he hears a voice ' भो भो साधोः क्षणं तिष्ठ मत् चिंतामपि नाशय ।' **('bho bho sādhoḥ kṣaṇaṁ tiṣṭha mat cintāma pi nāśaya')** O, great sage! Please stop for a while. Please help me to end my worries, please redress my problem and give some solution for it. Then Narad Ji started.



Shri Varaah Avataar

|| Shrimad Bhagawata ||

DAY - 2

Shrimad Bhagavata is a Mahapurana (A Purana is a sacrad hindu text that contains legends and other traditional lore and a Mahapurana is a greater Purana). There are 18 Puranas in Hinduism. The puranas other than Shrimad Bhagavata are known as Puranas but Shrimad Bhagavata is considered as a Mahapurana. A Purana is that book or lore that has five characteristics

सर्गश्च प्रतिसर्गश्च वंशो मन्वन्तराणि च ।
वंशानुचरितं चेति पुराणं पञ्चलक्षणम् ॥

sargaś ca prati-sargaś ca vaṁśo manvantaráṇi ca |
vaṁśānucaritaṁ ceti purāṇaṁ pañca-lakṣaṇam ||

I.e. a Purana has five characteristics namely: Sarga (Story of Primary creation), Pratisarga (re-creation after dissolution), Vamsha (Genealogies), Manvantara (Cosmic cycles ruled by Manus), Vamshanucharita (Accounts of dynastic histories).

And the book that has 10 characteristics namely: Sarga (primary creation), Visarga (secondary creation), Sthana (sustenance or maintenance of the universe), Poshaṇa (divine protection and nourishment), Uti (impulses or motivations behind action), Manvantara (cosmic periods ruled by Manus), Ishanukatha (narratives of the Supreme Lord and His devotees), Nirodha (establishing ones heart and soul in Supreme being), Mukti (liberation), and Ashraya (the ultimate refuge of supreme reality), is known as Mahapurana.

अत्र सर्गो विसर्गश्च स्थानं पोषणमूतयः ।
मन्वन्तरेशानुकथा निरोधो मुक्तिराश्रयः ॥

atra sargo visargaś ca sthānaṁ poṣaṇam utayaḥ |
manvantareśānukathā nirodho mukti-rāśrayaḥ ||

We will listen to these ten characteristics when we will enter into the second chapter of this Mahapurana.

Bhagavata ji is such a divine book that can remove all the ill-feelings from our lives. It collects all the subjects related to life. It is considered as the Vangamaya Swaroop (the literary form) of Shrinathji.

Our Shastras (holy-books) have given us many ways to venerate the different swaroopas (forms) of God.

शैली दारुमयी लौही लेप्या लेख्या च सैकती ।
मनोमयी मणिमयी प्रतिमाष्टविधा स्मृता ॥

śailī dārumayī lauḥī lepyā lekyā ca saikatī |
manomayī maṇimayī pratimāṣṭavidha smṛtā ||

Our holy books have described eight forms of Paramatma Among which there lies लेख्या **(lekyā)** – the written form and when it is sung by a speaker, or a story-teller it becomes the Vangamaya Swaroop of Shrinathji.

God has given us all the senses and we can stop observation with all those senses at our will, but we don't have any means to stop listening. Just try to stop listening without hands, you cannot do that! Bhagavana says, even if you close all your senses, I can enter in your heart through your ears.

The katha of Shrimad Bhagavata is the process through which God moves towards His devotee.

Considering it the best, Narad ji visits The Earth, as here exists the happiness which is difficult to find anywhere else. So, what is that? The pleasures enjoyed in the heaven are much more than those enjoyed on the earth. In that manner, heaven must be considered better than the

Earth. Then why the Earth is considered better? The reason is, one can do bhakti on this Earth only. And therefore the devotees have said, 'ભૂતલ ભક્તિ પદારથ મોટું.' **('Bhootala bhakti padarath motu')** i.e. The Bhakti is the best virtue to be enjoyed on the earth.

It is the most important virtue because you cannot do bhakti anywhere else, in any other loka (The word loka means a world.). If you sit and turn a rosary on the earth, you can focus on God. But if you try it in heaven, you will be failed in doing so as your heart is constantly attracted towards pleasure there.

What do we mean by heaven? Heaven is the place where the things forbidden on the earth are valid. What else is it? And therefore, the Earth has a characteristic of being the most suitable place for bhakti (devotion). So, Pushtimarga is the marga of this Earth. We also sing in a pada that 'ભાગ્યન વલ્લભ ભૂતલ આયે' **('bhagyana bhootala Vallabh aaye')** means we are fortunate to have Shri Vallabh on this earth. In Sarvottam Stotra, Shri Gusain ji also says, 'भूमि भाग्यं' **('bhūmi bhāgyaṁ')** - The earth is proud of herself to have Shri Vallabha on it. Therefore, we are fortunate to have Pushtimarga, or the marga of bhoo-tala (here the earth is called bhoo-tala).

Just imagine, we have reached to leela (the place where Shri Krishna lives forever, according to Pushtimarga, after the death the soul of a pushtimargiya Vaishnava goes there) in Gaulok-dhama. It isn't definite there that we would do the seva which we are doing here on this earth. There we will get the seva of which we have adhikara or ability. But on this earth, we do the whole seva i.e. from Mangala ji till Shayana (from morning to evening). That's why we have got the ease to do bhakti on this earth.

Knowing that the earth is the best place to do bhakti, all the Teertha (Pilgrimage sites) are present here. Have you ever heard that a person has been to a particular Loka for a pilgrimage? No other Loka has a Teertha. The other Loka haven't got even a temple! They are the abode of other devas and other powers. So, all of these are present here on the earth. More significantly, there are other bhagavadiya people (devotees) on this earth and we cannot get them in other loka. Even more, Shrimad Bhagavata ji exists here on this Earth and that is not possible in other loka. So, just accept that the place and the loka where you have taken birth are the best.

God has sent you on this earth after thinking a lot because he wants that you must do bhakti.

So, they say, "Narada ji came on this earth considering it as the best place to do bhakti. But he notices that the Kaliyuga has infiltrated everywhere and gets very disappointed. And therefore, we need to be cautious about maintaining the dignity of our pilgrimages. It is our responsibility to maintain the dignity of our religious places, temples, and satsanga centers.

Purity and cleanliness are not only physical, but also ideological. These are like mirrors. You can wipe off the face clean if it gets stained but you will see your face stained always if the mirror is stained. So, all these religious places are the mirrors to watch our faces in them and we all have to be cautious about them getting stained.

So, wherever Narad ji goes, he notices the influence of Kaliyuga, and gets disheartened. He thinks I came here to do Bhakti, to recite the name of God, to do good deeds but wherever I go, I see the effect of Kaliyuga. Thinking this, he reaches to Brajdham.

He is walking along the banks of Yamunaji and then he hears a voice 'भो भो साधोः क्षणं तिष्ठ मत् चिंतामपि नाशय ।' **('bho bho sādhoḥ kṣaṇaṁ tiṣṭha mat cintām api nāśaya')** 'O great Sage, please stop for a while!' every second of great people is important.

You all know the name of Shri Mahaprabhuji 'सान्निध्यमात्रदत्त श्रीकृष्णप्रेमा' **('sānnihdya-mātra-datta śrī-kṛṣṇa-prema')**, it means if a person gets the company of Shri Mahaprabhu ji even for a moment of time, Mahaprabhuji fills that person with the love for Shri Krishna.

If a person has these three elements in his life, Kaliyuga can never harm him.

(1) Closeness to Shri Thakurji

(2) Guidance of a Guru, and

(3) Company of Vaishnavas

If one has these three things in life then Kaliyuga can't harm him in any way. Therefore, try to keep one of them in your life.

Perhaps, you can't talk much with your Guru, but the mere glance of a guru while performing Dandavata (act of prostration, lying flat on the ground as a mark of respect), can prevent us from doing many sins.

Perhaps we cann't be near Shri Thakur ji for a long time, but we can do dandavata to Thakur ji everyday. The closeness to Shri thakurji just for a short time too can protect us from a number of mis-fortunes we can get in our life. Therefore, I always advise to stay for atleast 2 minutes near Shri Thakurji. While being there, just think, even if we can't see him, he is watching us and stay before him. A glance from Thakur ji can make mis-fortunes to stay away.

We all wish to be fortunate in our life and the only way to become the most fortunate one is staying close to Shri Thakurji.

And the third element is the company of Vaishnava, or Bhagavadiya. Always try to be in the company of such people who makes you remember God whenever you meet him. That is called the company of a bhagavadiya. Be in the company of such people who help you enhance and enrich your faith and belief.

No matter how a person is learned, we may consider him a bhagavadiya or learned or great, but if his company creates doubt in God, and our faith gets shaken, then we should consider him as a bad company.

Be in the touch of such Vaishnava who always motivate you and push you forward saying, 'don't worry, everything will be fine, Thakur ji is always there with us. Don't leave His name and the one who surrenders himself to bhagavannama (name of Shri Thakurji), Shri Thakur ji always helps him to get rid of every problem in his life'. So, know a person as a bhagavadiya if he strengthens your faith. Keep always that one on your side in your life.

So, on seeing Narada ji, lady Bhakti (personification of the act of devotion) calls him. Listening to her voice, Narada ji looks back. There he sees a lady and two old gentlemen lying besides her. Many other ladies were worshipping her. Then Narada ji asks, "who are you?" Introducing herself, the lady says:

अहं भक्तिरिति ख्याता इमौ मे तनयौ मतौ ।
ज्ञान वैराग्यनामानौ कालयोगेन जर्जरौ ॥

Ahaṁ bhaktir iti khyātā imau me tanayau matau |
jñāna-vairāgya-nāmānau kāla-yogena jarjarau ||

I am Bhakti and these two men are my sons: knowledge and vairagya (personification of knowledge and Vairagya). They have been old due to the effect of time. Further she says,

उत्पन्ना द्रविडे साहं वृद्धिं कर्णाटके गता।
क्वचित् क्वचित् महाराष्ट्रे गुर्जरे जीर्णतां गता॥

utpannā draviḍe sāhaṁ vṛddhiṁ karṇāṭake gatā |
kvacit kvacit mahārāṣṭre gurjare jīrṇatāṁ gatā ||

'I took birth in the Dravidian state, grew in the state of Karnataka, my wealth and value enhanced in the state of Maharashtra and in the state of Gujrat, I became old'. Now, people of the state of Gujarat would feel offended hearing this and therefore the sages from Gujarat interpret it in many different ways.

Some interpreted, during the young age of the mother each of her children can keep her with them but to those who take care of their mother in her old age, she gives all her property. So, lady Bhakti has blessed the people of Gujarat with wealth. But, here it clearly means that lady bhakti got weaken in Gujarat. Why so? As there are more business people than anywhere else and being businessmen they look for profit everywhere. But if we seek any benefit in bhakti, it starts being more and more weak. In this way people interpreted it in many ways.

Now, Lady bhakti says, when I came here, in Vraja, I got young but both my sons knowledge and vairagya remained old due to the effect of time. It means, in Vrajadhama too, people do bhakti but very few are interested in knowledge and Vairagya. Just take my word bhakti doesn't get increased without Knowledge and Vairagya. When does bhakti get cherished? She would get happy when knowledge and vairagya become young again i.e. when they get accepted by people. She says, 'I got my young age back but my children are still old. It totally contrasts the normal. O Narad ji, please give me solution.' So, a person who does bhakti should also take knowledge and vairagya. Shri Mahaprabhu ji says:

'शास्त्रं अवगत्य मनोवाग्देहैः श्रीकृष्ण सेव्यः।' **('śāstraṁ avagatyā mano-vāg-dehaiḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa sevyaḥ')** - Do bhakti only after studying holy scriptures.

What is the knowledge of bhakti-marga? Then, a detailed interpretation of bhakti was done. (bhakti means total devotion, adherence, faithfulness.... towards God.)

'माहात्म्यज्ञान पूर्वस्तु सुदृढ़: सर्वतोऽधिक स्नेहीति भक्ति: ।' **('māhātmya-jñāna-pūrvastu sudṛḍhaḥ sarvato'dhikaḥ sneha iti bhaktiḥ')** - Bhakti isn't the name to close the eyes and touch the feet, but it is about knowing everything about the one to whom you are bowing, and venerating, because if we would not know about Him fully, we can get deflected from Him anytime when a problem comes and it weakens our faith in our Ishta.

Many times people say, 'I faced a problem then I lost my faith.' It indicates that the person didn't have faith but he was in the illusion of it. So, a person can only have faith after knowing about Him fully. So, until you know prabhu, you will get deflected from Him easily.

Why do we have to listen to Shri Bhagavata ji? If I could explain shri Bhagavataji in a single line then I would say it is the chance to understand God. We don't want to spend an hour to understand Him for whose glance we are ready to stand in a long the queue. We don't try to get all seven days in our life. So, it is a chance to understand God and the day when you start understanding God, you won't be distracted by any event. Because, God isn't the name for questions, or exclamatory marks, or commas. God is the name for the full stop for all the questions risen in the life. It is the name for a full stop. It is the name for the solutions not doubts.

For us, God himself is questionable. We think that, does God exist? How is He possible? What would be He? Where would be He? We have a lot of doubts in our mind. So, He isn't a doubt but He is the solution. We have to go to find solution with the map of doubts in our hand and we have to travel a long distance for that. This journey of Bhagavata ji means the journey from the doubt to solution. It commenced with the doubt. Vyasaji had some doubts, he had a temptation. But he found a sadguru and therefore he got faith. We can integrate Bhagavata ji in four words i.e. doubt, faith, devotion and solution. Almost all our scriptures get start from doubt, and that doubt may exist in the form of temptation or other flaw of a human mind. You can take the example of Geeta ji, or Valmiki's Ramayana or Shri Bhagavata ji.

Here too, Vyasaji has temptation, and doubts. See, doubting somebody or something is not bad, but to get it solved by a wrong person is wrong. Doubt itself is not bad. Just think for a moment that, what would have happened if Arjuna had went to Dhritarashtra about the solution when he got a temtation towards his family, and got some doubts? What would have been the form of Geeta ji then? Just think if he had asked Dhritarashtra about fighting the

battle when he started doubting about fighting or not. Dhritarashtra would have said that is it a matter to fight? No! let's get back to our homes. So, to have doubt is not bad but yes it is very bad and very dangerous to ask for the solution to a wrong person. You can get the solution only after going to an authority.

Go to a person who as has read and applied the holy scriptures in his life, who has studied them well. So don't look for the solution in logic, just look for them in scriptures. Because logic may be the thoughts of a single person but scriptures are the orders of God, that don't contain any doubt. Whenever our society will follow the scriptures to find the solutions, the religion will rise. Let's come back to the original story that Bhakti would be cherished when knowledge and vairagya would be young again. So, bhakti requested Narada ji to end her sorrows. Narad ji promises lady Bhakti to find the solution. And for that he tries a lot. He recites mantras from Vedas, Upanishada, and Geeta, but only for nothing. Knowledge and vairagya didn't wake up. It looked like they didn't have any energy to get up. They would only get energy when they will be accepted by people.

We ask that why Bhagavana take avatara to establish dharma? The answer is simple, he takes avatara when Dharma starts getting destroyed. So, when Dharma starts getting destroyed? The answer is when people leave dharma only in books and don't adapt it in their lives then it starts getting destroyed. The true propogation of dharma can be done by adapting dharma in life. Now-a-days we have considered it as an event and whenever a special occasion arrives, we do it. It is the true deterioration of dharma. The fact is, we cannot live our lives without dharma. Before taking any step, we should think of it.

How the religion gets elevated?

Let us come back to our story, Narad ji tried everything but still knowledge and vairagya are old and lady bhakti is young. It is the greatness of vraja-bhoomi that only by coming in contact to it, lady bhakti got young. But, here, Narad ji has taken a resolution to bring them back to their young age. Meanwhile, he hears an oracle that says, "o great sage Narada, do the good deeds. It is the only way to revive them and to end the sorrows of lady Bhakti. Now, it said to do sat-karma but it didn't say what karma he had to do? What is the best sat-karma in this world? Just think there was Narad ji who had studied all the vedas, upanishadas, and other scriptures and he had done everything within his knowledge but still he was unable to revive both. Then what will be the Karma that will be the best for this world?

So, Narada ji was thinking about it when he met Sanat kumaras who asked him about his tension. So, Narada ji was in tension about his resolution. He ponders what he must do, and how he must do it. Watching Narada ji anxious, Sanat-kumaras stop him and listens to all his story. Then they say, 'O Narada ji! We do have the solution of your problem.' Listening this, Narada ji felt very happy and asked them about it! Then they said we are here only to do satsanga.

The solution to your tension is the best sat-karma in the world and that is Shrimad Bhagavata Saptah. By doing it, the Knowledge and vairagya will revive and bhakti will get her sorrows ended. So, whenever you do the Bhagavata Saptaha, Bhakti gets happy. When lady bhakti gets happy, she blesses you and your family that may the light of bhakti always shine at your home.

When they advised to do the Bhagavata Saptaha, Narada ji asked, "what should be done to do it, who will help us in it and where should it be done?'

They say, " we have gathered to do satasanga here and also we don't have any prejudice. Our object is to do satsanga only, if we would get a speaker, we would listen to him and if we have to be the speaker, then we can tell katha. It doesn't matter who is the speaker or listener for us, our object is satsanga only. If you want, we would do the katha.

If great sages like Sanat-kumara tell us that we would tell the katha for you, then we feel fortunate and really there is no one as fortunate as us. So, as soon as Narada ji hears that, he becomes overwhelmed and tells, it is very kind of you that you are doing this for me. He then asks them for the place that they want to choose for the Katha.

Then they said, 'there is a riverbank named Ananda near Haridwara, we would go there to do the katha. O Narada ji, become the host for the katha and invite everyone to listen to it. Arrange the Pandala (a large area of land covered with tents where the speakers and listeners gather for the Katha.). We will be present there to do the katha. Just imagine, what would be the influence of the katha if the speakers are great Sanat kumaras.

As was directed by Sanat Kumaras, Narada ji arranges for a Pandala at the river bank called Ananda tata of Ganges river in Haridwara and invites all beings. Every deva, teertha, rivers, mountains and others reach there in the human form.

When there gathers everyone, Sanatkumaras take their seat on the 'Vyasa-peetha' (the seat of the speaker of katha') and start the Katha speaking of its mahatmya as

सदा सेव्या सदा सेव्या श्रीमद् भागवती कथा ।
यस्याः श्रवणमात्रेण हरिः चित्तं समाश्रयेत् ॥

sadā sevyā sadā sevyā śrīmad-bhāgavatī kathā |
yasyāḥ śravaṇa-mātreṇa hariḥ cittaṁ samāśrayet ||

They tell 'always listen' two times for the katha we should never say that I have heard it once and it is enough as the true result of Shri Bhagavata ji is the urge to listen it more. So, they said always think about Bhagavata ji. It is the global medicine and it works in every period of time.

'पिबत भागवतं रसमालयं, मुहुरहो रसिका भुवि भावुकाः ।' **('pibata bhāgavataṁ rasam ālayaṁ, muhur aho rasika bhuvi bhāvikāḥ')** They have said to keep drinking it. And till when? Until your ears become pious.

It is the virtue of this katha. By only listening to it, Bhagavana leaves his holy abode Vaikuntha and resides in a bhakta's heart, and please take my words that wherever exists Shri Bhagavata ji, Shri Thakur ji comes there. So, first of all Bhagavana comes to the heart in the form of emotions. So, as you will listen to the katha daily, you will feel His influence gradually increasing. Actually, we want to see him in particular conditions and therefore we don't recognize Him when he is there between us.

You could see God in the volunteers who keep running for seva during Bhagavata ji, you could see Him in the hands that give you Prasada or in the watery eyes of a bhakta that are filled with the love for Him, or you could find Him in the pure smile of someone who feels happy for being able to listen to katha. God can be present here in any form. It is us who live in the world of fantasy and expect that God will appear with a smoky background and some light music. All thanks to television! People have become so habitual of it that they won't accept God as God unless He comes with all pompous.

Prabhu can be here in any form, but we don't have the tendency to accept Him. Do you possess the eyes that can see Him? So, don't wait for God to be present here, but prepare yourself for those eyes that can recognize Him, and Bhagavata ji gives us those divine eyes. It is sure that

Prabhu comes to our hearts after we listen to Bhagavata ji, as it is the sure result. I am sure that on the seventh day, you will feel His presence in your heart giving you the eternal happiness.

It is said by Sanatkumaras in the 'Mahatmya' that the one who listens to the Katha or a chapter or a shloka or even a half shloka of Shri Bhagavata ji, gets the rewards of doing Raja-sooya and Ashvamegha yajnas. And when someone listens to it on the death-bed, is received by Paramatma Himself in the other world. Bhagavan himself handles the end time of the one who has listened to Shri bhagavata ji. Even if one has spent his/her whole life doing seva and smarana (reciting the name of God silently), has not the control over their end time. The point is even after sitting in mandir before Shri Thakur ji, we don't have our focus on Shri Thakur ji, Then how can you be so sure that you would be focusing on Him when it is your end time, or while lying on the hospital bed with oxygen mask and saline on your hands!

So, we can't be sure of our whereabouts and conditions during our end time. But, the one who has listened to Shri Bhagavata Saptaha, Bhagavana won't let their end time be spoiled. Bhagavana himself will come in that person's mind himself making the end time virtuous. In our Pushtimarga, the end minute is said to be much important.

Even if a person has lost the conscious of his/her body, Bhagavana comes to his/her chitta, if he/she has listened Shrimad Bhagavata.

While Sanatkumaras are telling of the virtues of Shrimad Bhagavata, a young lady with two young men appears there. The people there become curious and then Sanatkumaras say, "Don't be worried, She is Bhakti herself. She has come here with her sons Knowledge and Vairagya.

Such is the virtue of Shri bhagavata ji! Sanatkumaras have only spoken about the virtue of Shri Bhagavata ji and the old Knowledge and Vairagya have regained their lost youth. The Katha is being told at the bank of River Ganga and it's effect has reached to Bhakti Maharani who is at the bank of River Yamuna. So, it is a virtue of this katha that regardless of time and place, it reaches to the person for whom it has been done.

Many times people think that we are doing this katha for someone who has departed a long time ago, then will it's effect reach to them?

The katha does reach to the nimitta karana (the material cause) for which it has been done. So, in comparison to the other kathas you all are so fortunate that this katha is being read when you all are present here to listen to it, otherwise it is done after a person dies. So, it is the best time of your life. Instead of planning for the katha to be done after death, you should do it when alive as after it you will get relaxed of the tension that whether it will be done or not.

So don't plan for the people to do good for you after your death, instead do it yourself alive so that you can die with the happiness of doing good. Because, the good deeds done by ourselves are the only truth that will accompany your soul after death you and after the death, it is others' fortune!

Even the principle of karma doesn't say anything about the property or planning after the death of a person. It is like, the used is yours, otherwise it belongs to others. 'It is said the God says, nothing is yours, leave it and come to Me, if everything is yours, leave it and come to Me, and if it is all yours that show Me that you can leave it.' We can only get the capability of doing something when we can use it in need. A human being should know to use everything at right time and right place. Because God gives us resources and capabilities but He doesn't give us the date and time to use them. He leaves this decision on jeev-atma (soul). This is where a person gets stuck between the thoughts of using or not using it. He gets confused about saving them or not and about the time to use them. So, those who keep waiting for the favorable conditions, can't use them and God helps those who decide to use and makes their conditions favorable. So, don't wait for the favorable conditions for doing good deeds. Just decide to do it and Thakur ji will make your conditions favorable.

So, while speaking of virtues of Shrimad Bhagavata, when Sanat kumaras announce the arrival of Bhakti Maharani and her sons, Bhakti Maharani asks, "O pious sage! We appeared here from the meanings of your words but where shall we sit? There is no space for us to sit. If you have invited us then please give us a place to sit".

When Sanat kumaras observe they find no place there and when Bhakti Maharani asks again for the place they say, "we have found a place for you. Please take your seat with both of your son knowledge and vairagya in the hearts of people present here.

Therefore, whenever a Bhagavata katha is done, Bhakti, Knowledge and Vairagya appear from the essence of the words and take their seat in the hearts of the listeners. So, to invite Bhakti,

Knowledge and Vairagya in the hearts of the audience, the virtues of the katha are sung first.

So, when a person hears it for a day, the Bhakti gets awakened in his heart and he gets some knowledge about Bhagavana and he starts sitting here for 4 hours for Him. It is Vairagya. Further, whenever a person sits here for more than 4 hours, he/she doesn't disturb others. Otherwise, it is very difficult to make someone sit for a single minute too! It is very virtuous to sit for 4 hours listening to Shri Bhagavata ji in these times when no one is ready to listen others. Because, they consider listening to others as a strike on their ego.

Then how to inspire someone in such conditions? This is the only katha when Bhagavana speaks and a bhakta listens for four hours a day! Before listening to this katha, we used to expect everything from Him. But now it is the time to say, "Prabhu, now, please you advise us, you tell us something" and when a Bhakta requests this, Bhagavan sends him to listen to this katha. He says, "Now, you listen to me." So, the time when Bhagavan speaks and bhakta listens, is Bhagavata.

The word Bhagavata itself means, 'भगवता प्रोक्तं भागवतम् ।' **('bhagavatā proktaṁ bhāgavatam')** i.e. spoken by bhagavana. Therefore, the first speaker of Shri Bhagavata ji is bhagavana himself. The first Bhagavata was told by Bhagavana to Brahma ji in four shlokas and it has been detailed in these eighteen thousand shlokas. Shri Bhagavata ji has tweleve skandhas(books), three hundred thirty- five chapters and eighteen thousand shlokas. But it was first told by Bhagavan in only four shlokas.

So, when they told bhakti maharani to sit in the hearts of people, people started hailing them and then Paramatma Himself appeared there. As soon as all the people realized His arrival, they started hailing Paramatma saying, "Shri Govardhan Nath ki jay!" and started playing Dundubhi (a Musical Instrument).

'सकलभुवनमध्ये निर्धनास्तेऽपि धन्या ।' **('sakala-bhuvana-madhye nirdhanās te api dhanyāḥ')** Here, they say, those poor are among the rich in whose huts Paramatma comes bounded by the string of their love and devotion. And in this way 'भक्तिसूत्रोपनद्धः' **('bhakti-sūtro panaddha')** they say about the virtues of Bhakti. With which string the Paramatma can be bound? "By the string of the Bhakti"

So, when a jeev goes towards Paramatma, it is known as Maryada Marga, but when Bhagavana comes to bhakta, it is Pushti-Marga. In Pushti-Marga, a jeev doesn't move towards God, instead the Pushti-Marga is the name of a Marga along which God comes towards His bhaktas.

So, there comes God in the Katha and assures to be present at all those places where the katha is done. So, be cautious whenever you sit in a Bhagavata katha because, Bhagavan Himself comes here. It is said that wherever the Ramayan is sung, there comes Hanuman ji, wherever Mahabharata is sung, there comes ashvatthama and wherever Bhagavata Katha is Sung, there comes Parmatma surely.

Further it was discussed that it is the katha of bhaktas (devotees). By the virtues of Katha, the suffering of Knowledge - Vairagya ended, suffering of Bhakti ended. It is a fact that bhagavana sends his grace through bhagavata ji for the virtuous people and they get absoluteness but could it uplift those who are not virtuous, those who have done evil deeds? Then they say, "Yes! Even if a person is the biggest sinner of the world can also get liberation if he/she listens to Shri Bhagavata ji. Bhagavan forgives him of all his sins and accepts him in his sharana. It is also said in the Geeta ji that-

अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥

api cet su-durācāro bhajate mām ananya-bhāk |
sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ samyag vyavasito hi saḥ ||

"Whoever is devoted to me, know him as a hermit as sins are not going to exist in his life now." Once someone develops the love for God in his heart, all his sins get perished automatically." He doesn't need to end anger, lust, jealousy and revenge from his heart because the eternal love in his heart automatically ends these vices.

There remains no need to put efforts to end the vices. So, just be full of love, the vices will be gone automatically.

Giving the example of a sinner, they told the story of Dhundhukari. It is named as 'Gokarnopakhyaan'. Once there was a Brahmin named Atmadeva. He lived in a village at the banks of river Tungabhadra. By the grace of God, he has got everything. But he doesn't have a

child. It isn't compulsory that everyone gets everything in their life. There doesn't exist any such contract. So, we have to accept that whatever we have, we have got it by the grace of God. But, it is the human nature that he won't appreciate the 99 things that he has got, but will yearn for the one thing that he has not got. But remember, even after getting a thing that is not in your destiny, you will not be happy.

Atmadeva thought I have not got any child and therefore my life is meaningless. See! If you think that a child can make you happy then just meet those who have a child. Are they happy? Whenever you think that you are suffering because you don't have a particular thing, then just go and meet those who have got that and ask them, have you got happiness after getting this thing? It is our biasness about the happiness due to which our happiness always lies in our imagination.

A person must learn to be happy in whatever he has got. Nobody and nothing can make you happy. The happiness comes only when a person gets enlightenment. Only if a person is virtuous, he gets peace and happiness. It is not possible to get happiness through the materialistic things like position, ability and conditions.

There was a rabbit going from a path when it saw a vulture sitting peacefully at the top of a tree. It thought, "I should also get some rest under this tree" and it sat there to rest. At the same time, a jackal came there and attacked it. The rabbit asked, "why nobody is disturbing that vulture sitting peacefully there and when I wanted to rest, I got caught by you! Then, the jackal said, "to sit peacefully like that vulture, one has to go to the top! Dear! To get peace and rest, you must be at the top!" So, without reaching to the height of enlightenment, you won't get peace". So, until you don't reach to the heights of behaviour, understanding and thinking, you cannot get peace in your life.

So, Atmadeva thought, "I don't have any child and therefore there remains no meaning in my life. It is needless to live in this world now!" And when someone does such overthinking, he starts thinking that the life is not possible without that thing. See! The things and people are there to help you spend life, but there is no need to lose your life for a person or a thing. Life is long and vast. Many times, people lose their life for trivial things and that is the biggest mistake! All these things are there for spending on your life but your life is not to be lost for them!

Atmadeva repented. Now let us understand this spiritually. 'Tungabhadra' – 'tunga' means the 'peak' and Bhadra means 'wellbeing'. So, Tungabhadra means the peak of felicity means the human body. Atmadeva means the jeev-atma. His wife is Dhundhuli. It is not that she cannot bear a baby. The story in the Mahatmya says, she doesn't want to have a baby. She argues for that in many ways.

She argues, "What will happen to me if the baby remains in my womb for sixteen years like Shukdeva ji, or what will happen to me if someone attacks me during that time, or my body will be deformed, or what if I would catch an illness" in this way she takes many shields to delay her pregnancy and on the other hand Atmadeva thinks that she is unable to bear a baby. If we think it spiritually, Dhundhuli is the representation of a mean mind. And the mean mindedness never pays back for Satsanga. Even Geeta ji says, **'बुद्धिनाशात् प्रणश्यति' ('buddhi-nāśāt praṇaśyati')** means if the mind is destroyed, everything is destroyed. So, the mean-mindedness never lets you take the reward of Satsanga.

So, Atmadeva thought there remains no meaning of my life if I don't have a child. And thinking that he comes to the outskirts of the village thinking of suicide.

When he is about to dive in a tank, he sees a sage sitting a little distance away. The sage was looking divine. As soon as Atmadeva sees that sage, he thinks of going to him and request for his blessings as he had listened that the blessings of a divine sage could change destiny. He rushes to the sage and lies in his feet. Atmadeva venerates to the sage and requests him, "O great sage! Bless me that I could have a child." The sage closes his eyes and comes to know about Atmadeva's destiny. Then he says, "Atmadeva, it is not about only this life, but for the next seven lives, you are not destined to have a child. When Atmadeva, listens this, he feels very bad and thinks to end his life. He starts bashing his head on the floor saying if you won't bless me then I will end my life here and now, and you will be charged with the sin of brahma-hatya (killing a brahmin is known as brahma-hatya in Hinduism). The sage takes pity on him and takes a fruit out of his bag. He chants a mantra and consecrates the fruit. Then he gives that fruit to Atmadeva and says, "give this fruit to your wife to eat, you will be blessed by Thakur ji and will have a child soon."

Atmadeva gets happy and goes to his wife. He gives the fruit to Dhundhuli and says, "if you will eat this fruit, we will have a child." Dhundhuli takes that fruit thinking of it as new problem.

Then, as soon as Atmadeva leaves, she calls her sister. The sister of mean-mindedness is 'duh-sangatI' i.e. the company of bad people. When the mind gets impure, there remains no need to search for a bad company. And when the mean-mindedness and bad-company meet, no one can stop the degradation of a person. If you think you have a mean mind and bad thinking, just seek for Satsanga, so that it can purify your thoughts. But if you have a bad company with mean-mindedness, it will remove your hesitation that you feel before committing sin. Then you won't think once before committing a sin.

So, mean-mindedness and bad company meet there and Dhundhuli's sister says, "I am already pregnant, do one thing, come to my place and pretend to be pregnant. When my child will be born, I will give it to you in exchange of money and it will be announced as your child.

She likes the offer. Then she asks, "What would we do of this fruit? Her sister says, "Give this fruit to your cow as she also doesn't have any child. Let us see how powerful is the sage's fruit!"

They gave the fruit to the cow. When the time came, cow gave birth to its offspring. The offspring had the body of a human but its ears were like a cow. The child was looking as divine as the sage. The child was named 'Gokarna'.

On the other hand, Dhundhuli 's sister also gave birth to a child. Atmadeva also got the news. Dhundhuli says "we have got a baby boy." Atmadeva brings his family back and then he suggests Dhundhuli to name their child as Ramadas, Krishnadas etc. But Dhundhuli declares "I name him Dhundhukari". Both of them are very happy as they got a child.

As the time passes the child grows up. But as the child was the result of the trickery, he turned out to be a rogue after growing up. He did the most heinous crime of killing babies. He became mean-minded and greedy. He started doing sinsful acts and upon watching all these, his mother felt very guilty and committed suicide. Meanwhile, Gokarna goes to Gurukul for studies. Atmadeva was so unhappy and thought, "I would have been happy if I hadn't had such a son. Now what should I do?"

After completion of studies, Gokarna returns and observes that the father is suffering due to his inclination towards the material world.

He is still attached to his family and this attachment is giving him pain. It is the time to do bhakti now. Everyone has their own destiny and their life goes according to it only. No one can change other's destiny. Many times, Bhagavana make us the medium to change other's destiny but we cannot change it on our own. So, those who play the role of a medium, should never think of themselves as destiny changer. They should think, "I am the medium only and if I would not be there, God would have chosen someone else for it."

Many times, it happens that a poor family has five girls. They grow, get married and they live their life. Nothing stops their life. On the other hand, a well-established and elite family gets their life spoiled in tension. A poor person lives freely and an elite class person remains tensed. God is the doer and keep this faith alive in you.

After listening Shri Bhagavata ji, you must believe that God is the doer of all. He decides the destiny of everyone and He makes sure that everyone must fulfill their destiny.

Gokarna thought, my father is still attached. He goes to Atmadeva and says, "O! father, now it is the time to do bhakti for you. What are you waiting for? Till now, you spent your life in maintaining your home. But now this old age is the age to live for yourself." The old age is not to be spent waiting for death, but it is the time to be spent learning from the experiences gained in the life. So, it is the time to live for yourself!

The childhood was spent in studies, then you got married and had children, you gave them parenting. You kept working to set others, but you yourself remained upset always.

Many litterateurs have said, "a person has all the sets in his life like T.V. set, Sofa set and dining set, but he himself remains upset for whole of his life. So now, I want to live for my-self, for my salvation. I have done enough for others and from now on I am leaving them. Yes, I will watch them and advise them when needed. A man himself decides how to lead a respectful life, when to advice and when not. When to sit in the drawing room and when to leave from there. It is the wisdom that one has to bring on their own. It is not needed to be a cynosure everywhere and for every matter. Till now, you were the decisionmaker but now it is the time to leave to others. You must support them for the times of adversities. But at last, you have to leave. They won't learn if they won't try.

Here, Gokarna ji preaches,

धर्मं भजस्व सततं त्यज लोकधर्मान् ।
सेवस्व साधुपुरुषान्जहि कामतृष्णाम् ॥
अन्यस्य दोषगुणचिन्तनमाशुमुक्त्वा ।
सेवाकथा रसमहो नितरां पिवत्वम् ॥

dharmaṁ bhajasva satataṁ tyaja loka-dharmān |
sevasva sādhu-puruṣān jahi kāma-tṛṣṇām ||
anyasya doṣa-guṇa-cintanam āśu muktvā |
sevā-kathā rasam aho nitarāṁ pibatvam ||

Gokarnaji explained very beautifully, "O father! Live for yourself now. Live for the salvation of your own. **धर्मं भजस्व सततं त्यज लोकधर्मान् (dharmaṁ bhajasva satataṁ tyaja loka-dharmān)** now start following Dharma and leave the material things. Just gather yourself like a spider does with its web. Human beings know how to weave their web of responsibilities and wishes but doesn't know to wrap it up. A spider never gets stuck in its own web but a human being gets caught in his own web.

Start avoiding worldly wishes. There is no need to attend every marriage party, now it is the time to search a corner. It is the time to think what to do next, to decide priorities. Everyone must decide their priorities. Priorities may be different in childhood and in young age. But in the age of 60, when one has become old, the priorities must be to do such things that can make the old age happy and contented. It is the time to do bhakti. It is not about running away from responsibilities but it is about handing them over to others.

People show three behaviors, one is avoiding responsibilities, other is running away from responsibilities and the third one is handing them over to others. Handing over responsibilities means to slowly assign them to those who can maintain them, who can respect them, who can carry them forward to those who are young and capable. It is so because they cannot be handed over to children or aged people as childhood and old age both are similar in many aspects. To start crawling is the beginning of childhood and the start of knee pain is the beginning of old age. In the childhood, we have a lot of energy and in the old age, we have lost it.

When you are an infant, people come to see you and you keep lying on your cradle and in the old age too people come to see you. While in childhood a person's parents teach him/her to

eat and advice what to do and what not. Similarly, during the old age, the young ones give us advice. In this world, everything comes back to you. So, you will get what you have given.

But many things are not to be asked for, they are to be earned. If you would ask for love, you won't get happiness in it, it is to be earned. Respect is also not to be asked for. You get respect for your deeds. You have to establish yourself as an ideal of family. Do you think that your youngsters will remember you while doing a and good deed? We always remember our ancestors while we talk about dharma that my grandpa was a 'marjadi' or my grandma used to do that according to tradition. They are a sort of inspiration for us. It is said in the Geeta ji too that, "People are there to follow you and therefor instead of being a preacher, be an inspirer. Because preaching is a process that deals with only speaking to do good, but to be an inspirer one needs to sacrifice his/her life.

In today's world there is a need for such inspirations as the newer generations need them. We always say the new generation is directionless. The reason of them being directionless is not that they have been spoiled but it is the absence of such inpirers.

The inspiration, the values and the ideals are not there for them and in the absence of ideals, the new generation is losing its direction.

It is not necessary that someone should only be respected due to his financial excellence. The social institutions should also respect those who have done sacrifices for their family, who are living as an elder of a family, holding it together. They should respect good fathers, good wives and good mothers so that the newer generations can get inspiration from them. This should be done at priority as we are social beings, and society cannot be run only on business. So, the financial development is not the only development a society needs. If we can't develop the society culturally, socially and on the basis of family relations, then our society will remain incomplete. Therefore, the social institutions must respect not only the prosperous ones, but also respect others according to the categories described above. You will see that the newer generations will start getting inspiration and will start thinking about the ideal relations. They will get their ideals too!

'सेवस्व साधुपुरुषान् जहि कामतृष्णाम्' ('sevasva sādhu-puruṣān jahi kāma-tṛṣṇām') Gokarna ji said, 'O father! Please start being in the company of sages and good people. Remember, after a

certain age, we get some free time which is not to be wasted. Otherwise, many people think that now we have retired and we have a lot of time. No, it is not to be wasted. Learn to use it wisely. When you were young, you wanted to read many books and learn music but due to responsibilities you couldn't do it. Now it is the time to do it. The old age means the time to fulfill your wishes but you must keep Bhagavana in the center of them. Only then your wishes will convert into bhakti. And they will become the reason of your salvation. Get inspiration from the great ones. When you reach a certain age, find a good guru and join him. Use your time, skills and money in the direction of him for the good deeds. It will purify your inner-self and you will start having good thoughts.

'सेवस्व साधुपुरुषान् जहि कामतृष्णाम्' **('sevasva sādhu-puruṣān jahi kāma-tṛṣṇām')** - "Now gradually abandon desires and cravings. Now, don't fall into all this. Now try to make your life successful and meaningful."

'अन्यस्य दोषगुण चिन्तनमाशु मुक्त्वा' **('anyasya doṣa-guṇa-cintanam āśu muktvā')**. Futher, Gokarna Ji preaches a nice fact, "O father, now leave thinking about the vices and virtues of others." It is so because after a certain age, the habit intensifies. We always keep judging others saying, he is good or he is bad, or we advise, "don't be in the company with him, he is not good". So, don't judge others. Here, I would like to discuss the fact that there is a strange thing about parents that makes me surprised. God always gives a sixth sense to parents about the friends of their children. They would know it naturally that which one of them is good for their children or not. It is because they love their children the most not because they hate their children or they only want to stop them from doing something. It is only because of the limitless love they have for their children and due to that love, they develop an attachment with their children. They have an insight to recognize good and bad for their children naturally.

That's why it is always good for us if we listen to and obey our elders. We always listen to experienced person of a particular field for any related work for example, we always take the advice of a CA if we want to maintain our accounts. We always get advices of a doctor if we are ill and for leagal matters we go to an advocate. So, we go to an expert of the field to take an advice similarly, our parents have a good experience of life. We won't get any smaller by taking their advice. So, if you accept the fact that elders always think our good, you will start liking all their advices. But if you keep thinking that they don't want me to be happy then you

will do your own bad. No doubt you will get some freedom but you will be deprived of many securities. Now, the choice is yours!

With freedom you only have one advantage that you will take all your decisions on your own but be prepared if your decisions prove to be wrong. If you have some elderly with you, you will feel safe and protected and your life will move swiftly on its own pace.

'अन्यस्य दोषगुण चिन्तनमाशु मुक्त्वा' **('anyasya doṣa-guṇa-cintanam āśu muktvā')** – "Don't bother about others' virtues or vices. Because, O father, the person whom you consider good, is bad for someone else". How could we say that someone is virtuous or not! There's no need to measure everyone with our measures. The world is so and we have to learn to handle the people. If you will go to weed only good ones, you will find only a few, as we have to spend most of our life with the people whom we don't like.

Just think! you spend 10 hours in the office and only a few hours at home, then if you calculate you would find that you spend most of the life with those whom you don't like. So, if you could learn to live happily with those whom you don't like, then you could spend the bigger part of your life happily. But if you would weed only those whom you like, there will be a small part to live happily. That's why learn to handle them. Learn the art to be happy with everyone, don't try to judge everyone, but try to find happiness. Actually, we don't try to find happiness instead we try to judge everything with only one measure. Once, there were two friends. One was a gardener and other was a jeweler. They used to share everything. Once the jeweler made a beautiful necklace. He thought let me show this to my friend. He took the necklace and went to the gardener and said, "see this beautiful gold necklace." Now the gardener was not aware about the measure to check if it was real. So, he took that, smelled and threw it. And said it doesn't have any fragrance. After a week, there bloomed a beautiful flower in the garden, the gardener thought let me show this beautiful flower to my jeweler friend. As I worked hard to grow it and it turned out to be so beautiful. He plucked the flower and took it to the jeweler and told to him, "See! Isn't it beautiful!" Now, how a jeweler would test the purity? He took a stone and rubbed the flower with it. The flower got crushed. So, when they tried to test other things according to the method of their own, they couldn't enjoy the beauty and art. The same happens with us in our life. flower must be tested by smelling and the gold must be tested by rubbing, in this way, there is a different measure to test different things and when

you learn it you get success in finding the true happiness in your life. But if you will test everyone with a single measure, you will lose many moments of happiness.

Then Atmadeva says, "then what should I do? Gokarna ji says 'सेवा कथा रसमहो नितरां पीबत्वम्' **('sevā-kathā rasam aho nitarāṁ pibatvam')** - "Father! just do seva and grasp the essence of Katha daily. Because, it is the time for it now." Before this, you wished to do it but you didn't get opportunity, and now when you have got that opportunity, you have lost your wish for it". It is one of the basic problems of human beings. When we have wish to do something, we don't get opportunities and when the opportunity comes, we lose wish to do it. It is the problem with every one of us! When we wish to visit the whole world driving our car, we don't have money or suitable conditions, but when we have money and conditions are favorable, our body doesn't support us. Then, we think to sit and pass our time at home. So, the availability of both, time and favourable conditions, is a mark of luck. And who is lucky? The one who gets both the favourable conditions and ease simultaneously to fulfill all his wishes. Suppose, you decided to do something, the conditions were favourable and you completed it. Then, you are lucky. Otherwise, most of the times it happens that when you become capable, the conditions get change.

'सेवा कथा रसमहो नितरां' **('sevā-kathā rasam aho nitarāṁ')** "Dear father! You spent your life wishing for many things. Now when you have got opportunity, don't lose it."

As Soordas ji says, 'जनम सब बातन बीत गयो' **('janam sab baatan beet gayo')** the whole life is gone talking of wishes only. The childhood was spent in studies and playing, youth was spent in earning and when the old age came and I thought of doing bhakti, the body stopped supporting.

The people crying on the death of someone are the real cause of the suffering of the soul of dead. Parents sacrifice their whole life to brought up their children. They put their wishes aside and bring up their children and when their children say, "you have done nothing for us" they get shocked! If this is what they will get after so many sacrifices, they would have better fulfilled their own wishes. But still, they have the opportunity to worship and find God! The old age means the time to live for self. Just take the rosary and start reciting the name of God.

After the age of 20, you started earning. You got success and progress in your life. Being successful is not bad. Go a long way. Progress is good but progress without virtue is not good. Be cautious about not losing your virtues. And that's why whenever you get all the success in your life, be cautious about getting a true and virtuous path to spend it. When Laxmi (money) doesn't get a virtuous way to go, it searches a vice-full way to go. So, after being successful one must be very cautious as it is the time when one may spoil the virtues and become the victim of ego. At this time, only a sat-purusha's (a virtuous man's) company can protect you. Because, when you get success, you start thinking yourself as the smartest and the most intelligent. You think that my decisions are always right and whatever I do is always right. This is where you need a good company.

Once a guru was teaching to climb a tree to his disciple. When he was climbing the tree, Guru didn't instruct him. After struggling hard, the disciple succeeded to reach the top. But, when he started climbing down, the Guru started giving instruction about grabbing and holding the branches properly. He continuously instructed his disciple until he reached safely to the ground. After climbing down the tree, the disciple said, "Gurudev! It was very difficult to climb up the tree, but you didn't instruct me then but you chose to instruct me while I was climbing down. Why?" then his guru said, "when it was difficult, you were cautious on your own. But one always slips down when he is not cautious.

Gradually, body starts getting old. Till now body was supporting but now we have to support our body. Now, the waist has been bent and the skin has been dried. Till now we had an influence over the family but now they don't bother about us. In this condition, the person gradually starts thinking that now who's there for me? The body has got old and the energy has started vanishing. At last, he realises that, "O! I have not done any sat-karma till now". What is the real asset of life? It is not money, not position, not power but it is the family. The one who has the family with him in the old age is the luckiest person.

'When Ram and Ravan fought the battle, Ravan asked, "Bhagavana! even after having capabilities, knowledge, power, money and position why I lost this battle? Then, Ram answerd you cannot win with your money and position, you can win only if your real brother remains with you.

When a person has his family with him in his old age only then he can win the battle of life.

A person never does bhajan or seva of Guru or he never has given anything to anyone and when he realizes that and wants to do some good deeds, Yama-doota comes to take him away. Then there remains nothing other than regret in the life and that's why it is much better to go to God after doing sat-karmas rather than with regret. Go to God with the happiness that you have given so many things to world rather than being in regret. Just think about the moment when you are not capable of doing anything due to your old age versus the moment when you are old and you can think of your good deeds done at a younger age. That's why I always advise to do good-deeds during the youth because then you will have these sat-karmas to think about in the old age and if you have not done any during your young age then what you will think about in your old age? Are you planning to think about money only?

I am lucky that I will think about the number of katha that I have done, about the number of Manoratha I have done, about the yatras that I have attended and the sat-karmas that I have done.

Just think for a moment that when you will get old and your body wouldn't have any energy then what will you think about? If one has not done any sat-Karma in youth his old age also gets spoiled and therefore it is advised that the time when your body is healthy, you must do sat-karmas. It is not needed that you do it with money only. You can give your time, or inspiration, or company also! And in this way, you can have the subjects to think about in your mind. If your mind wouldn't have any interesting subject to think about then what it will think? So, here, Gokarna ji discusses a beautiful subject with Atmadeva. And Atmadeva leaves his home and goes to the forest. There he gets salvation and leaves this world. Now Dhundhukari has no one who can control his evil deeds. His parents have passed away and now he has got all control over his life. He brings five courtesans to his home and is living with them. Hearing, touch, vision of beuaty, taste and smell, these five senses act as courtesans for a human body. These five are the senses that connects a person to the worldly pleasures but the fact with the worldly pleasures is that we don't get any true pleasure with them.

To please those courtesans, he did a theft at king's palace. Whenever a person commits a sin, he gets caught into the net of the sins gradually. It is because once you commit a sin, you wish to do it for the second time and if you do it for the second time, you have to do a sin again to hide the previous one. In this way you make a chain of sins. So, never think like, 'what would

happen if I do it once!' If you are successful in doing it for the first time, you get the courage to do it for another 99 times. Those who have committed sins already are not alone to be called as sinners, but those who wanted to do but didn't get the opportunity are also sinners.

Many people keep saying about others that I know how they have been happy. So, in one or the other way they also wanted to do it. So, many people haven't done any sin just because they haven't got the chance or because they fear the world. But, they wish to do that. You cannot call such people virtuous. The virtuous are those who don't even think of doing a sin.

So, there was no one who could stop Dhundhukari from doing sin. He did a theft at King's to please courtesans. Courtesans thought if the king will find him, we would also be punished. Better is to kill him. And then they tortured him by hanging him upside down and through different methods. Suffering with pain Dhundhukari died. As he was died suffering and distressed, he didn't get Mukti or salvation. He took the form of a dreadful spirit as a result of his evil deeds. His soul was suffering.

When Gokarna ji came to know about the death of his brother, he did the shraddha at Gaya ji thinking that it will give Dhundhukari salvation. After performing shraddha, Gokarna ji returns to his hometown. He stays at his home and in the night when he goes to sleep, he sees some bizarre thing roaming around. He feels someone's presence there. And also comes to know that it wants to say something but is not able to do so. Suddenly Gokarna ji listens someone crying. Listening to this he takes some water in his palm consecrates it with a sacred text and throws it. Then he asks, who are you? The dreadful spirit says, "I am your brother Dhundhukari". Then, Gokarna ji says, "I have made oblation in Gaya for benefit of you and it is a matter of great surprise to me that you are still not liberated". The spirit says, "Oh brother! I have committed so many heinous sins that my redemption cannot be brought about even through hundreds of shraddha's done at Gaya. Oh brother! you are a great man and knowledgeable also. You are a sage please think of some other remedy now.

In the morning Gokarna ji wakes up and goes to the river bank and stands into the water and takes some water in the palms. With it he offers Arghya to the Sun god and asks, "please tell me the means of release of the one who cannot be liberated even after doing hundred shraddha at Gaya."

Hearing this, the Sun god says, "Gokarna, give a complete reading of Shrimad Bhagavata within a week to him." Such is the effect of Shrimad Bhagavata ji that the one who cannot be liberated through hundred shraddha at Gaya, can be liberated by listening to the Katha once.

As soon as Gokarna ji get this means to liberate his brother, he sets himself to this task. Gokarna ji is a knowledgeable person and therefore he invites all the citizens of his town. He does this as he knows that the more the people listen to the Katha the more will be the virtues collected. As other pilgrimages have the importance to feed others, Katha has the importance of listeners. The more the listeners, the more is the punya collected.

It is said that the more virtues are collected if more people get food in a tirtha, similarly in Katha the more virtues are collected if more people listen to it. As it is a karma to spread Bhagavad rasa(essence). It is the food for one's soul. So, for the liberation of Dhandhukari Gokarna ji sets himself and informs all the citizens of the town. He has set himself on the Vyas Peetha for Katha and all the others are present to listen to him.

As soon as he starts expounding the story the spirit of Dhundhukari also arrives there. Looking about for a seat he saw a bamboo with 7 joints standing there, he enters in the bamboo to hear the exposition. You can think of your desires as the bamboo. These desires are not to be searched outside; they are present within.

The bamboo with the seven joints of desires, anger, lust, jealosy, grudge, arrogance, and envy are present within us. Then, the seven joints started cracking day by day. There is no need to put a bamboo during the Katha because we all have these joints within us and we have to crack these joints of desire and taboos within us. So, just check weather these joints are cracked after the Katha. Just check it within yourself.

So, after listening to the katha for 7 days Dhundhukari gets liberated. Denizens of Vaikuntha came there in an aerial car to take Dhundhukari to Vaikuntha. Even now the aerial car comes to take those who have listened to Shri Bhagavata ji but no one gets ready to go.

So, when the aerial car has arrived and Dhundhukari is about to board the car, Gokarna ji stops them and says, why are you taking Dhundhukari alone to Vaikuntha! All those who are present here have heard the katha and therefore you should take all these people to Vaikuntha. Then

the denizens of Vaikuntha say peacefully

अदृढं च हतं ज्ञानं प्रमादेन हतं श्रुतम् ।
संदिग्धो हि हतो मन्त्रो व्यग्रचित्तो हतो जपः ॥

adṛḍhaṁ ca hataṁ jñānaṁ pramādena hataṁ śrutam |
saṁdigdho hi hato mantro vyagra-citto hato japaḥ ||

You get the reward only for what you have done. 'Infructuous is the spiritual wisdom which is not firmly rooted. Hearing of scriptures is marred through listlessness'. Also if you utter a mantra with a doubt, it is fruitless. So, utter a mantra with full faith and trust. That's why '**श्रवणस्य विभेदेन फलभेदोऽत्र संस्थितः ।' (‘śravaṇasya vibhedena phala-bhedo’tra saṁsthitaḥ’)** though they all have heard it, they have not reflected upon it in an equal degree.

During the rain, the water will be gathered according to the capacity of the pot. Similarly, the reward of listening the Katha is also different according to their devotion. Then they said, 'who gets the proper reward of listening the Katha?

विश्वासो गुरुवाक्येषु स्वस्मिन् दीनत्व भावना ।
मनोदोष यतश्चैव कथायां निश्चलां मतिः ॥

viśvāso guru-vākyeṣu svasmin dīnatva-bhāvanā |
mano-doṣa yataś caiva kathāyāṁ niścalā matiḥ ||

Only those who have the following characteristics get the proper reward: those who have total faith in the words of Guru, those who listen to it believing that the katha is a fact and it is being spoken for me and it is for my wellbeing. Many times, it happens during the Katha that people poke others saying it is said for you. So, don't do that. Listen to the Katha for yourself. And that's the reason to keep the seating arrangement different for ladies and gentleman. So that they can concentrate on the Katha considering it for themselves only.

It happens that among three people there is a one for whom this Katha results in liberation. So, see to your right side and think the one on my right side is not capable of liberation then see to the left side and think he is also not the person suitable for the liberation then remains I! So, I am the one for whom this Katha is being done. Listen this Katha having faith that it is being

done for me only. Be in the humility that you have got this opportunity to listen to this Katha by the grace of God. Thakur ji has made me the nimitt karana (the material cause) and all the people should have faith that the katha is being said for them. You should not also think that the Katha is for the person who has arranged for it because it is being done for him but it is also for all the listeners and God has turned the condition in my favour. So, have this humility in you.

Do remember that you should sit and listen to the Katha being a devotee only. If you sit here with the ego of power and position given by this world, you wouldn't remain on either side. Sit near Bhagavan being His devotee. Keep in mind that I belong to Thakurji only. And I want my salvation through this Katha only.

The one who bridles all the disorders of the mind and focuses on Katha with a pure heart gets the grace of this Katha and here all of them haven't done that. What did Dhundhukari do? They said he listened, contemplated and did nididhyasana. Whenever someone listens to Katha, contemplates on it and then applies it in his life, he does nididhyasana.

We listened to this way of leading a life in the katha yesterday. So, now onwards, we will live our life according to it. Now, we will take the decisions accordingly. In this way, we should try to apply it in our life.

So, Gokarna ji said, "I will again do the katha and this time all the listeners have listened to it in aforesaid way. They all did nididhyasana and the katha was so great that God himself came there in His aerial car to take all of them to His holy abode. And took them with Him to Vaikuntha. Such is the effect of the Katha.

Further in the sixth chapter, the process of listening to the Katha is described. First of all, they talked about the characteristics of the speaker of the Katha, then they directed about the place to be chosen for it and then they directed about the planning of the Katha. And in this way, in the sixth chapter they said about the process of the Katha.

Before planning for Katha any one may think of the allocation of the budget for it. The budget is also given here. Just make the budget similar to that of marriage. Now, if you want to do it with all pompous then make it high and if you want it in a simpler way, then do it so. But be as

enthusiastic as you be during a marriage. Here, our acharyas say, "The Katha itself is like a marriage celebration, marriage of a bhakta with Bhagavan. First of all, the invitations for the marriage are given and for that the date and time must be fixed. For the Katha too fix the date, time and venue and then get the invitations printed. Invite all the relatives and friends as the katha is not restricted for anyone. So, the katha is the marriage of a soul with the Supreme one. When gets fixed, the groom comes on a horse in a procession. In the Katha too, we put pothi ji (the books of Shri Bhagavata ji) on our head and bring them to the venue. In this way, Paramatma comes in the form of Pothi-ji to the venue to accept jeev-atma. Similar to the circumambulation of sacred fire, one circumambulation is taken every day for seven days. In this way, this is the marriage of a jeev-atma with Paramatma. 'શ્રી ગોકુળ સાસરિયે જાવું રે...' (**'Shri Gokul Sasariye jaavu re...'** I want to go to Gokul...) And jeev-atma is so happy and enthusiastic that he is dancing and celebrating that Paramatma has come to marry me.

These seven days are the time for celebration of the divine marriage of jeev-atma with Paramatma. On the seventh day, Paramatma will make you His. You will get coloured in His colour. You will start liking what He likes. Just like a newly wedded girl, all your wishes will be centred around Him. In this way, a jeev-atma gives seven vows to God.

Let us rest the Mahatmaya Katha here.
Krishna Kanhaiya Laal ki jay

Now let us enter into the first book of Shrimad Bhagavata, i.e. the first Skandha. These twelve books of Shrimad Bhagavata are the twelve anga (body parts) of Shrinath ji. And in Vedas, the form of Paramatma is described as '**द्वादशांगो वै पुरुषः**' (**'dvādaśāṅgo vai puruṣaḥ'**) They describe that the Purush Paramatma has twelve body parts. So, Shrinath ji also has twelve body parts. And the vocal form of Shrinath ji is Shri Bhagavata ji and Shri Acharyacharana compares the twelve body parts of Shri thakur ji to 12 skandhas of Shri Bhagavata ji. The first two Skandha of Shri Bhagwat ji are the two charnarvinda (feet) of Shrinath ji. The third and the fourth Skandha are the two hands of Shri ji Baba. The fifth and sixth skandha are the two thighs of Shri Thakur ji. The seventh skandha is the folded hand of Shri Thakur ji which He has put on His waist. The eighth and ninth skandha are the heart of the Thakur ji. The eleventh skandh is the head and the twelth one is the upper hand of Thakur ji with which He is calling His bhaktas. It is the Bhavna behind the Swaroop of Shrinathji that he is calling through His his hand standing on the

gate of his Nikunj. And when the bhakt goes to his sharana He captures his bhakta into his palm and tell His Maya that this jeev belongs to me now and therefore you cannot do anything of him and now you won't have any effect over him. Because '**मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ।**' **('mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te')** those who are mine get over the effect of Maya, He says.

All these 12 body parts of Shrinath ji are these Twelve Skandhas. When you do the darshan of the Swaroop of Shrinath ji, what do you see in the Kandara (niche) surrounding Him? When you see it carefully, you can find twelve symbols in it. These twelve symbols are the representations of the twelve skandhas. It means whenever you do the darshan of Shrinath ji you get the reward of the listening to Shri Bhagavata ji. Because, Shrinath ji is the idol form of Shri Bhagavata ji.

Whenever you see the Kandara, you find two cows first. The symbol of two cows is the symbol of the first Skandha of Shri Bhagavata ji. Because, in the first Skandha, the discussion between Dharma (religion) and Prithvi (the Earth) is given. The religion is in the form of an ox and the earth is in the form of a cow in it. So, the two cows in the Kandara are none other than the religion and the earth.

Then you will see a parrot just above Shrinath ji. It is the symbol of the second skandha. It is so because from the second skandha, the katha is told by Shri Shukdeva ji.

The third symbol in the Kandara is of a sage, and the sage there is Kapila Bhagavan, who has preached the philosophy of Samkhya and it is the representation of the third skandha. The other two sages present there are Nara and Narayana. Those are the representation of the fourth skandha.

Further, there is a symbol of a sheep in the Kandara. It is also the representation of the Aries sun-sign which is the first among twelve. Why is it the representation of the fifth skandha? Because the fifth skandha has a detailed description of the calculation of the time. Further, the two cows are the representation of the sixth skandha of Bhagavata ji as it has the Pushti-Leela in it. The symbol has a Cow and its calf. The Calf keeps drinking the milk of the cow and simultaneously keeps kicking its mother.

Even then the cow doesn't stop to feed it. It's her mercy, and affection towards her child and so is the Pushti of Bhagavan. A Jeeva makes God suffer and disgraces Him in many ways but He never stops His mercy. And that is called as His Pushti-Leela, the sixth skandha. When we further observe the Kandara, we can see the symbol of Narsimha ji. It is the representation of The Seventh Skandha in which there is katha of Narsimha ji, an incarnation of God. Also, there is a serpent in the Kandara which is the representation of eighth skandha. Because, in The Eighth Skandha, there is the story of churning of ocean known as 'Samudra-Manthana' which was done by both devas and danavas. And for the churning of Ocean they took the help of mountain Mandaranchala as the churning rod and the Serpent King Vasuki as the churning rope. Therefore, this serpent is the representation of the eighth skandha. The Kandara also has a symbol of peacock. When you see at the bottom, there is a peacock and the peacock is the symbol of platonic love. The ninth skandha is the story of bhaktas whose love for thakur ji is platonic. It is named as 'Ishanu katha', '**ईशस्य अनुगामीनां कथा**' (**'īśasya anugāmināṁ kathā'**) i.e. the story of true devotees (Bhaktas). God himself is present in the Tenth skandha. So, Parmatma in the middle of the Kandara is the tenth skandha. '**तमद्भुतं बालकमम्बुजेक्षणं**' **('tamadbhutaṁ bālakam ambujekṣaṇam')** It has the birth story of incarnation of Paramatma himself. The eleventh skandha is the Mukti-Leela. There is another serpent around Shrinath Ji. It goes around His knees and it is said that if a serpent doesn't shed its skin, it goes blind and therefore it is said in our Pushti-marga that 'mukti/salvation' is to forgo all our temptations and in the eleventh skandha, there is the story of salvation called 'Mukti-Leela'. The twelfth skandha is known as 'Ashraya-Leela'. The upper hand of Shri ji is the representation of this skandha. In this way, the twelve skandhas are visibly present there in Shri-nath ji.

Let us dive deep into the first skandha. It is the right foot (Dakshin Charan) of Shrinath ji. The Leela (the deeds of Shri Thakurji according to his own Wish) described here is the 'Adhikar-Leela'. Adhikara means the rights or capabilities of a person. There are three categories of speakers and listeners of Shri Bhagavata ji and the discussion between them is known as Shri Bhagavata ji. Generally, we don't have the religious scriptures in the form of preachings. They are in the form of discussions. A person asks and the other one answers. So those three speakers and the listeners were categorized as rightful seekers or aspirants. The first category is named as Uttamadhikari the superior seeker who is the most capable, the second one is Madhyamadhikari, the intermediate seeker and the Heenadhikari, the inferior seekers. These

three are the categories. Shri Mahaprabhu ji has explained in detail the characteristics of all the three categories. The characteristics of the inferior seeker is tendency of differentiating. They don't have full faith in Bhagavata ji yet. They still have some attachment to the Yagya. So, the inferior speaker is Suta ji and listener is Shaunank ji, who are doing this katha in Naimisharanya. Suta ji has reached among 88000 rishis and is telling the katha. Now while discussing about the intermediate seekers, they said it is Narada ji (speaker)and Vyasa ji (listener). Because when Vyasa ji fell victim of Moha and got frustrated that even if I have written so many granthas and puranas I have not got the satisfaction. Then, Narada ji came and preached Shri Bhagavata ji. They are said to be as Madhyamadhikari. Because, even though they are the avatara of Bhagavana, both of them have worldly worries, they are not fully detached. It is so because a Katha becomes successful to the extent of the detachment of the speaker from the world. Then, they discussed about the superior speaker and the listener. They are Shri Shukdev ji and Pareekshit ji. They both have seen Bhagavana. But, still they have faith in Katha. When Pareekshit Maharaj heard that he will die after 7 days, he didn't sit idly, instead he started thinking about getting Moksha in this period of seven days. And then he met Shri Shukdev ji, the speaker who is the most capable. He is completely detached from the world and has faith in Paramatma. He has developed true 'Vairagya', the true faith. Both of them have faith in Katha. He immediately left his throne and house after hearing of the curse as he wants to see only Bhagvana, to get Him in a true manner.

They follow vairagya and therefore they are the superior.

So, in the first Skandha of Shri Bhagavata ji there is a discussion on those three categories of the speakers and listeners. Now, Let us start the first book in which it is said that the reward one gets depends on the capability.

After listening to the katha, Dhundhukari gets moksha but King Pareekshita finds God. The katha is the same but the reward is different according to the capability! There are two ways to increase the capability, the first is by the grace of God and the second is by the knowledge obtained from a Guru.

Now let us begin the Katha of the first skandha. There are 19 chapters in the first skandha in which the chapters 1, 2, 3 have the discussion of the Heenadhikari. And chapter 7 to 19 has the discussion about the Uttamadhikari.

Shri Mahaprabhu ji has discussed the differences among these Adhikaras in detail. 'Jalabheda' and 'Pancha-Padyani' are the two granthas among 'Shodash Granthas' (The sixteen knowledgeable verses) that have the discussion about the characteristics of speaker and the listeners.

In the starting of the first Skandha, they have done Manglacharana in three shlokas. The first shloka has the discussion about the seed, the second has the discussion about the tree and the third one has the discussion about the fruit it bears. Consider this first shloka as the key to Shri Bhagavata ji. Entire Bhagavata ji can be assimilated in this shloka which can be called as the Gayatri of Pauranic literature. It means the first shloka of Bhagavata ji says the same thing as the Gayatri Mantra so the Pauranik form of Gayatri is this first shloka of the manglacharan of the Bhagavata ji.

Gayatri Mantra is the seed of vedas. Shri Mahaprabhu ji has written an entire Gayatri bhashya (transcreation). Shri Mahaprabhu ji explains that Gayatri is the mantra for Parabrahma. We only think of Devi about it but it is the name of type of verse and basically it is the mantra for Parmatma. People think of Devi because of the word Savita present in it but who is the actual Savita? It is Parmatma himself.

'सूते प्रसूतेति सविता' **('sūte prasūta iti savitā')** – The one who has given birth to all. It is the one and only as it is said in Gayatri 'तत्सवितुः वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ।' – 'तत्सवितुः' **('tatsavituḥ vareṇyaṁ bhargo devasya dhīmahi dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt | - tatsavituḥ')** Is Savita. So the thing explained in the Gayatri Mantra is the same as the thing which is written by Vyas ji in the first shloka of Manglacharana in the first book of Shrimad Bhagavata.

जन्माद्यस्य यतोऽन्वयादितरतश्चार्थेष्वभिज्ञः स्वराट् ।
तेने ब्रह्म हृदा य आदिकवये मुह्यन्ति यत्सूरयः ॥
तेजोवारिमृदां यथा विनिमयो यत्र त्रिसर्गोऽमृषा ।
धाम्ना स्वेन सदा निरस्तकुहकं सत्यं परं धीमहि' ॥

janmādy asya yato'nvayād itarataś cārtheṣv abhijñaḥ svarāṭ |
tene brahma hṛdā ya ādikavaye muhyanti yat sūrayaḥ ||
tejo-vāri-mṛdāṁ yathā vinimayo yatra tri-sargo'mṛṣā |
dhāmnā svena sadā nirasta-kuhakaṁ satyaṁ paraṁ dhīmahi ||

So, the thing which was explained in the Gayatri, which was said in the Vedas, is said in this Mantra because everyone does not have the capability to study Vedas but all of us have the capability to read the Puranas and the same thing is explained in this first Shloka.

As it is said in the Gayatri Mantra that 'तत्सवितुः' **('tatsavituḥ')** Who is the 'Savita', that is the origin of everyone and everything, that is the creator of this Srishti (creation) and the one who preserves and dissolves this world. We venerate that Savita and, in this mantra, the Savita is 'Parmatma' and the same thing is said here as 'जन्माद्यस्य यतोऽन्वयादितरत' **('janmādy asya yato'nvayād itarata')** – जन्माद्यस्य यतः **(janmādy asya yataḥ)** and the similar is said in the Brahma-Sutra that 'जन्माद्यस्य यतः शास्त्रयोनित्वात्' **('janmādy asya yataḥ śāstra-yonitvāt')** the one who is the origin, who gives birth to all means the 'Parmatma' is the creator, preserver and the dissolver of all.

Shri Mahaprabhu ji's philosophy is Shuddha-Advait-Brahmavada. So let us try to understand in brief that what is Brahmavada. Bhagavana creates all from himself. And therefore, Shri Mahaprabhu ji considers this jagata or world as Satya, the truth. 'ब्रह्म सत्यं जगत् सत्यं' **('brahma satyaṁ jagat satyaṁ')**, but in Mayavada, they considered this world as mithya, a false, that all this which is visible is all mithya or false. Shri Mahaprabhu ji acknowledges the difference between the world (jagata) and the material existence (samsara) and says that the things made by human with their ahmta and Mamta (ego and attachment) are also created by God and therefore they are a truth. Again, they asked, 'how can these destroyable materials are considered as truth? As truth is present forever. It was present in the past, it is present currently and it is going to be present in future. Only that is to be considered as truth the rest all is myth. So the world was not present before, it came into existence when Bhagavana created it and when Bhagavana will dissolve it, it will get destroyed. Then why you consider it as truth.

Then Mahaprabhu ji answers Bhagavana doesn't create and dissolve the world but Bhagavana himself gets resulted in the form of the world. And therefore, Mahaprabhu ji doesn't consider the philosophy of creation and dissolution, instead he considers it is as Avirbhava (manifestation) and Tirobhava (Withdrwal). Bhagavana himself gets manifested in the form of

world. 'आत्मकृतेत् परिणामात्' **('ātmakṛteḥ pariṇāmāt')** - He doesn't bring anything from outside. It means Bhagavana himself gets manifested or takes the form of world and does his Leela and whenever he dissolves the world, he doesn't destroys it but he again absorbs the world in himself the world disappears in him and gets diluted.

There is the famous example of a tortoise in Vedanta in which it is said that whenever a tortoise wants to do any act it brings its limbs out of its shell and whenever it wants to sit peacefully, it takes all its limbs within. In the similar way, whenever Bhagavana wants to do any Leela he gets manifested in the form of the world and when you want to wrap up all the things he absorbs the world in himself. Therefore, there is no creation or dissolution of the world, but it was there in Bhagavana and then it got resulted in the form of world and again it got disappeared or absorbed in the form of Bhagavana. It is similar to 'रूपनाम विभेदेन जगत् क्रीडति यो यतः ।' **('rūpa-nāma-vibhedena jagat krīḍati yo yataḥ')** You can understand this through the example of a bangle. Suppose you have a bangle made up of gold when it gets old you go to the goldsmith and tell him to keep that bangle and give you back the gold according to its value. Now, the bangle itself is made up of gold. It is gold but it has the shape of a bangle and so you tell it a bangle not gold. You say take this bangle and give me back the gold. Then you take the gold and go to another goldsmith and ask him to make earrings. Now, those earrings are also gold but you name them earrings so you identify the things by the name of the shape that they have taken. Similarly, Bhagavana also gets many shapes in the form of world and he is doing his krida or action by the name of this name of the form. But we identify it by his shape and name and therefore Shri Mahaprabhu ji gives two types of Parinama-vada (transformation theories), First is Vikrit Parinama-vada and the second is Avikrit Parinama-vada.

The milk can be turned into curds but the curd cannot be turned back into the milk, so this is known as Vikrit Parinama-vada.

A small rubber can be pulled and transformed into the long rubber but whenever you release, it again gets into its original shape and this is called Avikrit Parinama-vada.

When Bhagavana results into the form of world then it is not Vikrit, it is Avikrit because he again takes the form of Parmatma. As it is said in the mangalacharan of Upanishada that -

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्ण-मुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

oṁ pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇam idaṁ pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate |
pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate ||

the world gets its form out of Purna Brahma but Bhagavana doesn't lose anything and at the time of dissolution, it again gets absorbed in Bhagavana and Bhagavana again doesn't experience any extra. So, he remains complete always. It works similar to the example of the earthen pot given earlier that the soil is said to be the material cause and the potter is said to be the Nimitta cause or the doer cause. But in all cases bhagavan is both the material cause and the doer cause of this world.

There is an aphorism in Brahma Sutra that 'कार्यकारणमभेदात्' **('kārya-kāraṇam abhedāt')** the act and the cause are never different. The cause is Paramatma and the act is the world. And if the cause is that root then it can never let a myth manifested from it. Therefore, Shree Mahaprabhu ji enunciates the world as truth.

The world immerged from the God. 'तेजोवारिमृदां यथा विनिमयो यत्र त्रिसर्गोऽमृषा ।' **('tejo-vāri-mṛdāṁ yathā vinimayo yatra tri-sargo'mṛṣā')** When we see a mirage, we think that there is some water on the road but when we reach near to it, we can find there nothing. That is the Maya of Bhagavana but for us it is the illusion. Originally there wasn't any water but we saw it as we were in the illusion of it. In the same way, the image of Bhagwan be seen as the happiness in the world but when we go near to it, it is not the real happiness. Because it is our illusion only.

Just think when you see anything into the mirror and to take that thing what would be needed? To go near to the mirror or to go far from it? If you go to the mirror then you will get hurt and therefore you have to go far from that mirror to get that thing. Similarly, the image of Paramatma can be seen in the world in the form of pleasure but when you go to find it in the world then you won't get it instead you have to go to the Parmatma for it. 'धाम्ना स्वेन सदा निरस्तकुहकं सत्यं परं धीमहि ।' **('dhāmnā svena sadā nirasta-kuhakaṁ satyaṁ paraṁ dhīmahi')** Therefore, we venerate that ultimate truth. Who is the ultimate truth? About whom is this Katha? Then they say, when Thakur ji was about to incarnate and when he entered into the

womb of Devaki ji, all the Devdas came and praised him. 'सत्यव्रतं सत्यपरं त्रिसत्यं सत्यस्य योनिं निहितं च सत्ये ।' **('satyavrataṁ satya-paraṁ tri-satyaṁ satyasya yoniṁ nihitaṁ ca satye')** that eternal truth is Paramatma. It is the story is of Shri Krishna. And we venerate such an eternal truth and in the form of this origin, they said the Gayatri Mantra 'धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ।' **('dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt')**

In the second shloka or verse, they consider Bhagavta ji as a tree. 'धर्मः प्रोज्झित कैतवोऽत्र परमो निर्मत्सराणां सतां ।' **('dharma-projjhita-kaitavo'tra paramaḥ nirmatsarāṇāṁ satām')** They say, it is for those who are unenvious. Now what is envy? The emotion of jealousy that emerges for other's happiness is known as envy. Jealousy is a big hurdle for bhakti. No matter how much Thakur ji makes you prosperous but do you have the courage to say, 'Thakur ji! it is enough for me. Now make others prosperous. Are you that courageous? While a moocher sucks your blood from outside, jealousy does it within. We don't get jealous if an unknown person succeeds, but we feel jealous if someone close gets succeed. We always want a known should not move ahead of us. No matter what others are doing but we should be ahead of our relatives and friends. So, the jealousy is always present there in us and we keep it for our closed ones. The more a person is close to us, the more we feel jealousy for them.

Do you have such a big heart to pray for others to become prosperous? The thing is, regardless of people's advice we must know about our capacity to wish well for our closed ones. Can we pray for others?

Do you have that much courage? It needs inner power! The power is not the thing that we need to pull others down! It is also needed to push others up. So, how do you use your power- to push other up or pull others down? 'I left others back' is one form of power and 'I let them go forward' is the more beautiful form of power. How can we enjoy others' loss? The true happiness lies in letting others win, "I helped someone to win". It gives a different sort of happiness and from that happiness we always remain deprived. So, keep it in mind that you don't have to keep running in a race always. There's no need to make all the events of life a competition. Because, in future, it will happen once that you will be moved ahead and your near and dear ones will remain behind. So, don't run so fast that you leave your life behind.

The problem is we are losing the essence of life for the race of better lifestyle. We lose the essence of life for a better lifestyle.

Don't buy an expensive bed against good sleep. Don't buy good food against your hunger. Progressing in life is good but it shouldn't stop the progress of your dear ones. It is good to be happy but not on the cost of other's happiness. There is no problem in being happy. In fact, Shri Bhagavata ji has the story of such kings and emperors. So who said that God only grants grace to the poor ones! So, you can be prosperous but be prosperous not only by money but also by mind, thoughts and deeds. If you have become prosperous then let it be shown in true essence. The true meaning of your prosperity lies in helping others to go up.

God has created human beings in such a way that they do sins to earn money, but when they die, money remains here and their karma goes with them. Bhagavan has created it in that way only And that's why always be cautious to lead a quality life. Also, be cautious not to spend your life collecting different quantities.

'प्रोज्झितकैतव' **('projjhita-kaitava')** Shri Bhagavata Ji has the detailed descriptions of pure dharma that doesn't intend to deceive anyone. What's that dharma? What's the deceiving in bhakti? They say, to ask for material things instead of God from himself is deceiving. You ask for materialistic things from Him is also a form of deceiving. Bhagavan gives us things you know why? To get your love. The difference between love and God's love is that He gives us things to get love and we give love to get things. That's the basic difference. Bhagavana seeks for love in you and you keep seeking for things. So, what will happen by listening to Shri Bhagavata ji? You will become selfless and will pray to Him that may I focus only on you whenever I stand in front of you. Bless me that whenever I stand before you, I don't remember anything else than you. Because, if I go far from you I would have to fulfil my all responsibilities. I am not talking to run away from the responsibility, I don't want to run away from all the responsibility but I want to fulfil them being a Vaishnava, instead of being an ordinary human being. Whenever you face any problem, don't search for the solution being a common man otherwise you will face its consequences in the form of raga and dvesha (attraction and aversion). Solve it being a Vaishnava, then you will get peace in your life. Whenever you face any problem then just ask a simple question to yourself that what should a Vaishnava do for it? When you ask yourself this

question, you get the solution that a wish now can apply and the solution will be so beautiful that it will bring peace in your life, so get the solution as a vaishnava.

So just pray to God that whenever I stand before you, I don't get anyone else in my mind or in my heart, because the time when we are near Shri Thakur ji, is the most important time of the 24 hours. The most precious time and the most important time is the time when I stand before Shri Thakur ji It is all right if the other time gets spoiled but I don't want to spoil these 10 minutes. I don't want to spoil this time. Because I stand near God during this time. This is the time when I am with Paramatma who has the control over this whole world. Just think when President or Prime Minister of any country gives you ten minutes appointment ! Then what do you do? You switch off your mobile and inform all others that I have a meeting with Prime Minister. How important you consider it that the Prime Minister of a country is with you then just think how important are those ten minutes when the creator of this world is with you. How quality time should it be! Then do you think you respect that time while standing there? No! We don't give much importance to them. We don't give the required importance. After listening to this, all those present here must decide to focus only on God while standing before Him.

Don't ask for God Himself from Him. Many times, it happens that God already knows about the list of demands before someone reaches to the temple. They always demand I want this, I want that, you didn't give me this, you would have done that. You must have to believe that He does, but he always do it at the proper time. Just trust him. Just be firm for that.

Shri Mahaprabhu ji also says in Shodash Grantha, '**प्रार्थिते वा ततः किं स्यात् स्वाम्यभिप्रायसंशयात् ।**' **('prārthite vā tataḥ kiṁ syāt svāmy-abhiprāya-saṁśayāt')** what would happen even after demanding from God? You will get it only when God will wish to. You ask from him because you don't trust the decision of God. He will do that. Do you trust him? Then don't ask for anything, just enjoy whatever he has given.

Whenever God is there, then you must not think about asking instead think of getting happiness that I have God with me. How good is the way in which Gopis enjoyed the company of Krishna. Can I enjoy it? So think of getting that joy, not of demanding.

In the third shloka, they expounded the resultant form of Paramatma saying

निगम कल्पतरोर्गलितं फलं शुकमुखादमृतद्रव संयुतम् ।
पिबत भागवतं रसमालयं मुहुरहो रसिका भुवि भावुकाः ॥

nigama-kalpataror galitaṁ phalaṁ śuka-mukhād amṛta-drava-saṁyutam |
pibata bhāgavataṁ rasam ālayaṁ muhur aho rasikā bhuvi bhāvakāḥ ||

Here they explained the form of bhagavata ji. What is the swaroopa or form of shri bhagavata ji? '**निगम कल्पतरोर्गलितं**'. **('nigama-kalpataror galitaṁ')** There is a tree in Vaikuntha in the form of veda which has a ripened fruit named Shri Bhagavata ji. That has Gayatri as its seed and Upanishads as branches and on that tree, this ripened fruit of Shri Bhagavata ji has grown. Now which is the sweetest fruit on a Tree? The fruit that has been tasted by a parrot is the sweetest. Then, is this fruit sweet, they say yes, it is! as it is '**शुकमुखादमृतद्रव संयुतम्**' **('śuka-mukhād amṛta-drava-saṁyutam')** – tasted by Shri Shuk-dev ji. Here, the ripened fruit means the fruit that has no skin to peel and no hard shell of seed to throw off. It is full of juice. And therefore, they said to drink it not to eat it. They said '**पिबत**' **('pibata')** i.e. to drink it. Because it has no skin or hard seed but it is juicy because in Ved, the form of Paramatma is said to be as '**रसौ वै सः**' **('raso vai saḥ')**. He is essence of everything. So, Paramatma is also the essence of Shri Bhagavata ji.

Vedas describe the both. One form is of knowledge. '**सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म**' **('satyaṁ jñānam anantaṁ brahma')** and they also told a way to get the Paramatma's knowledge form. The second is '**रसो वै सः परमात्मा**' **('raso vai saḥ paramātmā')** (The Paramatma is the one who is the essence of all), it is the way to find Him. So, Parmatma in the form of essence is present here. It is the ripened fruit. In this world we have harvested fruit or the fruit that is taken from the branch but this is the ripened fruit. There are karma-kanda (the part of Vedas dealing with sacrifices or ceremonial rites) and Gyan-Kaanda (the part that deals with the knowledge of Brahman) in the books of Veda. But, here, Shri Bhagavata ji is called as ripened, full of essence! this is ripened and therefore they said it as an order '**पिबत**' **('pibata')** i.e. drink it. It is '**रसमालयं**' **('rasam ālayaṁ')** i.e. it is the home to all the rasa (the every essence) Prabhu is, '**रसो वै सः**' **('raso vai saḥ')** the one who is the essence, and who has all the nine rasa within Him.

In 'Shri Subodhini ji' (the transcreation of Shri Bhagavata ji by Shri Mahaprabhuji) too, Shri Mahaprabhu ji says, when Shri Krishna enters in the sacrifice (Dhanur-yagna) organized by Kamsa, where all the citizens of Mathura are present, they feel:

मल्लानामशनिर्नृणां नटवरः स्त्रीणां स्मरो मूर्तिमान् ।
गोपानां स्वजनोऽसतां क्षितिभुजां शास्ता स्वपित्रोः शिशुः ॥

mallānām aśani-nṛṇāṁ naṭa-varaḥ strīṇāṁ smaro mūrtimān |
gopānāṁ sva-jano'satāṁ kṣiti-bhujāṁ śāstā sva-pitroḥ śiśuḥ ||

i.e. everyone feels of Him as they think about Him. So, there are all the nine rasas in Paramatma. All these nine rasas attract a jeeva.

Now, the question arises, the group of nine rasa also has the bhayanaka rasa (the horror element) in it. Then I would say, people like it too! Yes, people love to get horrified. Let me tell you, why would people go to watch a horror movie then? They already know that it is a horror movie, still they go to watch it. So, it is also a rasa, area of interest. On the other hand, people also get pleasure in getting tired. People go for tracking, they know that they will get tired but they enjoy it. They say we enjoy tracking. So, where ever there is a rasa, there is an attraction. So, anyone who goes to Paramatma, enjoys all the rasas as he is 'raso vai sah!'

So, they said, 'drink it as many times as possible.' Listen to it till your ears become 'alaukika' (pious). Drink it till Paramatma gets assimilated in you i.e. '**पिबत भागवतं रसमालयं मुहुरहो रसिका भुवि भावुकाः ।' (‘pibata bhāgavataṁ rasam ālayaṁ muhur aho rasikā bhuvi bhāvakāḥ’)** then, they end the Mangalacharana.

Now, they take us to the Naimisharanya where Shaunka ji has started a fire sacrifice that will last for 1000 yrs, He has other 88000 sages with him. The place for the sacrifice was suggested by Brahma ji. They have invited Suta ji and have offered him a sacred seat to sit. And now they are asking many beautiful questions.

When meeting great sages, what kind of inquiries should one make? So, they asked: "You have studied all the scriptures, so kindly enlighten us—according to all the scriptures, what is the ultimate welfare of a human being?" This was the first question asked. The sages, led by Shaunaka, asked a total of six questions.

The first question asked was: What is the ultimate welfare of a human being? This is because the problem with humans is that they perceive happiness, they understand happiness, but they neither see nor comprehend what true welfare is. And even if someone shows them, they often do not like it. This is the real dilemma of human beings—they do not know what is truly beneficial for them. God is not the giver of mere happiness; He is the giver of true welfare. If you ask for happiness, there is no guarantee that God will grant it. But whatever leads to your ultimate well-being, He will certainly provide. The Lord is interested in doing what is best for you, not in merely entertaining you. For example, if a diabetic child asks his mother for sweets, she will refuse. However, if the same child goes to a restaurant and orders rasgullas from a waiter—one dish, then another, and another—the waiter will not stop him. The waiter will not say, "Sir, you have diabetes; you should not eat this much sugar." Instead, he will serve it because his goal is to sell, not to ensure the customer's well-being. Similarly, worldly pleasures focus on giving happiness, but a mother standing in the kitchen will refuse to give her child something harmful, even if the child gets upset.

Because a mother is concerned about her child's well-being. Similarly, God is not like a restaurant owner; He is like your mother. He is interested in your ultimate welfare, not in providing temporary pleasures. So, what is the ultimate welfare of a human being? This was the first question asked.

The second question asked was. 'Please enlighten us with the essence of all the scriptures, so that we can get our inner-self pure.' By listening to scriptures, we get our inner-self pure.

Their third question was, "Paramatma comes on this earth taking different incarnations, enlighten us about them". Because we have heard about them in the scriptures and from many great men. So, tell us about those incarnations.

Doing the fourth query, they asked about the objective behind Shri Krishna avatara. Why did God himself take birth on the earth?

Their fifth question was why do Paramatma do different leelas? Why does He take birth on this bhoo-tala? What a jeeva does is krida and what Paramatma does is known as leela.

Many people say, Bhagavan also had to pay back for His karma as He got hurt by an arrow and Karma always pays back. But, the truth is Bhagavana never has to pay back for Karma because

He never does a Karma! He does Leela! In Geeta ji also he has cleared the fact that 'जन्म कर्म च मे दिव्यम्' my birth and Karma both are divine, they are not laukik (worldly).

They are not like those of a common man. The they are not worldly 'अनायासेन हर्षात् क्रीयमाणा चेष्ट सा लीला' **('anāyāsena harṣāt kriyamāṇā ceṣṭā sā līlā')**. In this way they enlightened about the word 'Leela' which says 'that which has no purpose but is only the manifestation of eternal bliss. Therefore, Bhagavan hasn't to pay back for Karma and He doesn't take birth on this earth to pay for His Karma. A jeeva has to take birth on earth because of his Karma, but Bhagavan comes here because of his kindness. So, bhagavana has stated this very clearly in Geeta and the one who gets this, becomes free of his own Karma.

Prabhu does different leelas. Why? Just to give us a way to get salvation by remembering His leelas when He is not here in the human form. It is so because His names, forms, leelas and virtues all are the forms of His own. The name of God is as mighty as God Himself and so mighty are His virtues and leelas. His katha also is as mighty as Him, i.e. it has His all virtues namely, opulence, chivalary, famdom, prosperity, knowledge, vairagya, that's why Gopis say in Gopi Geetam

तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनं कविभिरीडितं कल्मषापहम् ।
श्रवणमङ्गलं श्रीमदाततं भुवि गृणन्ति ते भूरिदा जनाः ॥

tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanaṁ kavibhir īḍitaṁ kalmaṣāpaham |
śravaṇa-maṅgalaṁ śrīmad ātataṁ bhuvi gṛṇanti te bhūri-dā janāḥ ||

Gopis say "Prabhu! Your katha is as mighty as you!

In Subodhini ji, Shri Mahaprabhuji says, "the six virtues of Paramatma are also present in His katha." And therefore here, Rishi Shaunak and others wish to listen to leelas of Bhagavana.

"He does so beautiful Leelas that everyone likes them regardless their age and situation. Whether a jeeva is in childhood, adulthood or in the old age, or he is a Brahmachari (celebate), a gruhastha (a householder), a Vanaprastha (forest dweller) or a sanyasi (ascetic), he/she likes Shri Krishna charitra (the tale of Krishna Avatara). It is so beautiful that it enchants everyone! So, please tell us about those Leelas.

Their sixth question was, "Where did dharma take refuge after Bhagavana departed to His holy abode? Because scriptures tell us about two time periods – avatara kaal and anavatar kala. Avatara kaal is when God is present on Bhoo-tala (earth) in the form of an incarnation and when He is not present on bhoo-tala (earth) is the anavatara kaala. During the Avatara kaala Dharma resides in the shelter of God. But they asked, 'where do dharma reside during the anavataara kaala. Tell us about that place so that we will take it's refuge. And only then we can follow the true dharma.

There is a story in Bhagavata ji that when Shri Krishna was about to leave this earth for His holy abode, Uddhava ji was with Him. He requests with folded hands and eyes filled with tears in his quavery voice that, "Prabhu! How would we feel you after you will leave this earth? How would we live without our Krishna?" Then it is said that Bhagavana told him that I am embracing this Bhagavata Katha with all my holy virtues. So, when I am not here, just take refuge in Shrimad Bhagavata Katha, you will feel like I am here with you." So, in this anavataar kaala, Bhagavan himself is present here in this Bhagavata katha. Reading, understanding and listening Shri Bhagavata ji gives the joy of experiencing Him.

So, when they asked all these questions, Soota ji answers-

स वै पुंसां परो धर्मो यतो भक्तिरधोक्षजे ।
अहैतुक्यप्रतिहता ययाऽऽत्मा संप्रसीदति ॥

sa vai puṁsāṁ paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje |
ahaituky apratihatā yayātmā samprasīdati ||

What is that which is needed for the well-being of human beings? Suta ji says, it is doing pure Bhakti of Him. They told it 'अहैतुकि' 'अप्रतिहता' **('ahaituki' 'apratihatā')**, i.e. purposeless devotion and continuous devotion.

If I say in the words of the 'Bhakti-Sutra' by Narad ji then it is 'तैलधारावत्' **('taila-dhārā-vat')** i.e. like the flow of oil. Narada ji tells in the Bhakti Sutra about the nature of bhakti. He says, 'प्रतिक्षण वर्धमाना' **('pratikṣaṇa vardhamānā')** i.e. it increases every moment. There are three acharyas who have defined bhakti. 1) Shandilya muni, 2) Narada ji and 3) Vyasa ji.

Defining Bhakti Shandilya Muni says, 'सा परानुरक्ति ईश्वरे' **('sā parānurakti īśvare')** "The ultimate affection to God is Bhakti" Narad ji has written Narada Bhakti Sutras. Incredible are those sutras. They are worth to read and in them he described Bhakti as 'सा तु अस्मिन् परमप्रेमरूपा' 'अमृतस्वरूपा च' 'यल्लब्ध्वा पुमान् सिद्धो भवति, अमृतो भवति, तृप्तो भवति।' **('sā tu asmin parama-prema-rūpā' 'amṛta-svarūpā ca' 'yad labdhvā pumān siddho bhavati, amṛto bhavati, tṛpto bhavati')** It is the ultimate love, affection! The one who gets it gets all the achievements, the ultimate satisfaction'।

The third definition is given by Vyasa ji, which is also accepted by Shri Mahaprabhu ji, 'माहात्म्य ज्ञानपूर्वस्तु सुदृढ़: सर्वतोऽधिक: स्नेह इति भक्ति: ।' **('māhātmya-jñāna-pūrvas tu sudṛḍhaḥ sarvato'dhikaḥ sneha iti bhaktiḥ')** and through this bhakti only the ultimate kalyana (well-being) of a person can be achieved rest in this Kali-yuga nothing can get a person the ultimate welfare.

Good deeds are there to be done and they will bring happiness but if one cannot handle that happiness, it will be the reason for the aberration of him. So, don't consider yourself successful if you get happiness instead consider yourself successful when you can make that happiness work for bhakti and the happiness of God. Don't you want your happiness to be the reason of the happiness of others? So, keep checking for it. So, what Mahaprabhu ji considers the most important thing for a Vaishnava? It is to make your happiness the reason for the happiness of Shri Thakur ji. If you do it, your life is successful.

Everyone goes to God to ask for happiness, but what if He wants to be happy? And when He thinks to get some happiness, He goes to get seva from the sevaks of Shri Mahaprabhu ji thinking that he will take care of my happiness. Whole of the world goes to Bhagavan to ask for happiness but the sevaks (devotees) of Shri Mahaprabhuji are those to whom Bhagavana goes for happiness. Paramatma goes to the homes of Gopies as they think of His happiness.

So, after this talk of the ultimate kalyana (welfare, well - being), they discussed many other questions. Further, they asked the third question about various avataras (incarnations) that bhagavana takes on this bhoo-tala (earth). They told to explicate the stories of those avataras taken by Him. Explaining the word avatara, they explained it to descend from higher realms is avatara. Understand three words: Bhagavana (God), avatara (incarnation) and devata (Deity).

In Hinduism, many people say there are 33 crore bhagavana (God) but, they are not bhagavana, they are devatas (deities). So, there are three words, devata, avatara and Bhagavana. They all are different. So, there are not many Bhagavanas, Hinduism says 'स्व' **('sva')** There is only one God and He appears on the earth in the form of devatas, in the form of 'ansha' – a part, kala – a phase or a shape or a form, 'avesha' – a zeal, amuck. He manifests in the form of devata and comes in the form of avatara. But who should be worshipped? Whom should we venerate? See, we must respect all! Everyone should be respected. But there is a slight difference in the category of all these three.

Bhagavana has manifested himself in the form of devatas to achieve some works done on this earth. He manifests in the form of avatara to save this earth or for the good of devotees. Scriptures describe six types of avataras (incarnations) of God – 'anshansh avatara', anshansh means the part of the part i.e. the avatara that has a slight energy of God, second Anshavatara, the avatara has a part of energy of God , Avesha avatara – the avatara that shows a zeal of godly virtues at times, 'kala avatara' – the avatara has a god like phase or form, poornaavatara – God manifests in this avatara with his all virtues of Godliness and last Paripurna avatara, - God manifests with all his Godly virtues and reveals all that during his Avatara kaala. So, these six can be the form of avatara. But Shri Bhagavata ji says:

'एते चांशकला: पुंसा कृष्णस्तु भगवान् स्वयम्' ('ete cāṁśa-kalāḥ puṁsāṁ kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam') i.e. "All these are either parts or portions of the Supreme Person, but Krishna alone is the Supreme Lord Himself." And the third is Paramatma, who incarnates on the earth and it is 'Shri Krishna'

So, if we can understand these three categories, we understand the whole structure of Hinduism.

In Geeta ji too, Bhagavan has explained very beautifully that what would one get by worshiping gods, worshiping avataraas and worshiping paramatma. So, if we study Geeta ji or Bhagavata ji, there remains no confusion. As we have left studying our scriptures, we remain confused and that is the reason behind Hindus following superstitions. If Hindu people could read scriptures, they can get rid of superstitions then before considering anything they would ask about the reference of a scripture. No doubt we respect all and there must be faith but that faith mustn't spread superstitions. The faith must be according to our scriptures.

|| Shrimad Bhagawata ||

DAY - 3

In this pious and pure flow of Shri Bhagavata Katha we all are enjoying and experiencing bliss together. Here there are no categories among us! No one is the speaker and no one is a listener. We all are gathered here to do Satasanga. You listen and do your 'Shravana Bhakti' and by reciting Shri Bhagavata ji I am doing my 'Kirtana Bhakti' here. Here is a big conference of Bhakti. Here, no one is big or small, speaker or listener, as we all have Paramatma in our hearts. He is present in all of us and therefore He is the one who is the listener as well as speaker of this Katha. And the true Bhagavata Katha happens only where there is Paramatma at every place. There remains no one else except Paramatma. And when the one who is omnipresent marks His presence in everyone's heart, the Katha becomes a success and it is the only fruit that the Katha will give to us.

In the Mahatmya of Shri Bhagavata ji, the five fruits are described that a person can get after listening to Bhagavata ji. Of those five fruits, the first fruit is doubtlessness. The listening of Shri Bhagavata ji releases us from every doubt we have. So, Shri Bhagavata ji is the solution of all the doubts and confusions. It has the solutions of all the problems. But these problems cannot be addressed through direct answers, they can be obtained by keeping faith in it. Because every answer has another doubt in it and every answer gives rise to other questions. But when a person has faith, that faith gives the ultimate satisfaction. So, by listening to Shri Bhagavata ji a person learns to keep faith.

Therefore, it is said in Geeta ji too that 'श्रद्धावान् लभ्यते ज्ञानं' **('śraddhāvān labhyate jñānaṁ')**, i.e. only the person who has faith gains the knowledge, not a person in doubt. Therefore, Bhagavan has said in Geeta ji, 'नात्र संशय:' **('nātra saṁśayaḥ')**, don't be in doubt! Keep faith. And when a person keeps faith, his/her soul starts guiding him/her. Bhagavan has said in Geeta ji that 'उपद्रष्टाऽनुमन्ता च भर्ता भोक्ता महेश्वर: ।' **('upadraṣṭā anumantā ca bhartā bhoktā maheśvaraḥ')** the supreme soul in this body is also called the spectator, the permitter, the enjoyer, the great lord and the supreme self'. And in this way your soul becomes your mentor, your guide. So, the undoubtedness is the supreme fruit of Shrimad Bhagavatam. Fearlessness is also a fruit of it. When faith emerges within, fearlessness also emerges. The fear remains in mind only till it has a tendency to think that I need others. Someday someone will help me. A dependent person never ever gets happiness. It is also said in 'Manas' that 'पराधीन सपने हुँ सुख नाहीं' **('paradheena sapanehun sukh naahi')**. As long as there is dependence, there is no happiness. The day when one gets faith that God is with me, I don't have to bother for anyone else! I don't need anyone. The phrase 'I don't need any one' doesn't mean that we must spoil our behavior with others. The behavior must remain the same as Parmatama is present in everyone.

A Vaishnava cannot lose his wisdom, but he must always take the refuge of God. The one who attains His shelter attains fearlessness. Shri Bhagavata ji makes you get supreme love. Shri Bhagavata ji makes you attain grace of God and get Darshan of God. In this way they have discussed about the five fruits.

We have commenced listening to Shrimad Bhagavata Katha. While listening to this Katha you will wonder that you will unknowingly start having faith in Him. Gradually, Paramatma is entering in your heart in the form of faith. And when He will enter your heart through these words, you will find your attitude and aptitude changed.

So, this Bhagavata katha is like that only. It is said that 'मज्जन फल देखिए ततकाला । काक होहिं पिक बकउ मराला ॥' **('majjana fal dekhiye tatkaalaa | Kaak hohin pik bakaumaraalaa')**. The scriptures have praised its fruit as, "The crow becomes a nightingale and a heron becomes a swan". One has a bad attitude and the other has a bad aptitude. The crow never takes anything from anyone nor it does any bad to anyone but no one likes its voice, and it becomes a nightingale!

On the other hand, a Heron has a good aptitude. It behaves like a sage in meditation but it has a disturbing attitude. Its silence is also for ruination and violence. But when it takes the shelter of the katha, it also becomes a swan by its attitude.

There is a story of a daughter and her father. After the death of her mother, her father daily gives her some money to collect for her marriage saying, "keep it very safely dear, it is for your marriage". Years passed and the daughter was now young. one day the father says, "dear bring those money that I have given you to keep safe, I will spent it for your marriage". Then the daughter brings Shri Bhagavata ji. at every page of it there were money. Watching that the father says, "who keeps money in Bhagavata ji! What would happen if someone stole it? The daughter says, "father! This is Shri Bhagavata ji! a thief would never open it and if a thief would open it once, he would leave the habit of stealing. As it is the katha that changes both the attitude and aptitude of everyone. It is so divine that you won't know when you will get changed listening to it. You will know it from others!

Because knowledge is named as 'anjana' (collyrium)! The eyes adorned with collyrium can't see the collyrium. Only others can see it and praise it. Similarly, A person who applies the knowledge in his life don't know about it. But others feel the change and they say 'you have changed". After listening to the katha others can feel the changes in both your attitude and aptitude.

This is a divine story. You cannot remain unaffected.

So, Suta ji, Shaunak ji and other sages asked six questions. They asked for the way to ultimate salvation and got the answer that only Bhakti (devotion) can bring the ultimate salvation to a person.

Then they asked about the avatars i.e. incarnations that what avatars are taken by Him and how? Why Bhagavan incarnates on this earth? 'एते चांशकला पुंसः कृष्णस्तु भगवान् स्वयम् ।' **('ete cāṁśa-kalāḥ puṁsaḥ kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam')** Six types of avatara were discussed: Anshansh Avatara, Ansh Avatara, Avesh Avatara, Kala-Avatara, Poorna- Avatara, Paripoorna-Avatara.

They said about the twenty-four Avatara of God. All of which are inculcated in the name 'Paramatma'. When you add the numbers made by the Gujarati word Paramaatmaa, 'pa'

when written in gujarati looks like five, 'ra' in gujarati looks like two, 'maa' in gujarati looks like four and half, 't' (the half syllable) when written in gujarati looks like eight, and then again 'maa' written in gujarati looks loke four and half. All adds to a total of 24. So, in the name only, 24 incarnations are there and Paramatma comes on this earth in the form of different Avataras for their devotees only.

There is a famous stoy of Akbar and Birbal in this context. Once Akbar tricks Birbal saying that your Paramatma descends from heaven, but our Khuda doesn't descend. He sends Paigambers instead of coming himself. Therefore, our Khuda is mightier than your Paramatma. That time Birbal doesn't answer and thinks of answering him when the right time comes.

Then after sometime, Akbar was sitting in a boat with his only child in his lap. When the boat reaches in middle of the lake, Birbal tricks him and drops the child into the pond. Akbar gets shocked and starts screaming to save his child. Getting no help he himself dives in the pond and saves the child. After re-climbing the boat, he gets angry on Birbal, "Birbal! What's it? Have you gone mad? Why did you do that? What would have happened if He was drowned?"

Then Birbal says, "O king! I was answering your question! 'if anyone else would have drowned, you wouldn't save him yourself. You would have called someone else to save or you would have told me to save. But when your own child was in danger, you didn't wait for others. Similarly, Bhagavan incarnates here when His devotees are in danger. He doesn't wait for anyone. He himself saves His devotees.

Shri Thakur ji is bhakta-vatsala (he truly loves his devotees)

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्म संस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥

paritrāṇāya sādhūnāṁ vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām |
dharma-saṁsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge ||

i.e. "For the deliverance of the righteous, for the annihilation of the wrongdoers, and for the establishment of Dharma, I manifest Myself from age to age." So, when Paramatma sees His devotees in danger, he doesn't wait for anyone. He incarnates for His devotees and that is His grace.

Elucidating further they told that only the one who has taken His Charan-raja (the small particles of dust of His feet) is capable of understanding His Leelas.

Further, they asked other questions that can be divided into four catagories. The first was about Bhagavan. The second was about the author of Shri Bhagavata, the third was about the speaker of Bhagavata and the fourth was about the listeners of Bhagavata.

When Shaunak and others asked these four questions, Suta ji has told them the story of Vyasa ji's birth. He says,

द्वापरे समनुप्राप्ते तृतीये युगपर्यये।
जातः पराशराद् योगी वासव्यां कलया हरेः॥

dvāpare samanuprāpte tṛtīye yuga-paryaye |
jātaḥ parāśarād yogī vāsavyāṁ kalayā hareḥ ||

In the third yuga 'dvapara' of the present yuga cycle, the gnanavatar (the incarnation that will spread knowledge) of Bhagavana, Shri Vyasaji took birth from the womb of the daughter of Vasu, Satyavati who had that child with Sage Parashar. 'Hail Vyasa ji!' Sage Parashar is the father of Vyasaji. It was the time of the sunset at the banks of Shri Yamuna ji when the abandoned act happened. The act must have resulted in the birth of an asura but the Gnan-avatara of Bhagavana took birth on this earth. Why so? Shri Mahaprabhu ji says, '**घनाघननिभे सदा ध्रुवपराशराभीष्टदे।' (‘ghanāghana-nibhe sadā dhruva-parāśarābhīṣṭade’)** As it happened on the banks of Shri Yamuna ji, and Shri Yamuna ji granted the wish to Parashar ji. We say that Dhruva ji did the penance and Thakur ji gave the boon to him. Then there are many who do the penance but He don't bless them all with a boon easily. Why He gave Dhruva the boon so early? Shri Mahaprabhu ji says, '**ध्रुवपराशराभीष्टदे**' **(‘dhruva-parāśarābhīṣṭade’)**, as he did the penance on the banks of Shri Yamuna ji and did Shri Yamuna-Pana. Therefore Shri Thakur ji blessed him earlier than others. So, by the grace of Shri Yamuna ji Parashar got Vyasa ji as his son instead of getting an asura. And therefore, it is said that '**અજાણે અધર્મી નાહી ગયો તોય મા એ કર્યો ઉદ્ધાર**' **(‘ajaane adharmi nhaai gayo, to-ya maa e karyo uddhara’)** i.e. 'Shri Yamuna ji gives the salvation to a sinner too even if he bathes unknowingly in the river'. Such is the nature of Shri Yamuna ji. '**तव चरित्रमत्यद्भुतं**' **(‘tava caritram atyadbhutaṁ’)**, 'her nature is astonishing'. So,

'Yamuna ji has an ashtonishing nature and as she is the mother, she blesses all with her grace regardless of how their emotions are.

As Vyasa ji was born on an island which is called a dweepa in Sanskrit, his name is 'Dwaipayana'. He grew eating berries, so he is Badarayana and he was black in colour, so people called him 'Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa'. And, he elucidated Vedas for which he has the name 'Veda-Vyasa'. In this way, he has many names.

He is the author of seventeen Puranas. He has classified Vedas to make them easily understandable. He has also written the epic named 'Mahabharata' and it is said in the Sanskrit literature that all that is present in this world is present in Mahabharata and the thing that is not present in Mahabharata doesn't exist in this world. Mahabharata has all the subjects in it. It is indeed a wonderful book! But we all fell victim to the rumor that says don't keep Mahabharata at your home otherwise your home will become the battle ground. Ok then, you don't have Mahabharata at your home. Still, can I consider your home peaceful? So, instead of falling victim to such rumors if we read and apply the teachings of such books in our life, we can remain safe from many such things. So, it is not true that Mahabharata happens in one's life if he listens to it. Because it has the story of an entire family in it. It has many wonderful teachings. If you read whole of the Mahabharata, you will find it wonderful and astonishing.

If you look at the entire incident of Mahabharata, it seems that no one is to blame there! It is some trick of the nature. Dhritarashtra should become the King but as he is blind, Pandu becomes the King. But, due to Pandu's illness he dies. After Pandu's death they make Dhritarashtra the King until Pandu's son become eligible. But till Pandu's son becomes eligible, Dhritarashtra's own son Duryodhana also becomes capable of being a King. He also has all the qualities of a King. So, Dhritarashtra's mind gets a twist again. He thinks I am not capable but my son is! But according to scriptures and law only the son of a King can become a king. Therefore, son of Pandu, Yudhishthira has the right to be the King. From here, the nature takes an unexpected turn. Look, sometimes there is no one to blame, the situations are responsible. Many times, it seems that if elders don't care about their property and will, they often sow the seeds of conflicts among their children. They ultimately are responsible for the conflicts. In this way, disorganization leads to chaos.

Look at every incident of Mahabharata, you will see that how naturally occurring desires and ambitions leads to such a big battle; it is evident in every incident of the epic and if you see it closely, you will find they all are descendants of Vyasa ji. Then there is Bhishma ji! He did a single mistake only! He remained loyal to the throne not to his people. He remained loyal to the person who sat on the throne but didn't think whether the king is a well-wisher for His people or not. In the present years too, In the present times too, it happens that people are loyal to their political parties not to the people.

Many times, it is heard that Mahabharata happened because Draupadi raised her voice, but it also happened because of those who could raise their voice but didn't. Elderly people didn't utter a word when it was direly needed and that also caused the battle. We can interpret Mahabharata through many perspectives. Shrimad Bhagavata ji also has a brief story of Mahabharata.

Vyasa ji wrote Mahabharata. He authored 'Jaya- Grantha' (the book of victory). It is said that, it has one lakh shlokas (couplets). But still Vyasa ji is not satisfied fully. He can't feel the joy of writing it. It is said that you cannot be happy till you start doing the work for which you have taken the birth on this earth. So, Vyasa ji is not happy. Why is it so? It is because he has described and elaborated Dharma but he has not eulogized Dharma. The satisfaction can be achieved through bhakti only. Knowledge gives curiosity but bhakti gives satisfaction. Constant curiosity arises by knowledge. But, 'यल्लब्ध्वा पुमान् सिद्धो भवति अमृतो भवति तृप्तो भवति ।' **('yad labdhvā pumān siddho bhavati, amṛto bhavati, tṛpto bhavati')** "On attaining this, a human being becomes accomplished, becomes immortal, and becomes fully satisfied". bhakti only can give satisfaction.

Many times, people say, 'we have many things in our mind to ask but whenever we sit in front of you, we get overwhelmed and forget everything. Bhakti gives us satisfaction, and we get all our conflicts and doubts resolved.

Now, Vyasa ji is sitting absorbed in his own thoughts, he hears a distant voice.

'श्रीमन् नारायण नारायण नारायण, श्रीमन् नारायण नारायण नारायण' **('Shriman Narayana Narayana, Shriman Narayana Narayana.')**, 'Shriman Narayana...' chanting the name of Narayana, Narada ji was coming there. And then he enters Vyasa ji's ashrama reciting 'Narayana,

Narayan'. Whenever we listen God's name from a devotee, we feel joyful. And then, Vyasa ji welcomes Narada ji saying, 'Please come' and Narada ji was reciting 'Narayana, Narayana!

It is the first sign of grace of God when a devotee, sage, hermit or a great man comes to your house. The pious feet of sages are considered as pious as pilgrimages. It is said that whenever these pilgrimages appear at the home, all the negativities get neutralized. It is the bhavana behind it.

Gopaldasa ji has also said, **'તીર્થ સકલ શ્રીનાથ કીધાં, ચરણરેણુ સમાજ.' ('teerth sakal Shrinaatha Kidhaa, Charanrenu Samaj')** What was the need of pilgrimages to Mahaprabhu ji? See, Mahaprabhu ji didn't need Pilgrimages, but pilgrimages needed him. Because, when many people go to pilgrimage sites, they lose their sins there and when a great man goes there, the pilgrimages lose those sins to them. Therefore, Shri Mahaprabhu ji has given the pilgrimages their essence back.

So, when Narada ji meets Vyasa ji, he asks, "why are you looking disappointed?" Vyasa ji answers, 'I wrote so many scriptures but still I am not satisfied. Then Narada ji explains him very beautifully that, "Vyasa ji, no doubt you have elaborated and eulogized Dharma and have sung about the God's might but you haven't eulogized the Bhakti, love for God and love of God. You have recited the mightiness of God in many Puranas but you have not eulogized the story that shows pure and divine love of God. That story is present in Shrimad Bhagvata Pruana and you have not eulogized it.

Narad ji explains him in many ways that no matter how figurative language you use or how beautiful voice you have or how excellent words you use, Paramhansas do not enjoy that has no mention to the devotion of God. Devotees only enjoy the songs and literature that have the elucidation of Bhakti and love of God regardless of their music or words.

We have the story of Rupa Poriya as an example. He sung so badly that people told him to stop singing. When he did not sing, Shri Thakur ji didn't sleep and when asked, 'why are you awake?' Shri thakur ji said, "Rupa did not sing", then they asked to Rupa, "Why you did not sing?" He said, "People stopped me from singing as I sing bad". Then they told Shri Thakurji that, "He sings badly". Shri Thakurji says, "I listen to him as if he is telling a story. I don't consider it singing but I think he is telling me a story and I go to sleep". So, that is the love of God.

Shri Gusai ji also gave a shell to Tansen. Tansen said, "I understood that you gifted me with five hundred gold coins but why this shell?" Shri Gusai ji said, "Your music is the best but it does not have bhakti and therefore it values as a shell to me".

In this way, that, which has the elucidation of Bhakti in it gives joy to Paramhansas and others are 'तद् वायसं तीर्थं:' **('tad vāyasaṁ tīrthaḥ')**, like only the false places of spiritualism.

Narada ji told, "Vyasa ji look at me" then he said the story of his previous three births. He did not only preach but also inspired. "As an incarnation of God, I keep wandering in all the three worlds chanting His name. When did I attain this state? 'नारं अज्ञानं खंडयति इति नारद: ।' **('nāraṁ ajñānaṁ khaṇḍayati iti nārada')** expounding the word 'Narada' he says, 'the one who refutes ignorance is Narada". It is us who have made Narada ji a laughing stock. If someone gossips a lot, we say he is like Narada. He is not at all a laughing stock! Instead, he is a devotee who spreads the word of God and His bhakti regardless of his own disgrace! And therefore, he is in the center of all our scriptures. If you don't believe, you may see any of the scriptures. So, 'the one who donates knowledge always, is Narada'. Just read the 'Bhakti-sutras' written by Narada ji, you will start respecting him. There is no one who can teach you about Bhakti better than Narada ji. He isn't ordinary, He is also a Bhagvad-Avatara, the incarnation of God. He is the central figure of every Bhagavad-Leela.

So, Narada Ji starts saying, "O Great Vyasa ji, I was the son of a maid in my previous birth. I lost my father at a very young age. Once, many sages and great men came to our village for 'Chatur-Masa' (the period of four and half month in the rainy season, specially from Dev-Shayani Ekadashi to Dev-Prabodhini Ekadashi). People told my mother to serve them. In the night when they sit and do Satasanga, my mother used to serve them and I heard them while sitting in the back side. Listening to them, I couldn't realize when my heart became pure. I couldn't realize when I got myself dyed in the colour of Satasanga. Because, the great men are like the cloth dyed in raw color which dyes the other cloth permanently. No matter you try hard to wash it off, it never gets off. I couldn't realize when that ultimate knowledge, that I listened from them, touched and entered my heart.

Soon, the period of Chatur-masa ended. That time, I was a kid but I was not puerile. My behavior was mature and I had all the characteristics of a devotee. What are the characteristics of a true devotee?

The first characteristic is being reticent. The one who wants to be in devotion, seva must behave reticent.

The second one is the tendency to perform seva. The one who does seva after getting indications, is not a true sevak, but the one who has the natural tendency to do seva is a sevak.

The third one is the quality of being service-oriented. It is the tendency to understand the liking and disliking of the one whose seva you are doing. A sevak must have this tendency. It is an important characteristic. Do you know about the linking and disliking of the one whose seva you do? It is not a good thing to do as your own wish! Just think, you are doing someone's seva who has diabetes and you offer him sweets saying you must eat this! Is it acceptable? So, while doing seva you must think of other's liking and comfort!

The fourth characteristics is 'deenata' or humility. There must be humility in our nature. If there is any kind of arrogance or pride in the mind, you cannot sustain in seva for long. Even prabhu also finds ways to break the ego of His true devotees. He uses someone as an instrument for this. We consider the person has humbled us but we don't understand that it is indeed the Lord Himself who has shattered our pride. He does this to protect us from harm and to prevent our downfall.

Further Narad ji says, "I possessed all these four qualities. I didn't realize how quickly the four months had passed. It was time for the saints and sages to return, and I felt as if these great souls had become my very own spirit. How would I live without them?" I fell at their feet and pleaded, "Please take me with you. I cannot live without your company. I won't be able to survive without your satsanga(good company)." The sages said, "You are your mother's only son. If you come with us, who will care for your mother? We would take you with us, but on one condition: first, you must seek your mother's permission."

Naradji went to his mother, and she said, "Oh! You are my only son, the sole support of my life. If you leave, who will be there for me? I will not let you go." So, Naradji was not allowed to leave. The sages departed from there, but it seemed as though Naradji's heart left with their feet. His mind remained devoted to the feet of the sages.

Narad ji further says, "once my mother was bitten by a snake while moving from a cowshed. Although she was bitten by a snake, but as she fell, her hand accidently touched the tail of a cow and my mother got salvation."

Just consider, even the touch of a cow is capable of providing salvation. And that is why, much importance is given to cow service in our tradition. How useful is the cow to us? Rather than discussing this, we need to think about how useful we can be for the cow. In life, we should not simply act after considering how beneficial things and people are to us. There are certain debts of elements that we always carry on our shoulders.

Just as the debt to this Earth lies upon us, in our scriptures, many elements are referred to as mother. The Earth is called mother, the person who gave us birth is called mother, the river is called mother, and the cow is called mother. We carry the debt of all these elements. Therefore, instead of thinking about how these things have benefited me, we should think about how we can be useful to them during our life.

Thus, now, as his mother had passed away. There was no one to stop him. Narad ji says, "Now, there was no one left in the house to stop me. I was free. The bonds were broken. In my mind, it seemed as though God Himself had freed me from worldly ties."

When everyone in the home is in favour of your devotion towards God, express gratitude to the Lord, saying, "Everything favours my devotion." And when everyone goes contrary and no one maintain relationships, consider that the Bhagavan has set you free from worldly ties. You might have become entangled in worldly bonds, but Bhagavan has taken away the feelings of others towards you. Therefore, you will never face any form of bondage. This is the will of Bhagavan. Do not cause turmoil in your mind. Instead of regretting, "Why didn't this happen?", focus on the learning the lessons the life has offered. If things are favorable, express gratitude. If things are unfavorable, understand that the Lord has lessened your worldly attachments.

Narada ji began to reflect and started moving towards the northern direction. As he walked, crossing forests, groves, rivers, and mountains, he continued advancing. Eventually, he reached a large tree. Beneath it, he sat in meditation. In his meditation, Paramatma appeared and said, "Narad! In this lifetime, you will not attain me. The time of dissolution is near. Everything will be swept away in the deluge. When I will do this creation again, you will appear in the form of my incarnation." It happened exactly. The dissolution of the universe occurred, and when creation was reborn, Naradji manifested as Brahma's mind-born son. Say, "Jai Narad Bhagavana!"

In the form of the divine incarnation, Naradji's appeared. Now, he roams the three worlds, chanting "Narayana Narayana" and filling the air with the sounds of his vina. Narada ji then says, "Look, Vyasa ji! It is only due to pure devotion and the association with great souls that the love for God has manifested in me. It is through this influence that today I have taken birth as a divine incarnation, I roam the three worlds, singing the glory of the Lord, and my heart always remains filled with joy."

'Vyasa ji! you have Shrimad Bhagavata ji, the literary form of God, in your heart. It is within you and you need not to bring it from outside! You only have to bring it in the light, you only have to express the joy which is there in your heart in the form of Shri Bhagavata ji.' Thus, Narada ji tells Vyasa ji that "write Shrimad Bhagavata ji as it is the object of your birth in this world" and then he goes away reciting Narayana-Narayana.

Then Vyasa ji takes a holy bath in river Saraswati and sits in Samadhi (the eighth step of ashtanga yoga in which a soul can go out of the body and come back whenever he wants.)

Shri Mahaprabhu ji says that there are three types of language in Shrimad Bhagavata: Laukik (worldly) language, Parmat (spiritual) language, and Samadhi (transcendental) language. These three types of languages are present in Shrimad Bhagavata. '**समाधि भाषा व्यासस्य प्रमाणं तच्चतुष्टयम्**' **('samādhi-bhāṣā vyāsasya pramāṇaṁ tac-catuṣṭayam')**. Mahaprabhu ji accepts this transcendental language as authoritative.

Then, Vyasa ji takes his seat. It is said that Shri Ganapati wrote down the Shrimad Bhagavata. Vyasa ji, sits in a state of samadhi (deep meditative absorption), a series of events begins to unfold before him. He witnesses each episode of the Shrimad Bhagavata. The phrase '**ऋषयः मंत्रद्रष्टारः**' **('ṛṣayaḥ mantra-draṣṭāraḥ')** conveys that Rishis are the seers of mantras. So, Shrimad Bhagavata is not a creation but a revelation. In the scriptures, the word Rishi defines the one who perceives mantras in meditation. Thus, Vyasa ji did not compose Shrimad Bhagavata; rather, he experienced it. What emerged as the Shrimad Bhagavata was his expression of that profound experience.

Vyasa ji begins to see vivid visions of these events. One by one the events of the great battle of Kurukshetra from the Mahabharata starts unfolding before him. The war had ended, and the entire battlefield of Kurukshetra had transformed into an immense cremation ground. Severed torsos lay scattered in places; elsewhere, decapitated heads were strewn about.

Severed limbs and hands lay discarded. Heaps of corpses were piled high. The stench of rotting bodies filled the air in all directions. Vultures hovered high in the sky, tearing pieces of flesh from the fallen bodies and carrying them off. The harsh cries of crows echoed throughout. The entire atmosphere had turned gruesome and horrifying.

Amid the heaps of corpses, Ashwatthama was searching for someone desperately, moving one lifeless body after another. Millions of bodies were piled up there. That was no longer a battlefield; it had turned into a vast cremation ground. Through the mountains of the dead, Ashwatthama was searching for the body of his dear friend, Duryodhana.

Suddenly, he heard a whisper, 'friend!', It was Duryodhana. Ashwatthama ran towards the voice and when he reached there, he saw Duryodhana lying in puddle of blood and struggling for life. Bheem had broken his thighs with a mace. He was taking his last breaths and Ashwatthama gets shocked, "O my friend! What has happned to you! Who has done this to you?" Duryodhana told, "Friend! I don't have much time. I have a few breaths left. Would you fulfill my last wish."

Ashwatthama asked, "what's your last wish? Your wish will be fulfilled before tomorrow's sunrise. Just tell me what is it?" he said holding Duryodhna's hands.

Duryodhana said, "I want to see severed heads of all the five Pandavas before I die". The wicked one desires for evil only. Now, Ashwatthama did not have the strength to fight head - to- head. All the other Kauravas were dead. See! How the ego of a single person led many others to death. Still, Ashwatthama promised to bring the severed heads of all the Pandavas and throw them to his feet before the sunrise.

Shri Mahaprabhu ji says, "Ashwatthama is a chiranjivi (According to Puranas a Chiranjivi is a person who will die after the Kaliyuga Ends). He is remembered and worshipped, still why his intellect diverted? The only reason behind this is the food he ate. He was loyal to Duryodhana and was paid by Duryodhana for his services, which ultimately led him to eat the food that was brought by the money given by Duryodhana. It is the effect of that food. And Ashwatthama's intellect would remain the same till he has the effect of that food over him.

So, Ashwatthama started thinking of severing Pandavas' heads. As he didn't have the strength and courage to fight head-to-head, he thought of doing that in the night when they will be sleeping in their camp. He thought of doing a sin.

Here, when the Pandavas were going to sleep in their camp, Bhagavana came and asked them to discuss something important with them. Ashwatthama forgot the fact that no one can harm those who have the grace of God with them. Whatever the wicked do, but the one who have faith, always gets His support.

In another event of Mahabharata, Duryodhana says to Bhishma that you are not serious about the battle because you have not killed a single Pandava yet but, there are so many Kauravas who died. You are being biased Grandfather. Listening to this, Bhishma says, "I will battle fiercely tomorrow specially, with Arjun." Now When Bhagavana heared this, He lost his sleep.

He gathered everyone to discuss about saving Arjuna from Bhishma. They discussed for many hours and it was midnight when Bhagavana noticed everyone except Arjuna.

Bhagavana asked others, "Where is Arjuna?" They answered, "He is sleeping soundly in his camp." Bhagavana got angry that all of us are awake for him and he went to sleep? Let me awake him. Then He goes to Arjuna's camp and wakes him up saying, "Just get up!" Arjuna got up pressing his eyes and said, "Prabhu why are you here at mid-night?"

Then Bhagavan said "We are planning and discussing to protect you tomorrow. We are discussing it until now and all of us are worried and awake. But you are sleeping here soundly, why?"

Then Arjuna said, "The one, who is so lucky to have God awake for him, shouldn't get worried. He must go to sleep soundly. If he worries, he is a fool!

चिंता काऽपि न कार्या निवेदितात्मभिः कदापीति ।
भगवानपि पुष्टिस्थो न करिष्यति लौकिकीं च गतिम् ॥

cintā kāpi na kāryā niveditātmabhiḥ kadāpi iti |
bhagavān api puṣṭi-stho na kariṣyati laukikīṁ ca gatim ||

'Do not worry. Bhagavana is present there in Pushtimarga and is gracious. He won't let you go in laukika gati i.e. He won't let your birth spoil.

Here, Ashwatthama thought of the way to kill Pandavas and Bhagavana took them with him. Pandavas had five sons. Shri Krishna told them also to go with Him. But they denied His order. They didn't listen to Him and they went to bed in the place of Pandavas. At mid-night,

Ashwatthama sneaked into the camp of Pandavas. He entered with an open sword. He was so angry that he was constantly thinking of killing Pandavas. Anger always hinders with intellect. He didn't think twice before attacking them, he didn't bother about confirming that whether they are Pandavas or not and due to dark he couldn't see also.

He severed the heads of young sons of Pandavas who were sleeping, tied them into a cloth and took them to Duryodhana and said 'Friend, I fulfilled my promise!' I have brought the severed heads of all the five Pandavas. Duryodhana then says, "be quick! show them to me as I don't have much time!" As soon as he shows the heads to Duryodhana, Duryodhana cries and says, "Ashwatthama! what have you done? These were not my enemies. You left none to offer the after-death ceremony to us! These heads are of their sons, not of Pandavas. Repenting, he gives his life.

In the morning, Draupadi went to the camp to wake her children up. If there is any saddest sight in the world then it is the sight when a mother sees the funeral of her child. No mother in the world can see it. Now when Draupadi entered the camp and watched the severed bodies of her beloved children, she cried and called Krishna! She didn't call anyone else, she called for Krishna.

Scholars interpreted it in different ways. Why did she take only Krishna's name? Why not other's? She thought if there is any possibility of life in them, then the name of Shri Krishna will give them moksha. Because they were the Kshatriyas and their spirits will go to heaven when they would have died fighting the battle but if they die while sleeping their spirits won't get peace. Listening to the name of Krishna will bring them peace.

The second interpretation says that Draupadi thought that I have seen all these worldly people. When Duhshasana was taking my cloths off, all the said elderly people kept their head down with shame but no one stopped him. And when I called Dwarikadhisha, he immediately came to save me. So, only Krishna can save me and my children. No one is capable enough other than Krishna! That's why she called Krishna.

Bhagvana heard her and came running with the Pandavas. Witnessing the scene everyone filled with fear and anger. Arjuna took the oath, "I will behead the perpetrator of this crime. Lord Krishna pulled the reins of the chariot, and Arjuna was standing behind him. The chariot

thundered forward. Ashwatthama tried to flee ahead, with Lord Krishna's chariot chasing him. They caught him and Arjuna hold Ashwatthama by his hair.

It is written in the Shrimad Bhagavata that Ashwatthama was dragged along, just like an animal is dragged to be sacrificed. However, there is a significant difference between Draupadi in the Mahabharata and Draupadi in the Shrimad Bhagavata. In the Mahabharata, Draupadi sometimes exhibits pride, ego, and resentment. But in the Shrimad Bhagavata, everyone is viewed as a devotee, and everything is perceived from the perspective of devotion.

When she watches Ashwatthama being dragged, she speaks something we could hardly imagine. '**मुच्यतां मुच्यतां एष ब्राह्मणो नितरां गुरु: ।' ('mucyatāṁ mucyatāṁ eṣa brāhmaṇo nitarāṁ guruḥ')** She says "Release him, release him! He is a Brahmin and highly revered as a guru." The scriptures state that a Brahmin should never be given the death penalty. '**नितरां गुरु:' ('nitarāṁ guruḥ')**— being the son of a guru, he is also considered as a guru. The knowledge that Dronacharya did not gave to Ashwatthama, he imparted to Arjuna. Such immense grace of the guru has been bestowed upon our family. "How can we kill him?"

The scriptures say that a heinous criminal should be killed on the spot, but they also state that a Brahmin should never be given the death penalty. What should be done in such a situation? Draupadi says, "He is a guru. Secondly, he is a Brahmin. But more importantly, he is also someone's son. As a mother, how can I cause such sorrow to another mother? If you kill him, it won't just be his death—it will be the loss of someone's son. I know the pain of losing a son; I can feel it deeply. As a mother, how can I make another mother cry? This is impossible for me. Let him go."

Lord Krishna and the Pandavas got astonished. They fell in deep contemplation what should be done? On one hand, the scriptures decree that a heinous criminal should be killed immediately, and on the other hand, a Brahmin cannot be sentenced to death. While pondering this dilemma, Lord Krishna referred to the scriptures and said: "Insulting a Brahmin is equivalent to his death." Thus, Ashwatthama was humiliated—his jewel (mani) was taken away, and his hair was shaven off as a mark of disgrace. After this humiliation they set Ashwatthama free.

Ashwatthama is a Chiranjivi (a person who has a boon to live on this earth for long, till the end of Kaliyuga). Our scriptures say that the following are chiranjivi:

अश्वत्थामा बलिर्व्यासो हनुमांश्च विभीषणः ।
कृपः परशुरामश्च सप्तैते चिरजीविनः ॥

aśvatthāmā balir vyāso hanumāṅś ca vibhīṣaṇaḥ |
kṛpaḥ paraśurāmaś ca saptaite cirajīvinaḥ ||

Ashwatthama, Bali, Vyasa, Hanuman, Vibhishana, Krup, Parashurama, these seven are Chiranjivi.

And the eighth one is Sage Markandeya. He is alive enven today as he is also a Chiranjivi. Therefore, whenever someone in the Valalbha-Kula (family of Shri Vallabha) has a birthday, the worship of rishi Markandeya is done. It brings long life. They are the Vaidik Rituals.

If we analyze the Mahabharata war closely, it appears that there is no logical way for the Pandavas to emerge victorious. The Kauravas had several powerful and seemingly invincible warriors on their side. Ashwatthama, Kripacharya, Bhishma – Blessed with the boon of Ichha-Mrityu (death at his own will), making him undefeatable until he chose to die. With such warriors on the Kauravas' side, their victory seemed certain. However, the Pandavas' triumph was ultimately attributed to divine intervention, strategic wisdom, and unwavering faith in Lord Krishna. Those who have numbers and strength don't get victory, but those who have God on their side become victorious. So, even in life, do not consider numbers, strength, or status as the ultimate measures of victory.

Instead, reflect on whether God is on your side or not. True victory lies where righteousness (dharma) and divine support stand. When God is with you, no matter how powerful the opposition may seem, success is inevitable.

यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो यत्र पार्थो धनुर्धरः ।
तत्र श्रीर्विजयो भूतिर्ध्रुवा नीतिर्मतिमम ॥

yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇo yatra pārtho dhanur-dharaḥ |
tatra śrīr vijayo bhūtir dhruvā nītir matir mama ||

i.e. "Where Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, is present, and where Arjuna, the wielder of the bow, stands—there surely are prosperity, victory, well-being, and righteous wisdom." As said in Geeta ji that where there is Krishna, there is victory. So, just reflect every time about his

presence! Is God with me this time and in this situation? Think about him before any decision that, is God with me in this decision? When Duryodhana and Arjuna went to Lord Krishna to get His support, they noticed Him sleeping. Therefore, they sat by him. When Shri Krishna wakes up, He notices Arjuna first, He tells Arjuna to ask his need first. Now, this time Bhagavan tells them to choose between Him (without his arms) and His army.

Now, at that time Duryodhana thinks that 'Arjun must take Bhagavana on his side as what would He do without His Arms? And the army would be helpful to me'. As soon as Bhagavana decides to support Pandavas, Duryodhana feels relieved to get the army. An ignorant finds strength in numbers, but a devotee draws strength from God. Victory always goes where there is the strength of God. It is not worldly power or material resources that determine success, but faith in the divine that leads to true triumph.

Now, they have left Ashwatthama humiliated. Burning in the rage, Ashwatthama thinks, "I won't let my humiliators go'. He brings his Brahmastra out and starts thinking on whom should I use this? On Yudhishthira or on Bhima, who killed Duryodhna, or on Arjuna?" When we reflect upon it deeply a thought arises – How low can a person's mind sink when filled with sin? The perfect example of this is Ashwatthama.

Blinded by revenge and hatred he thinks—"We killed Arjuna's son, Abhimanyu, through deceit. But his wife, Uttara, is pregnant. The last seed of the Pandava lineage is growing in Uttara's womb. If I destroy Uttara's unborn child, the Pandava dynasty will come to an end." With this thought, Ashwatthama released the Brahmastra toward Uttara's womb. It was as if millions of suns had come to burn everything. Uttara began to burn in the fire of the Brahmastra, consumed by its unbearable heat.

Uttara has samskaras given by Draupadi. After her marriage, when Uttara comes to her home the very first time, Draupadi asks her, "To whom you will bow first?" she says, "I should bow to the eldest in the house first.' Then Draupadi asks, "Tell me, who is the eldest?" she answers, "Kunti ji is the elderly and Yudhishthir ji is also elderly." In this way, she tells about all the elderly people in the home. But then Draupadi says, "dear, I have a better experience of all these elderly people! When my cloths were being taken off they all set idle, only my Dwarikanath came to save me. So, never go to anyone else whenever you feel in danger, just take the shelter of Him, the shelter of Bhagavana.

So, when the Brahmastra started burning her womb, Uttara cried for help:

पाहि पाहि महायोगिन् देवदेव जगत्पते ।
नान्यं त्वदभयं पश्ये यत्र मृत्युः परस्परम् ॥

pāhi pāhi mahā-yogin deva-deva jagat-pate |
nānyaṁ tvad abhayam paśye yatra mṛtyuḥ parasparam ||

"O God! Help me" "O Supreme Yogi, Lord of Lords, Master of the Universe, protect me, protect me! I see no other refuge but You, where death surrounds on all sides."

In the first Skandha of Shri Bhagavata ji, the story of three people is there:

सुखावसाने इदमेव सारं, दुःखावसाने इदमेव ज्ञेयं ।
देहावसाने इदमेव जाप्यं, गोविन्द दामोदर माधवेति ॥

sukhāvasāne idam eva sāraṁ, duḥkhāvasāne idam eva jñeyam |
dehāvasāne idam eva jāpyaṁ, govinda dāmodara mādhaveti ||

Three stories are the part of the first canto of Shri Bhagavta ji: The one who remembered God in sorrow – Uttara, the one who remembered God in happiness – Kunti ji and the one who remembered Him in death? – Bhishma ji. 'पाहि पाहि महायोगिन् देवदेव जगत्पते ।' **('pāhi pāhi mahā-yogin deva-deva jagat-pate')** She pleaded to the Lord, saying: 'You are the protector of world, "O Lord of the Universe, protect my womb. Save my unborn child!" In that moment of danger, it was only God who could protect the child growing within her womb. Who sustains the child in the womb? Who nourishes it? Who awakens it? Who shields it? It is none other than the Supreme Lord. Then, Shri Krishna takes the form of a tiny thumb-sized figure (Vishnu) and enters in the womb of Uttara. The unborn child in the womb is burning by the fire of Brahmastra and Paramatma is moving around it with his Sudarshana Chakra to protect it, even the child in the womb is watching that someone is protecting me. 'परितः ईक्षति इति परीक्षित' **('paritaḥ īkṣati iti parīkṣitaḥ')** - the one who sees Paramatma everywhere is Pareekshita. In this way, Bhagavana safeguards Pareekshita in the womb, then he takes birth.

Now, if you see it differently, Bhagavana and Pareekshita have been in the same womb. So, Uttara is indeed blessed, for the Lord Himself has entered her womb.

In one instance, Lord Krishna showed His grace to Devaki, by allowing her to bear Him, the divine incarnation, as her son. In another, He bestowed His grace upon Uttara, protecting her unborn child from the devastating Brahmastra and ensuring the continuation of the Pandava lineage.

Both Devaki and Uttara were fortunate to receive the divine grace of the Lord in such profound ways, illustrating His love and protection for His devotees.

As soon as the child takes birth, it starts searching for the Parmatma who protected it in the womb. On the other hand, when Kunti comes to know about the act of God she gets overwhelmed. He is so grateful that he protects not only His devotees, but also their lineage. Now, Bhagavana has decided to return to Dwarika as He has settled all the things for Pandavas. While he was thinking about returning, Kunti comes to Him quietly and touches His feet. Shri Krishna gets shocked and moves backward saying, "Aunty! What are you doing? The Mother, the sister of mother and the sister of father are equally respectable. All the three are equal to the mother and O aunty as you are the sister of my father, please don't touch my feet.

Then Kunti ji says, "O Lord! please don't do this overwhelming drama before me now." And then Kunti ji offers a prayer that lasts till 22 shlokas. Shri Mahaprabhuji says, "The prayer offered by Kunti ji is the best. As she has remembered God in her state of Happiness."

नमस्ये पुरुषं त्वाद्यमीश्वरं प्रकृते परम् ।
अलक्ष्यं सर्वभूतानां अंतर्बहिरवस्थितम् ॥

namasye puruṣaṁ tvādyam īśvaraṁ prakṛteḥ param |
alakṣyaṁ sarva-bhūtānāṁ antar-bahir avasthitam ||

"I bow to you O lord!" Acharyas and great people say, "what can a jeeva offer to Bhagavana other than a Namaskara! What can you give to Him as He has given us all that we have. In-fact, he also gives us the chance to offer things to Him. We just pluck a flower and say I offered a flower to Him but we forget that the seed, the soil, the nutrients in the soil and the sunlight belongs to Him, the water the air and the process of its growth also belongs to Him only. We just pluck it and say I offered my flower to Him. So, you are a fool to think that it is yours. It only belongs to Him. We just pluck and offer it to Him. Just be grateful and don't be proud of a mere

act of putting it in front of Him. Just be grateful that He has given you the chance and intelligence to offer to Him. He has given you a lot and you have the chance to offer just a little of that. He is the sole giver. He could have got His work done by anyone on this earth but he has chosen only you to do it and for that just thank him.

Just be grateful to him that he chose your hands among millions available to him. Be grateful that among millions of the legs available he chose yours and apart having a lot of money he chose your pocket to fill and get offerings from it. The Lord is the ultimate benefactor; He is beyond any limitations. Does He ever fall short in His grace or kindness? No, He is complete and infinite. But the true blessing lies in the fact that He has chosen us. The Lord's grace is not determined by our worthiness, but by His boundless compassion. "O Shri Thakur ji , we thank You with all our hearts, for Your divine choice of us. What could we ever give You in return?" It is His grace and choice that makes us worthy.

The only problem with us is that we thank a lot to those who gift us a T.V. but we never thank the One who has given us eyes. We thank a lot to the person who gives us a car but we never thank the One who has given us hands and legs to drive that car. We may struggle to practice devotion, but surely, we can still express gratitude for the countless blessings we receive every day.

Kunti ji says joining her hands, "I offer Namaskar to you as I can't offer anything in return of the beneficence you have done to us. You have done countless favors to us.

Just reflect on your past if you can't feel gratitude towards Him. Just remember the ups and downs of your life. Many times, you may have felt that now it is the end, or there is no way out, or how would we move forward? But every time, Paramatma came in different forms and saved you. Parmatma won't make us remember Him. He will never say that I helped or I came or I was there to make that person speak or I extended my hand for help or I ran for you. It should be us who would have to understand that He has come to help us in the form of someone who helped us. We must have this understanding. If you would remember all those incidences, you would get feelings and appreciation for him.

We keep remembering our intelligence and hard work but we forget that the actual giver is the Parmatma, that supreme one!

'ઉપકાર તમારા ભારે રે ઓ શ્રીજીબાવા.
હું દેખું દેખું વારે વારે રે ઓ શ્રીજીબાવા.'

'Upkaara tamaaraa bhaare re O Shriji Baavaa,
Hun, dekhun vaare vaare re O Shriji Baavaa.'

i.e. Your countless blessings are upon us. You have saved us from many troubles.

We remember all the hardships that came our way and how God rescued us. We also recall how God saved us from this trouble and that trouble. We also remember all the difficulties we were delivered from. But we have no idea about how many troubles did God never even allow to reach us.

Kunti ji remembers, O God, from many difficulties you have delivered us, from that house of lacquer, from that poisoned food, and from that battle of Mahabharata. We would have perished if you were not with us. But you are so graceful that you didn't even let us know that you saved us.

O God! We don't have anything except Namaskara to offer to you. We don't have anything other than gratitude. Because everything we have belongs to You only.

Then, Bhagavana says, "You are the sister of my father. You are an elder one. You should bless me instead of venerating before me.

She says, "Prabhu! Now I have understood you. You are not any ordinary relative of mine. Till now I was in the illusion that you are my nephew, son of my brother. I have seen you with these worldly eyes till now. But when you protected the unborn child of Uttara in her womb, it was only then I understood that you are not any ordinary person. You are the Supreme One, you are the Paramatma. Because, this world is transactional. Worldly people help only as much as the transaction demands. But You are compassionate, not transactional. You do not look at our actions; instead, You help us based on Your own divine nature. Now, I have come to know You completely.

You are difficult to comprehend. Only those, whom You choose to reveal Yourself to, can truly know You; otherwise, no one can understand Your essence. You are the knower of every heart. Just as an ordinary person watches a play and believes it to be real, in the same way, You

perform such divine acts that we all become completely captivated by them. We cannot truly understand You. Oh Lord! May I ask You for one thing? When Kunti began to make a request, the Lord said, "Elders are meant to command, not to plead. They are not supposed to ask; rather, they must instruct what is required."

Lord! This matter is such that I cannot command it—I can only make a humble request. Because today, I do not stand before You as your aunt. Today, I stand before You as your devotee. It was my ignorance that I kept considering You a worldly relative."

The Lord says, "Command me. What do you wish for?" Kunti ji replies, "Not like that. First, place Your hand in mine and promise that You will grant whatever I would ask for." The Lord places His hand in hers and says, "Dear Aunt, I give you my word. Whatever you ask for, I shall grant it."

Then Kunti ji says -

विपदः सन्तु नः शश्वत्तत्र तत्र जगद्गुरो ।
भवतो दर्शनं यत्स्यादपुनर्भवदर्शनम् ॥

vipadaḥ santu naḥ śaśvat tatra tatra jagad-varo |
bhavato darśanaṁ yat syād apunar-bhava-darśanam ||

"May calamities befall us constantly, here and there, O Lord of the Universe, for by seeing You in those moments, we shall not have to see rebirth again."

' As soon as she asks for this, The Lord pulls His hands from hers. He says, "What are you asking for?" Kunti ji had asked, "Fill my life with many difficulties." Bhagavana says, " People tend to ask for the happiness, and you are asking for difficulties? Why?

Kunti ji says, " When there were difficulties, you were with us at every single step. But now when happiness has come, you are talking of going away from us. The happiness without you is the biggest sorrow for us. Everything may fall into place, and all circumstances may turn favorable, but the moment we forget You, there is no greater calamity for us than that. "Lord! we are so entangled in this worldly life that we are unable to detach ourselves from it. We lack the strength to break free from the bonds of this material world. And as happiness increases, so does our attachment to worldly pleasures. Our desires for material things grow, and our

worldly relationships expand. When happiness comes, even distant relatives show up, claiming to be very close, eagerly forming new relationships. That is why I ask for sorrow—not because I enjoy suffering, but because I lack the strength to let go of worldly attachments myself. However, when sorrow comes, worldly people naturally drift away from us. Then I won't have to worry about letting them go—they will leave on their own."

"Lord! Happiness without You is the greatest calamity for us." That is why, O devotees, always be mindful—when happiness increases, strengthen your connection with God even more. Increase your good deeds and do more and more seva. For as long as He is with you, everything is meaningful. Happiness will truly feel like happiness. But if He departs, even that very happiness will turn into sorrow. Kunti ji continues, "Lord! Happiness is only happiness as long as You are with us. We cannot safeguard happiness without You. If You leave, that very happiness will become the cause of our sorrow. In every moment of joy, grant us the wisdom, Lord, to use that happiness for performing good deeds and seva to You. Otherwise, that happiness itself can lead to our downfall. Skill can become a source of pride. Doesn't arrogance arise when one feels skilled or capable? Those without any talent or ability do not fall prey to pride. But when talent, capability, or special qualities appear, we tend to think we are superior.

So, Lord, I pray—either stay with us always or take away the happiness, skills, and comforts that could lead us astray. These are the only two ways. But if sorrow comes, we may feel disheartened again. Therefore, it is best that You remain with us even in happiness. And, that is the most blessed path."

Kunti ji adds further, "O Lord! every woman is bound for two places. There are two places where a Woman is bound (1) to her maternal relations and (2) to her in-laws. Every woman has these two places to be bounded to. And therefore, a woman is called as 'Duhita'. O Lord! I am bound to both Pandu Lineage and Vrushni lineage. I don't have the power and courage to break these bonds. O Lord! just do one thing! "Lord, I have one request—please do something for me! Take a sword in each of Your hands, sharp and unsheathed."The Lord asks, "What will I do with them?" At that moment, Kunti ji says, "With those two swords, cut off my two worldly bonds. Sever all my material attachments so that only my divine connection with You remains. Let my relationship with You be the only one that endures. Because, Lord, my third bond—my

eternal bond—is with You. If these two worldly ties are severed, then only my relationship with You will remain. Please, Lord, bless me with this grace!

In this way. Kunti ji has done a beautiful veneration, stuti. Then, Lord says, "now everything is in its place here. Now, I want to go to Dwarika. I am out here for a long time (Bhagavana has lived in Hastinapura for the protection of His Devotees). Now, He thinks the citizens of Dwarka would have been missing him. So, He says, "now I want to return",

As Lord Krishna was about to board the chariot, a messenger came running towards him. The messenger exclaimed, "O Merciful One! You have given someone a promise. You cannot leave just like that."Hearing this, something suddenly struck Lord Krishna's memory. Without any delay, he immediately stepped down from the chariot.

It is said that, during the Mahabharata war Lord Krishna had promised Bhishma ji that He will visit him to give darshan when Bhishma's end comes. When Bhishma ji took the woe that, "tomorrow one of the five Pandavas will not remain alive' and instructed Duryodhna to send his wife to him to receive the blessings of being 'Akhanda-Saubhagyavati' (a blessing that says may your husband live long) during the sandhya. Because, after receiving the blessing no one could harm Duryodhana by any means.

Lord Krishna comes to know it. He devises a plan to save Pandavas. Next day, He wakes Draupadi up early at dawn and takes her along with him. "Where are we going, Lord?" Draupadi asks.

"Do not ask any questions. Just do as I say," Krishna replies. He takes her to the Bhisma's camp and stops outside it. Draupadi hesitates and says, "But this is Grandfather Bhishma's camp. He is going to fight a fierce battle against the Pandavas today."

"That is exactly why I brought you here," Krishna says and instructs. "Go inside. Bhishma will likely be meditating. Bow at his feet, touch them with respect, and quietly take whatever he gives you. Do not speak, and if Bhishma asks who brought you here, do not mention my name."

Draupadi enters the camp quietly. Bhisma ji is sitting in meditation. Draupadi comes and touches his feet. Now, Bhisma ji thinks wife of Duryodhna has come and he blesses her

'Akhanda Saubhagyavati Bhava' and listening to this Draupadi gets excited and says, "Grandfather! You have shown great mercy." And here Lord just acknowledges it with a clap that, "She spoke!" listening to this, Bhisma ji opens his eyes and he asks in amazement, "Draupadi! Why are you here?" Draupadi then says, "You have given me the blessing, now you cannot kill any of the Pandavas.

Bhishma ji says, "But who brought you here during this time?" Now Draupadi recalls that the Lord has asked her not to speak. She feels puzzled and wonders about the answer to give. Feeling shy and hesitant, she replies with some embarrassment, "I came with my friend." Hearing this, the Lord takes off His black shawl and coveres His head with it.

Bhishma ji says, "I want to see your friend. Take me to her". He holds Draupadi's hand and goes out of his camp. Lord was standing there with his head covered with the black shawl. Bhishma ji goes there and takes the black shawl off from His head. "Hail Shri Dwarika Dheesh!" Watching Him there Bhishma ji starts weeping with tears saying "O Lord, You show great mercy to your devotees! You show great assiduity to protect and save them. Further, He asks with tears in his eyes, "O Lord! Would you promise me a thing?" Lord says, "Just command me grandfather!"

Bhishma ji says, "Lord! I ask for only one thing. Just as You have graced me with Your divine presence today, promise me that at the final moment of my life, during my last breath, You will appear before me with this same divine face." The Lord then gives His word, "Yes, Grandfather! I will come to give you my darshan in your final moments." Remembering this promise, the Lord stepped down from His chariot. Bhisma ji was lying on the bed of arrows. There were many arrows that were gone through his body. He had the boon of death at his own will, that is, he will die when he would wish to. It is said that he was waiting for the summer solstice i.e. the starting of the movement of sun towards north. There are two movements of sun 1) southward movement and 2) northward movement. Our scriptures say that if a soul leaves its body during summer solstice it gets Sadgati (it leaves for a good place after death). But scholars don't interpret it the same. They say Bhisma ji was not waiting for any particular occasion, he was not waiting for any particular time, but he was waiting for the one who is the controller of the time, he was waiting for Krishna.

The one who resided in Uttara's womb—Lord Shri Krishna—is the one Bhishma was waiting for. For Bhishma, it was his true Uttarayana—the auspicious moment of his final journey.

Shri Krishna arrives with the Pandavas to meet Bhishma. It is a truly divine and profound dialogue—one worth reading in the Mahabharata. What an incredible exchange of questions and answers took place between Bhishma and the Pandavas at that time! Bhishma lay there, his entire body pierced with arrows, his arms stretched out. Many of Arjuna's arrows had passed through him. His long white beard and flowing hair adorned his majestic presence, and his eyes remained closed.

Upon hearing the news of the Lord's arrival, Bhishma slowly opens his eyes. Before him was the divine and radiant face of Shyamsundar—Lord Krishna. Tears begin to flow endlessly from the corners of his eyes. "O Lord! You have come to fulfill Your promise—to grace my final moments and uplift my soul." With tearful eyes, Bhishma gazes upon the divine face of the Supreme Lord. In such a helpless state, what more could he do? He offers the flowers of his words as hymns of praise at the lotus feet of the Lord.

इति मतिरुपकल्पिता वितृष्णा
भगवति सात्वतपुंगवे विभूम्नि ।
स्वसुखमुपगते क्वचिद् विहर्तुं
प्रकृतिमुपेयुषि यद्भवप्रवाहः ॥

Iti matir upakalpitā vitṛṣṇā
bhagavati sātvatapuṅgave vibhūmni |
Sva-sukham upagate kvacid vihartuṁ
prakṛtim upeyuṣi yad bhava-pravāhaḥ ||

Bhishma composed 11 beautiful shlokas in praise of Lord Krishna. Interestingly, while most hymns or praises typically begin with the word 'Ath' (meaning "following"), this particular stuti (hymn) by Bhishma begins with the word 'Iti' (meaning "Thus" or "So it is").

Shri Mahaprabhu ji says in Shri Subodhini ji that the Sanskrit word 'iti' is the representation of the conclusion i.e. कर्म समाप्ति वाचक: **(karma samāpti-vācakaḥ)**. It translates as now my all the karmas are taking a refuge in you. Now there is nothing left to be done. O Lord! I have kept a thing to offer to you. I thought when you will come to fulfill your promise I will offer it to you

finally. The Lord says, "What is that thing? He says, "My mind- detached and free from all the desires. My intellect is devoted to none other than You. It has always remained immersed in You alone."

Lord Krishna says, "Grandfather! Do not speak falsely. If your intellect was truly devoted to Me, you would have stood with the Pandavas, not with the Kauravas." Bhishma replies with deep reverence, "Oh Lord! My intellect was devoted to You—that is precisely why I chose to stand on the opposite side. Had I been on the side of the Pandavas, I would not have been able to behold Your divine presence so directly on the battlefield. I stood on the opposite side so that I could constantly have Your darshan (vision) before me." He continues, "My mind, my intellect, and my vision have always remained fixed upon You and no one else. And now, I wish to finally offer this intellect at Your lotus feet." Bhishma ji further says:

त्रिभुवनकमनं तमालवर्णं
रविकरगौरवराम्बरं दधाने ।
वपुरलककुलावृताननाब्जं
विजयसखे रतिरस्तु मेऽनवद्या ॥

Tribhuvana-kamanaṁ tamāla-varṇaṁ
ravikara-gaura-varāmbaraṁ dadhāne |
Vapur alaka-kulāvṛtānana-abjaṁ
vijaya-sakhe ratir astu me'navadyā ||

In this universe, in all the three worlds, if there is anyone truly enchanting or beautiful, it is You. There is no one more beautiful than You, O Lord! You are like the Tamala tree—benevolent and ever-giving. Just as a tree, when struck with stones, does not retaliate but instead offers its fruits to the one who throws them, similarly, O Lord, though we have hurled countless stones at You in the form of our flaws and offenses, You have always responded by blessing us with the fruits of Your grace and mercy. Whenever You have given, it has only been fruits of kindness and compassion."

The Lord is adorned with a yellow garment as radiant as the rays of the sun. Just like in the Venu Geet, where the Lord is described wearing a mystical yellow garment (मायारूप पीतांबर) **(Maayaaroopa Peetambara),** here it is said as - 'कनक कपिशं वैजयन्तीं च मालाम् ।' **('kanaka kapīśaṁ vaijayantīṁ ca mālām')** - golden-yellow like molten gold.

However, in Bhishma's stuti, the Lord's yellow garment (पीतांबर) **(Peetambara)** is described as - 'रविकरगौरवराम्बरं' **('ravikara-gaura-varāmbaraṁ')** - yellow like the glowing rays of the sun.

Here, the yellow garment represents knowledge and divine illumination (ज्ञान रूप पीतांबर), **(Gyana rupa peetambara)** symbolizing the brilliance of wisdom and enlightenment. Whereas in the Venu Geet, the yellow garment signifies the mystical and enchanting beauty (मायारूप पीतांबर) **(Maayaa rupa peetambara)** of the Lord, captivating the hearts of devotees.

He remembers the events one by one and says in his Stuti -

युधि तुरगरजोविधूम्र विष्वक् ।
कुचललितश्रमवार्यलंकृतास्ये ॥

yudhi turaga-rajo vidhūmra viśvak |
kuca-lalita śrama-vāry-alaṅkṛtāsye ||

"In that battlefield, you were looking so beautiful while you were working hard to drive the chariot and sweated a lot, you were looking so beautiful while you were adorned with the sand blown up by the legs of horses! You were doing so much for Arjuna and O Lord! when you took the woe that You won't be using any arms during the war, I took the woe to break your woe. And see how merciful you are that you break your own woe to let your devotee fulfill their own."

'सपदि सखिवचो निशम्य मध्ये'

'sapadi sakhi-vaco niśamya madhye'

Just see o lord! 'स्वनिगममपहाय मत्प्रतिज्ञामृतमधिकर्तुमवप्लुतो रथस्थः ।' **('sva-nigamam apahāya mat-pratijñām ṛtam adhikartuṁ avapluto ratha-sthaḥ')** you broke your woe to keep mine.' It was like when Bhisma was releasing the arrows from his bow, one after the other, Lord's shields were getting broken. Many arrows were flying past giving abrasions to Him. But Lord was standing peacefully among those arrows with reins of the chariot in his hands and it seemed that the arrows were not hitting properly. Then Bhishma ji shot an arrow towards Arjuna. It struck the aim and Gandiva (the bow of Arjuna) was dropped. A wheel of the chariot broke and He saw Arjuna lying down on the ground. This time, Lord got angry and He took the

detached wheel in His hands, invoked Sudarshan chakra and ran to hit it on Bhisma ji. 'हरिरिव हन्तुमिभं गतोत्तरीयः' **('harir iva hantum ibhaṁ gatottarīyaḥ')** In Shrimad Bhagavata ji, Bhishma ji tells in his Stuti that, It looked like a lion is going to attack an elephant when Krishna was running to kill Bhishma ji. He was running towards Bhishma ji and his uttariya (a cloth worn on the torso) was flying in the sky.Bhishma ji also got scared for a moment! When a lion roars and attacks, anyone can get scared and so was the condition of Bhishma ji. So, Bhagavan ran like death comes to devour a man, but he didn't kill Bhishma ji. For this many reasons are stated by the scholars.

Shri Mahaprabhu ji says that though He ran to devour Bhishma ji but 'गतोत्तरीयः' **('gatottarīya')**, His uttariya (a loose long piece of cloth worn on the upper part of the body) fell on the ground. And Kaala (time) is said to be a Brahmin. Our scriptures command not to eat without uttariya and therefore Bhagavana did not kill Bhishma.

Another interpretation says, there must be a slight arrogance in Bhishma. He thought, I succeed in making him break his vow. I won and He lost. Now, Bhagavan thinks that if my devotee will die having such an arrogance, his spirit will face downfall and I won't allow this to happen. In this way, many people have interpreted this differently.

Here, Bhishma ji keeps remembering all the events one by one. 'सपदिसखिवचो निशम्य मध्ये' **('sapadi sakhī-vaco niśamya madhye')** many times we refer the incidence of Geeta ji that who listened to it, we say Arjuna listened to it directly, and Sanjaya has narrated it to Dhritarashtra. But if you observe the Stuti done by Bhishma, in that Bhishma says, "when Arjuna said -

'सेनयोरुभयोर्मध्ये रथं स्थापय मेऽच्युत।' **('senayor ubhayor madhye ratham sthāpaya me'cyuta')** This clearly indicates that Bhishma ji has heard those sentences by Arjuna and it clearly indicates that Bhishma ji has listened to Geeta ji. Further, Bhishma ji says in the hymn that, O Lord, you took away the lifespan of all the beings in just a glance. Such is the greatness of Bhishma ji.

If you analyse the stuti, you can say that Bhishma ji also heard it. And in the last, Bhishma ji remembers the event of Rasa-leela. Just think about it—Bhishmaji, a steadfast celibate who had never even entertained impure thoughts, not even in dreams, remembered the Gopis and the Raas Leela during his final moments. Reflect on how pure and divine that Raas Leela must

be! If you seek the greatest evidence of its supreme sanctity, you need look no further than Bhishma's praises (Bhishma Stuti).

While remembering the Raas Leela he says:

ललितगतिविलासवल्गुहास ।
प्रणय निरीक्षण कल्पितोरुमानाः ॥

lalita-gati-vilāsa-valgu-hāsa |
praṇaya-nirīkṣaṇa-kalpitorumānāḥ ||

Bhishmaji prays, "Just as the Gopis became completely absorbed in Krishna after He disappeared, losing themselves in divine madness and imitating His leelas —making Krishna the sole focus of their love, actions, and thoughts—may my love, actions, and thoughts also be similarly absorbed in Krishna."

Bhishma ji ponders over all the leelas of Lord Krishna. He remembers all those events. Generally, a person lying on deathbed remembers mistakes done by him during his lifetime. But one should remember the moments when he has felt the grace of God in his life. When a person has committed many sins, he only remembers those during his last moments. But the one who has done seva and Satsanga during his life, remembers the moments when he has felt the grace of God upon him. He remembers the moments when he has done kathas or satsangas or manorathas, or pilgrimages. He thanks God to give him a nice guru and the company of Vaishnavas.

Bhishma ji is also remembering all those moments when he had felt the grace and mercy of God. 'હે પ્રભુ ! 'સમય મારો સાધજે વ્હાલા, કરું હું તો કાલાવાલા.' **('He Prabhu! Samay Maro Sadhaje Vhaalaa, karun hun to kaalaa-vaalaa')** He says, I will recite your name for whole of the life and I will do your seva too. But when I would take my last breath, during the last moments of my life, I won't have control over my eyes, on my mind and on my tongue. I won't have control on my body. During that time O Lord! bless me that your name will be there on my tongue, bless me that you will shower your grace upon me.

O Lord! a person does not have any control over his body in his last time. He becomes dependent. But for the one who has done seva during his life, God blesses him during his last

time. God never lets him fall down spiritually. So, just keep faith on him. He will come and stand before your eyes.

God will not let spoil the final moments of the life of those who have listened Shri Bhagavata ji. Remember one thing, I am not making you listen to Shri Bhagavata ji only, but I am sowing it in your hearts, so that during your final moments on this earth you could get the fruit of this tree, i.e. Bhagavana. The thing that you have listened to can be forgotten but the thing which is sown, gets grow and that is the actual asset.

We never say we are listening to Shri Bhagavata ji we say it as we are doing Shrimad Bhagavata Rasa-pana, i.e. we are getting its essence. Because, listening to Shri Bhagavata ji is related only to the sense of hearing but Ras-pana is done through every part, every pore of the body.

In this way Bhishma ji's mind and heart took refuge in the lotus feet of Prabhu and he left this world. Say 'Hail Shree Bhishma ji Maharaj'. He has got the salvation.

Now, Bhagavana has returned to Dwarika. Residents of Dwarika celebrate His return as they were waiting for him since a long time. They celebrate his arrival pompously by playing Dundubhi (an ancient instrument), filling Kalasha (water pots) and making rangolis (designs made at the entrances with the powdered colors). He enters the palace of Dwarika. And he goes to His mother and Father.

He pays his respect to Vasudeva ji and Devaki ji. It is our culture and tradition to take blessings of elderly people before going for any good purpose and after the completion of it. Why? It is so because only getting a thing doesn't make you successful, you become successful when you can properly use it and it happens through the blessings. Otherwise, those things lead to your downfall. Therefore, you must seek blessings of elderly people time to time.

You must never miss the blessings of three : (1) of your mother, (2) of any great person, (3) of God.

He has returned to Dwarika, and they had a grand celebration. On the other hand, Arjuna is not feeling good because he thinks, "though we have got such a big empire, we are now the kings, we have got all the luxuries but now we don't have Lord Krishna with us at our home.

And therefore, I always say, during Bhagavata katha, to those who are young vaishnavas, that after the departure of your elderly people don't leave your thakur ji. Try to keep Him with your family, at your home. You could say to your grandfather or grandmother or in laws or to your parents that we may not be able to offer seva to him just like you but as we have done the Raspana of Shri Bhagavata ji, we promise you that we will do seva as much as we can but we won't let our thakur ji leave this home after you. We won't let Him out who is the bringer and cause of every happiness in this home. If all the young ones decide this, we will never have a new Swaroopa at our Haveli in our Gawal Mandali.

Here in Hastinapura, Arjuna is not happy because his happiness is Shri Krishna. He says his elder brother Yudhishthira that it is nice that we have got all these but Bhagavana is not here with us. I am not feeling happy. If you give me the permission, may I go to Dwarika? I want to be with Shri Krishna for some days.

Getting his permission, Arjuna leaves for Dwarika. On the other hand, when Arjuna is in Dwarika, Yudhishthira notices ominous signs, and certain indications suggesting impending misfortune. Many times, events occur in such a way that we sense something unusual is about to happen. Even when something good is destined to occur, there are often signs. So, Yudhishthira's mind is restless. It has been a long time, and yet Arjuna has not returned.

Now, after the war of Mahabharata had ended, Dhritarashtra was residing with the Pandavas. The Pandavas uphold their values and traditions. Every day, Yudhishthira visits Dhritarashtra and Gandhari to pay his respects. These are their values. Dhritarashtra, who once tried many schemes to destroy the Pandavas, now lives as their elder because there is no other alternative left for him.

Vidura ji thought it as a wrong. He goes to Dhritarashtra and says (Vidurji thought that simply explaining things wouldn't make them understand, so he decided to use harsh words to leave a lasting impact on their minds.), "you are behaving like a dog who gets dependent on others for some pieces of bread". Dhritarashtra gets deeply shaken and says, "No brother, Pandavas respect us!" Vidur ji says, "It is their courtesy that they are giving us such respect, but don't you remember that you have tried everything to kill them. Now, you have lost your right here. Just be mature, open your eyes!"

Listening to these words from such a great person like Vidura ji, something got awakened within them. And finding solitude one day, Dhritarashtra and Gandhari leave their home. One day in the forest, a wildfire breaks out and they achieve their deliverance.

In the morning, as part of his daily routine, Yudhishthira goes to pay his respects but finds that there were no elders in the house. A home without elders, in a way, feels empty. Its true prosperity and charm lie in its elders. In our culture, there are certain signs that define a fortunate person. Who is considered fortunate?

The first mark of a truly fortunate individual is, he has parents at home and receives their blessings daily. This is the foremost sign of a blessed life.

The second sign of a fortunate person is having at least one daughter in the family. Such a person is truly blessed.

The third sign of a fortunate person, one who is graced by the divine, is the ability to see God's mercy even in times of hardships. No matter how grave the crisis, if one can perceive divine grace amidst challenges, they are truly blessed.

The fourth sign of a fortune is having children who respect and obey their parents. Such a person is fortunate whose children honor their words and show reverence. In today's times, wealth and possessions may hold value, but if one's children are unhappy, true happiness becomes unattainable. The constant worry for them takes away peace. Therefore, a person whose children are respectful and obedient is truly blessed.

Finally, the ultimate sign of fortune is having Shri Thakur ji (Krishna) enshrined in one's home and the privilege of listening to the Shri Bhagavata Purana at least once in life. Those who experience these blessings are indeed the most fortunate ones.

Now, reflect on yourself within this frame. Many might find all five signs applying to them, some may have four, and others three. Yet, even if just one of these signs applies to you, consider yourself fortunate. These are the signs of a truly blessed life.

Yudhishthira's mind grew heavy with sadness. The elders had left the house, and Arjuna was also away, with no news of his return. Every day, Yudhishthira would stand on the terrace, gazing down the road, hoping to see Arjuna return.

One evening, during twilight, a chariot was heard rumbling in the distance. Its loud clattering drew attention, and as it came closer, Yudhishthira recognized the fluttering flag—it was Arjuna's chariot. But the person sitting inside did not seem like Arjuna. Yudhishthira ran towards the chariot, eager to see who was riding it. As the chariot came to a halt, Arjuna stepped down. Overwhelmed with emotion, he fell at Yudhishthira's feet, crying uncontrollably.

"Oh, Arjuna! What has happened to you? Where has your radiance gone? Did you eat a meal while leaving a hungry person unattended? Did you fail to protect a woman's honor? Did you disrespect an elder? Where has your brilliance disappeared?"

Through his tears, Arjuna replied, "Arjuna's brilliance was none other than Krishna himself. The land of the Yadavas has perished, and Lord Krishna has departed to his divine abode. O brother, the Lord has left us all and has returned to his eternal home."

When the Pandavas and Queen Kunti hear this devastating news, grief strike their hearts. Overwhelmed with sorrow, Kunti could not bear the separation. Crying profusely, she gave up her life that very moment. The Pandavas and Draupadi were left feeling desolate, wondering, "What is the point of enjoying worldly pleasures without the Lord by our side?"

Pareekshit has been crowned king, and he is married to Iravati. After ensuring the continuation of the lineage and entrusting the kingdom to the five Pandavas, along with Draupadi, embarked on their journey toward the Himalayas. Their entire journey is described in detail, where one by one, they relinquished their mortal bodies and attained salvation.

King Pareekshit ruled with righteousness, adhering to the values instilled by the Pandavas. He governed wisely, always seeking the counsel of learned Brahmins, and upheld dharma in every aspect of his reign.

One day, as part of his duties, King Pareekshit sets out on a tour of his kingdom. While on his travels, he came across a scene that deeply disturbed him.

Parikshit got astonished by what he saw. He saw, a bull standing on one leg, trembling, while beside it stood a cow, weeping. Nearby, a Shudra king was mercilessly beating the bull. This pitiful sight of the bull and the crying cow deeply disturbed him.

He thinks to himself, how can such a sin occur in my kingdom? Without hesitation, he captures the king and imprisons him. Then he asks, "Who are you to commit such a sinful act in my realm?"

The Shudra king folds his hands and replies, "I am Kali-Yuga. With Lord Krishna's departure to his divine abode, my time has begun. O King, you may stop individuals, but you cannot halt the march of time. The age of Kali has arrived."

Pareekshit declares, "You cannot reside in my kingdom!" To this, Kali Yuga pleads, "O King, I have sought your refuge, and it is a ruler's duty to protect those who surrender to him. Grant me a place to reside. I wish to remain under your protection."

King Pareekshit, being wise and discerning, realizes that while Kali Yuga brings many vices, it also has one great virtue that:

यत् फलं नास्ति तपसा न योगेन समाधिना ।
तत् फलं लभते सम्यक् कलौ केशवकीर्तनात् ॥

yat phalaṁ nāsti tapasā na yogena samādhinā |
tat phalaṁ labhate samyak kalau keśava-kīrtanāt ||

"In other ages—Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, and Dvapara Yuga—attaining the Lord required great sacrifices, rigorous penance, and fasting. But in Kali Yuga, one can achieve the grace of the Lord simply by chanting His name only. This is the one extraordinary virtue of Kali Yuga."

Being a discerning and wise king, Pareekshit reflected, Indeed, attaining the Lord has become easier in this age. In other eras, practicing dharma was simple, but finding truly righteous individuals was challenging. In Kali Yuga, practicing dharma is difficult, but encountering righteous souls is easier.

He says, "Very well, I grant you four places to reside." Then he assigns Kali Yuga four domains: Gambling (Dyuta), Kali Yuga resides in gambling. Wherever gambling takes place, the influence of Kali prevails. Even under the guise of celebrations, gambling brings discord. Where there is gambling, there will be conflict. Addictions (Vyasana) i.e. Addiction in any form, is a dwelling place for Kali Yuga. It weakens one's character and brings strife. Immorality

(Vyabhichar), Kali Yuga resides in immorality and unethical conduct. Wherever this prevails, discord follows. Violence (Himsa): Kali Yuga thrives in acts of violence.

Kali Yuga then complained, "These are all negative places. Can you not assign me a good place also?"

Parikshit replies, "Very well, I grant you a fifth domain: Gold (Suvarna). By this, I mean wealth acquired through unethical means or greed. Kali Yuga finds a home in ill-gotten gains."

Thus, King Pareekshit assigns Kali Yuga five places. This is indeed the age of Kali, where the heart is like a closed bud (kali). However, just as a bud blossom when the sun rises, so does the heart bloom when graced by the divine presence of Shri Mahaprabhu ji, the spiritual sun.

That is why it is said:

'જબ લગ યમુના, ગાય, ગોવર્ધન જબ લગ ગોકુળ ગૉવ ગુસાંઈ, તબ લગ કલિયુગ નાહિ.' ('Jab lag Yamunaa, gaaya, Govardhana, jab lag Gokul gaanva Gusai, tab lag kaliyuga naahin.') As long as there exist river Yamuna, Cows and Govardhana ji, along with village Gokul and Gusain ji, Kali-Yuga cannot harm a Vaishnava.

"As long as a soul is sheltered under the grace of the Shri Bhagavata, Kali Yuga cannot harm it in any way."

After assigning five places to Kali Yuga, the King returns to his kingdom. In the above story, The bull was none other than Dharma himself, who stood on one leg. The four legs of Dharma represent the four virtues: (1) Tapa (austerity), (2) Purity, (3) Compassion, and (4) Truth. Three of these legs had been broken, and only one leg stood firm. The cow that was crying was not just any cow, but symbolized the earth, which was grieving the decline of Dharma. When Dharma suffers, the earth suffers as well. The weight that the earth bears is not from human burdens, but from sin. To alleviate the earth's burden, we must reduce sin. While we may attribute issues like global warming and other human activity to this but the true solution is offered by Shri Bhagavata, which teaches that by reducing sin, everything else will fall into place naturally.

Once, after returning to his palace, King Pareekshit thinks to himself, I have been a king for so long, but I haven't even checked my treasure chest yet. With that, he decides to visit the

treasury. Upon opening it, he finds many necklaces, garlands, earrings, crowns, and jewels there. As he looks at them all, his eyes fall upon one crown in particular.

"Wow! What a beautiful crown! I am an emperor, How splendid would it look on my head!" he thinks. This crown had once belonged to King Jarasandha. When Pandavas wanted to do the Rajasuya Yajna, Lord Krishna, along with Bhima and Arjuna, had gone to battle Jarasandha and defeated him. As a symbol of their victory, Bhima had taken this crown. Lord Krishna had told Bhima, "Do not take this crown. It is an asset gained by unrighteousness'. Bhima had replied, "I won't wear it but I will keep it aside and remember how I defeated Jarasandha." Despite Krishna's objection, Bhima did not heed His advice. In this way the asset earned through unrighteous found a way there.

Now, seeing the crown, King Pareekshit's desire to wear it grows. As he places it on his head, he feels a rush of pride and he thinks "All the other kings go hunting; I have never gone. A king should at least have some grandeur! Today, I will go hunting," he decides.

When unrighteous wealth comes, it awakens the desire for violence. One step leads to another, and to cover one sin, another must be committed. This chain of sins begins to grow. The king, filled with the urge for violence, mounts on his horse and sets out for a hunt. As he ventures into the forest, he loses his way. His soldiers and ministers also lose their way, and by the end of the day, they are all wandering, with no path to follow. The king is now hungry and thirsty.

Eventually, he finds the hermitage of the Shamik Rishi at a distance. The rishi was deep focused in meditation. When Kali Yuga descends upon someone, even the most virtuous actions seem to be tainted by pride.

Shri Mahaprabhu ji explains that the king's first offense is entering the guru's place without permission. One must always seek guru's consent before approaching. Although a king has authority over his kingdom, when it comes to the God and the guru, one must approach them with humility and a heart full of devotion. One should never go to the Lord or guru with pride or the ego of worldly honor. In their presence, one should always be in the role of a humble devotee.

The king enters without permission while thinking himself as a king, and as he stands there, he thinks that the rishi might not want to offer him respect. So, he has closed his eyes and pretends to meditate, thinking that he could avoid the formalities. This arrogance and lack of respect made him see all dharma as a mere pretense.

As the rishi meditated with his eyes closed, the king, overcome with pride, decides to test him. Near the rishi was a dead snake, and the king picks it up, intending to drape it around the rishi's neck to see if he would react. The rishi, however, is deep in meditation and unaware of his surroundings. His mind is absorbed in the Lord, and he has no awareness of the physical world.

The king places the snake around the rishi's neck and leaves, but the rishi's son soon notices what had happened. He becomes furious. "How dare the king insult my father!" he thinks. Filled with anger, he takes some water, infuses it with a curse, and pronounces a harsh warning. "King Pareekshit , you have disrespected my father by placing a dead snake around his neck. I curse you that in seven days, you will be bitten by the Takshak snake, and you will meet your death."

A cry of despair echoed throughout the three worlds. The rishi soon realizes that his son has cursed the king and rushes to explain the gravity of the situation. "My son," he says, "

"The king has not committed any offense. It is Kali Yuga that has descended upon him. The king is righteous. Right now, someone must be sent to inform the king that his death is set to occur in seven days from today."

Here rise some questions. The first question is why seven days? The reason is that the snake was placed around his neck, leaving seven openings. Two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, and the mouth—these seven openings were left exposed. If it had been placed on his head, death of the king would have occurred instantly.

And the second question is why couldn't the curse be revoked? It was because the curse was pronounced from a place from where Ashwatthama had released the Brahmastra, a powerful weapon. The effect of this weapon was such that anything uttered from that place could not be undone. The influence of the Brahmastra was so strong that once it was invoked, it couldn't be reversed. This land still holds the power of that event. It is said that if you go to the

Kurukshetra battlefield today and listen carefully, you can still hear the sounds of the horses galloping. The echoes of the battle are still alive in that land.

King Pareekshit was sitting on his throne when he received the news that his death is inevitable in seven days. The Takshak snake would come and bite him, causing his demise. Why was his death attributed to the bite of the Takshak snake only? His death was already certain, but it was shown as caused by the snake's bite because King Pareekshit's body had been scorched by an otherworldly fire. It wasn't a normal body, for when he was in his mother's womb, Ashwatthama had released the Brahmastra, and his body was affected by its intense fire. Therefore, ordinary fire could not harm him. That's why the death by Takshak's bite was depicted.

As soon as he hears the news, vairagya (dispassion) awakens within him. I have seven days. I don't want to just die; I want to die peacefully. It's not death I seek, but remembrance of the Divine. And doesn't everyone have just seven days? Who has ever been granted an eighth?

Yes, Pareekshit knows that nothing will happen to him in these seven days. Our predicament, however, is that we don't even know about tomorrow. That makes Pareekshit more fortunate than us. He knows that he has seven days where nothing will happen to him. We, on the other hand, live in complete uncertainty, even about the next moment.

But we don't wish to leave this life by dying; we wish to leave it in true sense. We want to depart having attained God.

Dispassion has awakened in King Pareekshit's heart. Wearing simple bark garments, he has gone to the banks of the Ganges. Wherever he encounters great sages, he falls at their feet and asks, "How can I attain liberation in seven days?"

The sages say, "We have been meditating and performing penance for thousands of years, yet we have not attained liberation. How, then, can we help you achieve it in seven days?"

In life, there comes a moment when the yearning for a Guru arises—a true Guru, a Sadguru, who can guide us. When this longing comes from the depths of the heart, God sends someone, some Guru, to us. The moment we see them, we feel, this is the one destined to liberate me. That person is our Guru. A Guru is someone in whose presence we feel as though

we are being cleansed, as though we are bathing in the sacred Ganges. A Guru is one who, simply by their proximity, makes us acutely aware of our sins and inspires us to let go of them. A Guru is someone whose words, presence, and very being make us feel as though we have found God.

Where King Pareekshit was searching earnestly, suddenly, there appears, 'तत्राभवद् भगवान् व्यासपुत्रो...' **('tatrābhavad bhagavān vyāsa-putro...')** - none other than the divine Shri-Shukadev Ji himself. He has long arms extending to his knees, large lotus-like eyes, flowing locks of hair, a broad chest, and the radiant glow of divinity. At merely sixteen years of age, his youthful form reflects unparalleled spiritual brilliance. Seeing him, King Pareekshit feels an overwhelming sense of awe and exclaims, "Ah! My Guru has manifested before me! He is here!" Without hesitation, Pareekshit runs to him, falls at his feet, and clasps them in reverence.

As he held Shukadeva Ji's feet, Parikshit posed two heartfelt questions. His first question was: "What is the means for the ultimate welfare of all living beings?" This wasn't merely about his own salvation, but the well-being of all creation.

Because such a capable Guru has arrived—one who could guide not just an individual but uplift all of humanity—Parikshit frames his first question in a universal context: "What is the path for the ultimate welfare of all living beings?" His second question was deeply personal and reflective of his current state: "What should one do when death is near?"

Pareekshit isn't afraid of death itself, but his concern is, in his final moments, he might lose the remembrance of Shri Hari. His prayer echoes the longing of every devotee that 'ભક્તિ કરતા છૂટે મારા પ્રાણ, પ્રભુજી એવું માગું રે. રહે જન્મોજનમ તારો સાથ, પ્રભુજી એવું માગું રે.' **('bhakti karata chhute maaraa praana, prabhu ji evu maangu re. Rahe janamo janama taaro saatha prabhu ji evu maangu re...')** "May my life end while immersed in devotion to You, Lord. Let me always remain in Your company, lifetime after lifetime."

"O Lord, grant me Your grace that in my final moments, I may not forget You. Death is inevitable for everyone—that is no surprise. But when is life truly successful? When, in the final moments, the remembrance of God remains unbroken. May these eyes, before closing forever, see no other vision but Your divine face. May these ears, before falling silent, hear the

melody of Your flute. And may this tongue, before it stops uttering words, utter only Your holy name." This is the essence of a devotee's prayer—a heartfelt plea for God's presence and remembrance at life's most critical juncture, transforming the end into the beginning of eternal union with the Divine.

"O Gurudev! May I retain the remembrance of the Lord in my final moments. What does the grace of the Guru accomplish? Guru's grace becomes the lifeline when the soul finds itself incapable of spiritual practice. The devotion, chanting, and service performed by the Guru do not serve the Guru alone; they would be written into the destiny of the disciples who have surrendered to the Guru. At the last moment, the devotion and practices of the Guru come to rescue the disciple. The Guru's grace ensures that the disciple is embraced by the Lord. When a Guru accepts someone under their refuge, it is as if the Lord Himself takes the vow to save that soul in their final moments." This is the profound power of Guru's grace—a bridge to liberation, even when all other efforts falter.

'अब मोहिमा भरोस हनुमंता, बिनु हरिकृपा मिलहि नहि संता ॥' **('Ab mohimaa bharos Hanumantaa, binu harikrupaa milahi nahi santaa')** When Hanuman ji meets Vibhishan in Lanka, Vibhishan feels a deep assurance in his heart: "Now that I've met a saint, I am sure that I will meet the Lord. Ram will surely come into my life." The Guru is the herald of God's arrival in one's life. As it is said, 'जो सद्गुरु मिले हैं, तो भगवान जरुर मिलेंगे', **('Jo sadguru mile hain, to bhagavana jaroor milenge')** "If you have met a true Guru, you are certain to meet God."

King Pareekshit then asks, "What should one do when death is near?" Death, after all, is not a surprise. In the Bhagavad Gita, the Lord says:

'जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युः', **('Jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyuḥ')** "For one who is born, death is certain."What remains for us to decide is how we face this certainty. Are we to leave this world weeping and clinging, or with a smile and the joyful remembrance of the Lord? The choice is ours. Departure is inevitable, but how we live it—regretfully or blissfully—is within our hands. Do we depart with the sorrow of having left so much undone, or with the joy of having given our best? Will we leave lamenting the time wasted, or cherishing the moments we lived purposefully for our own upliftment? Every moment of life, every action, holds significance when viewed from the lens of our final hour.

Even for a week-long trip, don't we open a bag and start packing? Day by day, we add things we'll need, thinking, what if I forget something important? So, one by one, we prepare everything. Now think—this journey isn't just for a week; it's a journey to eternity. If you start packing now, it will serve you well. Otherwise, regret will follow: I forgot this, I didn't do that.

God gives opportunities to everyone, but it is a devotee's wisdom that turns those opportunities into life-changing moments. Everyone receives chances. It's not that they don't come. Perhaps you didn't get a chance to organize a spiritual discourse, but you might get the chance to serve in one. Opportunities are plentiful. For those ready to make the most of them, God provides them in countless forms.

But can we transform those opportunities into milestones in our lives?

Consider the span of a human life—60, 70, 80, or even 90 years. Yet, how much of that time truly belongs to us? Only those moments that we turn into cherished memories. If someone asks you to recount your life, would you remember mundane routines—I woke up at 7 every morning, had tea, went to the office? No. The moments you turned into meaningful experiences are what you'll recall.Now, think about these next seven days. Let us make these days ours—days we can claim as our own, days we lived with purpose and devotion. Time is running, but the moments we transform into spiritual milestones will stay with us forever.

Because whenever we will remember something, we will remember this Katha, as this time has become ours. These moments will be turned into memories. The time that we pass never belongs to us, we tend to forget that. But whenever we do something really good, it turns into a memory and it remains with us till our last day. We will remember it as 'ours'. The time which we spent for other's profit belongs to others. But the time which we are spending here, is ours and we will take it with us as good memories.

Here, Pareekshit has asked the question, 'What should one do when the death is near'.

Let us end the katha of the first skandha here.

'Krishna Kanhaiya lal ki Jay!'

'Shree Govardhana Nath ki Jay!

●

Second Skandha (Sadhana Leela)

Here, in this canto, Shri Mahaprabhu ji explains three Prakarana (topics) in total of the ten Chapters. Tatva-dhyanam, Rit-prasadam and Manan Prakaranam. Shri Mahaprabhu ji tells us about three Prakaranas.

Hearing the questions of a high intellect , Shri Shukadev ji gets happy. When you meet any great man then ask them such a thing in which they get a chance to remember God. Now Pareekshita Maharaj asked such nice questions that Shri Shukdeva ji remembered of Shri Bhagavata ji. And therefore, Shri Shukdev ji answers very happily -

वरियानेष ते प्रश्नः कृतो लोकहितं नृप ।
आत्मवित्सम्मतः पुंसां श्रोतव्यादिषु यः परः ॥

Variyān eṣa te praśnaḥ kṛto loka-hitaṁ nṛpa |
ātma-vit-sammataḥ puṁsāṁ śrotavyādiṣu yaḥ paraḥ ||

"O King! You have asked the finest question." If Shrimad Bhagavatam were to be described in one sentence, it is the journey from a question to Krishna. Just as every question inherently contains Krishna, the essence of the query itself is Krishna. If one does not understand Krishna, He stands before them as the question itself. And when He is understood, no solution is comparable to the one He provides.

Reflect upon this: Is Krishna a question for you or a solution? The journey of Shrimad Bhagavata begins with a question and concludes in Krishna. It starts with an enquiry and finds its ultimate fulfillment in Him.

'वरियानेष ते प्रश्नः' ('variyān eṣa te praśnaḥ') That question is supreme," said Shukadevji, praising the king's question., "O King! You have asked the finest question." While addressing various kinds of questions, Pareekshita emphasized, "What should one do when death is near?" Responding to this profound query, Shukadevji began to speak.

तस्माद् भारत सर्वात्मा भगवान् ईश्वरो हरिः ।
श्रोतव्यः कीर्तितव्यश्च स्मर्तव्यश्चेच्छताऽभयम् ॥

Tasmād bhārata sarvātmā bhagavān īśvaro hariḥ |
śrotavyaḥ kīrtitavyaś ca smartavyaś cecchatābhayam ||

"Those who seek fearlessness must engage in the remembrance, listening, and glorification of the Lord. Only God has the power to grant us true fearlessness. Relying on this world will always leave one in fear—fear of losing what we have, fear of things being taken away, or fear of things not happening at the right time. For every person and object in this world, fear lingers in the human mind. But what is God like? 'Abhayam Sattva Samshuddhih'—He is the giver of fearlessness. Therefore, those who desire freedom from fear, must take refuge in the Lord."

It is often said that the greatest fear of a human being is the fear of death. Yet, forgetting death often leads us toward sinful actions. Therefore, one must always remember that one day, I have to leave this world.

Once, a merchant lived in a village who had never performed any virtuous deeds. In his old age, he thought, "Let me visit a wise guru and receive some good teachings." When he met the guru, he asked for guidance. The guru replied, "You have come too late. By tomorrow morning, you will no longer be alive. Tonight is your final night. You have wasted much of your life doing nothing worthwhile." Hearing this, the merchant got a feeling of deep regret. He reflected, "I have spent my entire life without doing any good deeds. I have given no charity, served no one, nor engaged in any righteous acts. All I have done is indulging in desires, anger, greed, jealousy, and attachment."

This realization brought him face-to-face with the reality of his life and the value of time.

The merchant left the ashram, still absorbed in his thoughts, when suddenly a beggar approached him, saying, "Sheth ji, please give me something." The merchant, who had never given alms before, thought, "This is my last night. Let me give." He took out some money from his pocket and gave it to the beggar.

When he returned home, he noticed that the meal served to him was bland, with no salt in the lentils. On any other day, he would have thrown the plate in anger, but today he thought, "This is my last night. What's the point of getting angry?" He ate everything as it was, without complaint.

He spoke lovingly to everyone at home. Normally, his presence would make everyone anxious because he would get angry at everyone for the smallest reasons. But tonight, he refrained from expressing anger and remained calm. Later that night, he lay down to sleep, expecting it

to be his last. However, when morning came, he woke up—nothing had happened.

The merchant thought to himself, "This Guru deceives people with false teachings and scares them unnecessarily. Let me go confront him." He rushed back to the Guru and exclaimed, "You give false advice that could frighten someone to death! You said it was my last night, and I would die by morning. Look, I'm still alive!"

The Guru calmly replied, "Do you think I want you to die? My intent was never to end your life, but to end your evils. Reflect on what happened. When the thought of death entered your mind, all your bad habits and wrongdoings disappeared. You gave charity, controlled your anger, spoke lovingly to others, and let go of your attachments. You didn't die, but your vices did."

The Guru continued, "The thought of mortality kills a person's sins and awakens their virtues. That is why one should always live with the remembrance of death."

The Lord alone is the giver of fearlessness. Then many questions are addressed here, ranging from the tales of history to the mysteries of creation. When asked about the process of creation, it is explained in Bhagavata ji that from the Lord's navel emerged a lotus, and from that lotus appeared Brahmaji. This profound concept is elaborated upon in the scriptures. In just four verses, known as the "Chatuh-shloki Bhagavat," the Lord provided essential teachings. Various discussions about creation's marvels are present here, describing the countless types of creations brought forth by the Lord. Each reflects His divine will and creative power, showcasing the depth and grandeur of His cosmic plan.

Brahmaji, upon his creation, looked in all directions, becoming Chaturmukha (four-faced). He wondered, "Where have I come from?" Searching for his origin, he entered the stem of the lotus but could not find its end. Emerging back out, he saw only water everywhere. In that vast expanse, he heard a sound resembling the bursting of bubbles: *"Tap-tap-tap."* The sound, perceived as divine guidance, urged him toward penance (*tapas*).

Brahmaji sat down to perform penance. When the Lord was pleased with his devotion, He imparted the essence of Shrimad Bhagavata in four verses, known as the "Chatuh-shloki Bhagavata."

In Vedanta, there are four principal concepts—Brahma (the Absolute Reality), Jiva (the individual soul), Jagat (the universe), and Maya (illusion). These foundational elements are also addressed in the Chatuh-shloki Bhagavata.

The various schools of thought in Vedanta, such as Dvaita (dualism), Advaita (non-dualism), Vishishtadvaita (qualified non-dualism), and Shuddhadvaita (pure non-dualism), all stem from interpretations of these four principles. Each philosophy seeks to explain the nature, origin, and interrelations of Brahma, Jiva, Jagat, and Maya, forming the basis of their doctrines and spiritual outlook.

Vyasa Ji wrote the Brahmasutras, and anyone who writes a commentary on these Sutras is called an Acharya. An Acharya, who establishes their philosophy by integrating the teachings of the Vedas, Bhagavad Gita, Brahmasutras, and Shrimad Bhagavata into one coherent vision, is regarded as an authority in Hindu philosophy. They are the ones who establish their doctrine through a unified understanding of these scriptures.

The first principle discussed is the nature of Brahman. What is Brahman like? Who is He? While explaining this, the Lord Himself spoke and clarified the essence of Brahman -

अहमेवासमेवाग्रे नान्यद् यत् सदसत् परम् ।
पश्चादहं यदेतच्च योऽवशिष्येत सोऽस्म्यहम् ॥

Ahamevāsamevāgre nānyad yat sadasat param |
paścād aham yad etac ca yo'vaśiṣyeta so'smy aham ||

Explaining the Swaroopa of Brahman, Bhagavana says, '**अहमेव अग्रे**' **('ahameva agre')** – When there was nothing, I was there, when there is everything, I am there and when there will be nothing, only I will remain. This is what we know as Brahman'.

When there was nothing, I was. Everything that exists now is simply a manifestation of me in names and forms, I am the underlying essence of everything. When everything ceases to exist, only I will remain. This is the nature of Brahman—the eternal, formless, and all-encompassing reality.

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत् किञ्चित् जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्य स्विद् धनम् ॥

īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ yat kiñcit jagatyāṁ jagat |
Tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā mā gṛdhaḥ kasya svid dhanam ||

In the Isha-Upanishad, it is stated: "This entire universe is the dwelling of the Lord. Brahman alone manifests as the world. Brahman is full of bliss, the world is devoid of bliss, and the individual soul experiences only limited bliss. This is the vast nature of Brahman." 'અખિલ બ્રહ્માંડમાં એક તું શ્રીહરિ, જૂજવે રૂપે અનંત ભાસે.' **('Akhila Brahmanda ma ek tu Shri Hari, joojave roope anant bhaase')** Additionally, it is said: "O Lord Hari, You pervade the entire universe. You manifest as the infinite, beyond any form or limitation."

'रूपनामविभेदेन जगत्क्रीडति यो यतः ।' **('rūpa-nāma-vibhedena jagat krīḍati yo yataḥ')** The Lord, assuming various forms, performs His divine play (Leela), revealing the essence of Brahman. In this way they talked about Brahman. They talked about the jeeva, jagata, and maya (individual, world and illusion). In this way, in the second skandha of Shri Bhagavata ji, the ten characteristics of Shri Bhagavata ji are discussed.

Now, Puranas have five characteristics and a Mahapurana has ten. Now, how can we accept this book as Shrimad Bhagavata ji? How could we differentiate it from others? What are the characteristics that differentiate this book from others? So, the Skanda purana describes the characteristics of Shri Bhagavata ji as:

यत्राधिकृत्य गायत्री वर्णयन्ते धर्म विस्तरः ।
वृत्रासुर वधोपेतं तद् भागवतमिष्यते ॥

Yatrādhikṛtya gāyatrī varṇayante dharma-vistaraḥ |
Vṛtrāsura-vadhopetaṁ tad bhāgavatam iṣyate ||

How can we consider it as Shrimad Bhagavata ji? The Skandha purana says, 'यत्राधिकृत्य गायत्री' **('yatrādhikṛtya gāyatrī')** - The book that starts with the Gayatri. That is the first characteristic of Bhagavata ji.

जन्माद्यस्य यतोऽन्वयादितरतश्चार्थेष्वभिज्ञः स्वराट्
तेने ब्रह्म हृदा य आदिकवये मुह्यन्ति यत्सूरयः ।
तेजोवारिमृदां यथा विनिमयो यत्र त्रिसर्गोऽमृषा
धाम्ना स्वेन सदा निरस्तकुहकं सत्यं परं धीमहि ॥

Janmādy asya yato'nvayād itarataś cārtheṣv abhijñaḥ svarāṭ |
Tene brahma hṛdā ya ādikavaye muhyanti yat sūrayaḥ ||
Tejo-vāri-mṛdāṁ yathā vinimayo yatra tri-sargo'mṛṣā |
Dhāmnā svena sadā nirasta-kuhakaṁ satyaṁ paraṁ dhīmahi ||

That starts with the Gayatri mantra. 'वर्णयते धर्मं विस्तरः' **('varṇayate dharma-vistaraḥ')** that which has the description of Dharma' and 'वृत्रासुर वधोपेत' **('vṛtrāsura-vadhopeta')** i.e. that which has the story of the killing of Vritrasura.

Shri Bhagavata ji is considered a Mahapurana, not just a Purana. Why? Because, a Purana is identified by five characteristics, whereas a Mahapurana is characterized by ten. From the third canto to the twelfth canto of Shri Bhagavata ji, the description of all ten characteristics of a Mahapurana can be found. These are the tenfold divine leelas of the Lord. So, Shri Bhagavata ji is referred to as 'दशलीलायुतं सदा' **('daśa-līlā-yutaṁ sadā')** It is stated by Shri Mahaprabhu ji that Shri Bhagvata ji has the ten leelas of Bhagavan. What are these tenfold leelas, and what are the ten characteristics? They are elaborated upon as follows.

अत्र सर्गो विसर्गश्च स्थानं पोषणं ऊतयः ।
मन्वन्तरेशानुकथा निरोधो मुक्तिराश्रयः ॥

Atra sargo visargaś ca sthānaṁ poṣaṇaṁ ūtayaḥ |
Manvantareśānukathā nirodho muktir āśrayaḥ ||

So, starting from the Sarga Leela from the third canto, the ten characteristics given are: Sarga, Visarga, Sthana, Poshana, Uti, Manvantara, Ishanukatha, Nirodha, Mukti, and Ashraya. These tenfold divine leelas are elaborated upon in Shri Bhagavata ji. Therefore, Shri Bhagavata ji is not an ordinary Purana but a Maha-purana.

Here, let us rest the story of the second skandha.

'Shree Govardhannath ki Jay'
'Shri Vallabhadheesh ki Jay'

'**सर्जनं सर्गः**' **('Sarjanaṁ sargaḥ')** in 33 chapters the sarga leela has been described. Mahaprabhu ji explains the two types of Srishti (creation) (1) the closed creation and (2) the free creation. That is daivi sarga and Asuri sarga. As Mahaprabhu ji describes in Pushti-Pravaha-Maryada Bheda (an spiritual treatise) that Bhagavana is the one who has created many kinds of creations. In those creations some are Pravaha – Srishti, some are Maryada- Srishti, those who need to follow some rules of dharma, and some are Pushti- Srishti, who find joy in serving the Shri-Anga (The divine body or we can say divine statue) of Prabhu.

In this way, bhagavana has created many types of creations. And therefore, there exists the diversity not differnce.But people find it problematic that 'how someone other is different from them!'. But the truth is God creates diversity and that is the beauty of this world. Many times, people feel about the hosroscope that the pandit has not matched ours properly. The Btahmana may have matched it in a hurry. But the truth is, the unity lies in the diversity, the essence of unity lies in diversity. The matching of horoscopes never implies that both the people must be same or both of them should convince on the same thing. Rather, the matching implies the contrast of characteristics. And it is always like that only!

If the wife is impatient, the husband remains calm. If the husband is hasty, the wife takes it slow. If one likes spicy food, the other prefers mild flavors. This diversity is the true beauty of the world. The only understanding needed is to joyfully accept this difference. At home, when everyone has different preferences, the plate is filled with variety. If everyone only liked khichdi, that's all you'd have. Someone loves puris, someone prefers potato curry, another enjoys eggplant curry, and someone else loves chutney—this is how a complete meal is created. This is the beauty of life. We often mistake this for conflict, but it isn't. All it takes is the realization that others can be different from us. This diversity brings joy and richness to life. Imagine if this variety didn't exist—life would be dull and monotonous. If everyone in the world liked the same color, how drab and unattractive the world would seem!

You all wear variety of colors in the Katha! See how beautiful it looks! This is the very essence of the world.

Today, people strive to make the world one, believing that everyone should think alike, feel alike, and like the same things. This very approach leads to more conflicts. God created diversity, and to bring unity to the world, it is not necessary to make everyone the same. Instead, it is important to accept that others can be different. Once this acceptance comes, unity will naturally follow.

However, if we force everyone to be the same, it will only result in greater conflicts. Just as the beauty of the world lies in its diversity, so does the beauty of a family or a household. Embrace differences, and you'll see harmony bloom.

The true essence of being modern is not merely about using mobile phones or computers, nor is it about wearing short clothes. Being modern means having the ability to embrace and respect others' thoughts wholeheartedly. A truly modern person does not see someone with differing opinions as an enemy. Differences in thought are natural, and only those with intellect think differently. Those without intellect rarely have thoughts worth differing over. Take democracy as an example. In a parliament, debates and disagreements occur. These are not signs of dysfunction; they are the lifeblood of democracy, where every voice is heard, every thought is valued. If everyone thought alike, humanity would lose its vibrancy and creativity. Thus, the diversity of thoughts and opinions is essential.

Children do what they are instructed about, it is alright but when they take each and every decision after asking parents, parents get irritated. But, we have problems in everything they do. If a baby doesn't speak, people want it to speak. And when it starts speaking, people want it to be silent. When they do something as they wish, we say they are not doing anything. And when they do, we say they are not asking us. Then, what should they do! What is the definition of dependency or independency? It is the fact that every intellectual person has their own thoughts and ideology.

Similarly, in families, individuals must learn to provide support without becoming a hindrance. A wise person should be like a tree that supports the growth of a vine, not like a dense tree that stifles growth around it. Elders should be a source of encouragement and development for the younger generation, not a restriction. At the same time, the youth must recognize that the guidance of elders is not a constraint but a foundation for their progress.

A balance must be struck between independence and reliance. Elders should foster an environment that supports growth, while the younger generation should leverage this foundation to achieve greater heights. This symbiotic relationship ensures mutual development and harmony. Ultimately, we must move beyond the mindset of "bondage" and embrace the spirit of "relationships." Bondage is about suppressing others to fulfill our desires, whereas relationships are about sacrificing personal interests to preserve and nurture others' emotions. Ask yourself: Are you fostering relationships in your family, society, and community? Are you a foundation that supports growth, or are you an obstacle holding others back? Reflect deeply on this, for it shapes the essence of your contribution to the world.

It is a very delicate and fine line. These moments are like, it is the understanding of an intellectual personality.

See, knowledge can be delivered, imparted but wisdom is something that awakens within automatically, it cannot be imparted. It can be awakened in a person through knowledge. Where to sit, where not, when to speak when not, when to take help when not, when to ask and when not, these can only be answered through wisdom. It is a very fine line. So, never ask for knowledge from God and a guru instead, ask for wisdom. intellect is somewhat that everyone has but lack of wisdom in such intelligent people creates discomfort for others. That is why, before seeking your own happiness, take a moment to observe the faces of your family members. Am I finding happiness at the cost of someone else's sorrow? A truly wise and educated person is the one who can read the emotions of others. Reading books and scriptures is good, but can you read the minds of your loved ones? Have you ever learned to read their expressions?

When a car is stuck in traffic, shifting to forward gears is important, but using reverse gear is equally essential. Often, we forget this. We think reversing the car is a sign of failure or humiliation. In most driving exams, people fail not in moving forward but in reversing. It's challenging to go in reverse, yet it is an integral part of driving. We must remember this. Now imagine a car without brakes or a reverse gear—how cautiously would you have to drive it? Life is much like this; it has no brakes and no reverse gear. You cannot go back, so every move must be made with care and foresight.

Notice another thing about cars: the windshield is large, offering a clear view of the road ahead, while the rearview mirror is small. This design teaches us an important life lesson. Focus primarily on the future while learning from the past. The small rearview mirror reminds us to glance back for awareness, not to dwell on it. Overlooking this balance can cause us to miss out on new opportunities and derail progress. Many lives get stuck in the past, constantly replaying what happened—"That day, this happened; they said this; I made that mistake." But what's done is done. Life demands that we learn to let go. The key to moving forward is to focus on the road ahead, guided by the lessons of the past but not shackled by them.

Many people come to me and complain, we cannot remember things. I say it is good to not remember because whenever you do it again, it seems new. Whenever you read the varta (stories of 84 and 252 vaishnavas), it seems new. And when you get to remember it, you often say I know this, now let us read further. It happens that when we get to remember something, we lose interest in that particular thing and we start thinking it as of lesser importance. We tend to think we know this, we know that and if we couldn't remember, we read it as new every time. Therefore, it is good to not to remember. Because, it is always difficult to forget, but easy to remember.

Respect might be forgotten, but insults are often remembered. Whatever the mind considers important, it holds onto. What you deem unimportant is what you tend to forget. So, if you ever find yourself forgetting something about God, consider it a sign that you did not give enough importance to Him, to His teachings, or to the lessons and stories meant to guide you.

Diversity is God's creation. If you embrace it, you will feel life beautiful. But if you view it as a source of conflict, you will always remain disheartened. Accepting differences with grace brings harmony, while focusing on opposition only breeds unhappiness.

Here now we rest today's katha.
Shri Goverdhan nath ki jay
Shri vallabhadheesh ki jay

|| Shrimad Bhagawata ||

DAY - 4

Yesterday we listened the Sarga Leela. The ten leelas discussed in The Second Skandha are told and discussed from the Third to Twelfth Skandhas of Shri Bhagavata ji.

Therefore, Shri Mahaprabhu ji also told in the Mangalacharana of Shri Subidhini ji that **'दशलीला युतं सदा' ('Daśalīlā yutaṃ sadā')** He, the Paramatma, always does these ten leelas. So, from the Third to Twelfth Skandha these leelas of Paramatma are described.

We discussed the Daivi and Asuri Sargas yesterday. Both these are the creation of Paramatma himself. Daivi Sarga means the Daivi jeeva. In Geeta ji too, both creations are discussed. We also discussed that the world has never been seen as conflicting but is always considered as an entity with diversity by the scholars.

The Lord made countless efforts to prevent the Mahabharata war, striving to ensure that this great conflict would not occur. He sought to avoid strife between brothers, making numerous attempts Himself to foster peace and reconciliation.

In the discussion of the Third Skandha, it is mentioned that when all other efforts failed, the Lord Himself said, "I will go and try to reason with Duryodhana. I will personally make an effort to prevent this war." People may claim that God instigated the war, placing blame upon Him. However, the truth is that the Lord made every possible attempt, until the very end, to avert the war.

In our narrative literature (Varta Sahitya), there is an incident where Krishnadas Meghan asks Mahaprabhuji, "Jayraj! What is dear to Prabhu, and what is displeasing to Him? What does Prabhu like, and what does He dislike?" In response, Shri Mahaprabhu ji stated, "Shri Thakur ji loves butter and, above all, He loves His devotees. As for what displeases Him, the Lord does not like conflict or smoke. This 'smoke' of discord is distasteful to Shri Thakur ji." That is why, at any home where Shri Thakur ji resides, there must be no conflict. Even if there are fewer material possessions in the house, it is acceptable, but devotees must avoid disputes in such a home. Shri Thakur ji does not like conflict. Harmony is essential in a place where the Lord is worshipped, as He finds joy in peace and devotion, not in strife.

Never ever assume that after closing the doors of mandir, He will not watch you. He is always watching you. He is listening to you all the time and therefore never ever consider him so naïve that He will sleep after you will close the doors. He is always watching you because Shri Mahaprabhu ji never establishes Shri Thakur ji at your home, rather he establishes Shri Thakur ji on you, on your very being. That is why Shri Thakur ji is with you all times, wherever you go, protecting you and guiding you. In Pushtimarga, this is why the phrase used is, **"Which form of Shri Thakur ji resides on you?"** rather than, **"Which form of Shri Thakur ji resides in your home?"** The emphasis is on Shri Thakur ji being ever-present on you, accompanying you in every moment of your life.

When He sat on the head of Shri Vasudeva ji, all the doors of the jail were opened and he found every way to go out. In the same way when Shri Thakur ji resides on our heads, we find all the solutions in our life.

Shri Thakur ji does not like conflict. That is why, whenever you are in Shri Thakur ji's service (seva), in the temple, in satsang, or anywhere where God's presence is felt, strive to avoid conflict. Endure, if necessary, but do not create discord. Endurance nurtures devotion and deepens your connection with the divine, whereas conflict erodes that devotion and diminishes the sanctity of your feelings.

Before the Mahabharata war, Shri Thakur ji makes every effort to avoid conflict and finally decides, "I will personally go to reason with Duryodhana." Duryodhana symbolizes the embodiment of sin, arrogance, and malevolence residing within Dhritarashtra. The Lord resolves to act as a messenger and try to convince Duryodhana, saying, "Grant the Pandavas

five villages—lands that hold no value to you, barren and unproductive. If you concede these, the war can be averted." With this intention, the Lord leaves for Hastinapur, determined to meet Duryodhana.

Duryodhana, in preparation for the Lord's arrival, makes elaborated arrangements to welcome Him, even preparing an extravagant feast with Chhappan-Bhoga. It is said that during this time, Duryodhana insultes Vidurji, leading Vidur ji to leave the palace and live in a humble hut on the outskirts of the city.

When Bhagavana arrives the entire town of Hastinapura gathers to welcome Him. The people stand in awe, eagerly awaiting His divine presence. Vidur ji also goes there and from a distance, he is silently gazing at the Lord. The townsfolk greet the Lord with great enthusiasm, chanting His praises and singing auspicious melodies. Amidst this jubilant scene, Vidurji and Sulabhaji observe from afar, their hearts overflowing with joy at the sight of the Lord.

As the Lord graciously accepts the greetings and reverence of the people, His gaze falls upon Vidur ji. A gentle smile graces the Lord's face as He acknowledges Vidur ji, radiating warmth and compassion. This subtle exchange spoke volumes, as if the Lord silently conveyed His deep understanding and affection for His devoted follower standing humbly at a distance.

Our Shri thakur ji always keeps smiling. Have you ever seen Shri thakur ji's face appear upset, angry, or downcast? Even in the Shreemad Bhagavata, no matter how dire the situation or how joyous the occasion is, the Lord's face always remains serene and cheerful—"Vadanam Madhuram" '**वदनम् मधुरं**' **('vadanam madhuram')** (the face is sweet). Those who belong to the Lord should also strive to remain perpetually joyful.

Even if you cannot always keep your heart or mind cheerful, at least keep a smile on your face. Writers often say that a smile enhances a photograph. If a simple smile can make a photograph beautiful, imagine how keeping a constant smile can transform your entire life into something beautiful.

Prabhu is accepting the warm greetings with cheerful demeanor and his gaze eventually falls at Vidur ji. At that moment, Sulabha ji turns to Vidur ji and says, "Listen", Vidur ji, "Yes, what it is?" She says, "I have a Manoratha (a desire to offer the happiness to Shri Thakur ji) that Shri

Thakur ji savor the raja-bhoga at our place. Vidur ji says, "This time he is the guest at Duryodhana's place, how come he take the raja-bhoga at our place? Sulabha ji says, "It just came to my mind and I told you."

Now, Shri Krishna has arrived at Duryodhana's palace and with patience and compassion He makes every effort to reason with him saying, "Duryodhana, relent, just give five villages to Pandavas, the war will be averted and countless lives will be spared". But when someone's intellect is clouded, even the words of the divine fall on deaf ears. As the saying goes: 'જા કો પ્રભુ દારુણ દુઃખ દેઈ, તાકિ મતિ પહેલે હર લેઈ.' **('ja ko prabhu daruna dukh deyi, taaki mati pahele har leyi')** (When the Lord decides to bestow severe suffering, He first takes away their wisdom.) When one refuses to heed the words of saints, devotees, elders, or even God, it is a clear sign that misfortune is imminent. A misguided intellect rejects even the advice of well-wishers. As the scriptures say: **'જહાँ સુમતિ તહાં સંપત્તિ નાના જહાँ કુમતિ તહાँ વિપદનિધાના. ('Jahan sumati tahan sampatti nana, jahan kumati tahan vipad nidhaana')** (Where wisdom prevails, there is prosperity; where misjudgment reigns, there is calamity.) **'बुद्धिनाशात् प्रणश्यति' ('buddhi-nāśāt praṇaśyati')** In the Bhagavad Gita, the Lord states: "When wisdom is lost, destruction is inevitable."

Duryodhan refuses to relent. He declares, "Not even the space on the tip of a needle will I give without a war!" Hearing this, the Lord, with great resolve, says, "Then let the war happen."

Then Shri Krishna prepares to leave. Duryodhana, trying to stop Him, says, "Wait, my Lord! I have arranged an elaborate feast for You—fifty-six delicacies have been prepared. Please dine before You leave." The Lord replies with a gentle yet firm smile, "One accepts a meal in two circumstances: either the host is dear to them or in need of food. Neither do I lack food, nor are you dear to Me."

With these words, Krishna gracefully declines, emphasizing the importance of sincerity and love over mere offerings.

'મન મિલે ઈષ્ટ મિલે, મિલે ભજન રસરીત,
તાહીં કે સંગ કીજિયે ખાન-પાન ઔર પ્રીત.'
'Man mile, isht mile, mile bhajan rasareet,
Taahi ke sang kijiye khaan-paan aur preet'

One must dine only there where the sincerity and love are present.

In our spiritual traditions, food holds immense significance. It is said that eating indiscriminately - anywhere, at any time, or without mindfulness - can cloud one's intellect and leads to poor judgment. Therefore, the principles emphasize consuming food with thoughtfulness, gratitude, and care and after offering it to God 'असमर्पित वस्तुनां तस्माद् वर्जनमाचरेत् ।' **('Asamarpita vastunāṃ tasmād varjanam ācaret')**, i.e. don't consume things that are not offered to God. It may happen that you cannot do like that, then try to eat the offered thing first in the day. First eat 'Prasadi Mishri' (the crystal sugar offered to God) or take the offered jari ji's jal (the water offered to God). The principles emphasize to see God everywhere. And it must happen that you see God in the smallest thing you see, but as a normal human being we can not do that but we can see Thakur ji's Swaroop first in the morning.

You can start your day with the darshan of Him. It is alright that you can not do it for whole of the day but your life will become heaven if you can do it the first thing in the morning. Now, Shri Krishna has said to Duryodhana that 'neither you are dear to me and nor I lack of food' then, where will he dine? Shri Thakur ji says to himself, "Raja-bhoga (the royal lunch) has long been ready. Turning to the charioteer Daruk, He instructs, "Take the chariot to Vidur Kaka's home." Obeying the Lord's command, the divine chariot made its way to Vidurji's humble abode.

Sulabha ji has gone to bathe and Vidur ji is chanting 'श्री कृष्णः शरणं मम' **('śrī kṛṣṇaḥ śaraṇaṁ mama')** turning his beads. That moment, someone knocks the door.

Now, just think you are sitting in the drawing room and chanting the mantra and the doorbell rings, you open the door and surprise! You see Thakur ji standing in front of you! How happy you will be! So, Vidur ji is also overjoyed seeing Thakur ji at his door! He feels eternal joy and calls Sulabha, "O Sulabha! See Thakur ji has come to our home. His eyes have been stuck to Shri Thakur ji's face and his intellect is instructing him for arrangements. What to do now? Sulabha comes running to them. They arrange for the seating for Shri Thakur ji and ask Him to be seated.'આ જ ગોપાલ પાહુને આયે, નીરખી નયન અઘાયરી, કે નીરખું કે ટહેલ કરું, એકો બનત ન ઉપાય.' **('Aaj Gopaal paahune aaye, nirakhi nayana aghaaya ri, ke nirkhun ke tahel karun, eko banat na upaaya.')** (Today, Gopala has come at my home as a guest. What should I do, should I keep seeing him or should I make arrangements for him).

They make Him seated on the seat and they themselves take seat on the floor near Him. They are so lost in Him that they are not doing anything else. They have a strong desire to see Him that they are not blinking their eyes too! Having tears in their eyes they are feeling grateful, "O Lord, You are truly the fulfiller of your devotees' desires — 'ભક્તેચ્છાપૂરક' **('Bhaktecchā-pūraka')** they said with heartfelt reverence. "We had no means, no status, no resources to offer anything worthy of You. Yet, in Your boundless compassion, You graciously chose to fulfill the wishes of Your devotees. You find some pretext or another to manifest their heartfelt aspirations. Such is Your divine grace."

"You were not here for Duryodhana; we now understand that Your grace was meant for us," they thought as they gazed intently at the Lord. Time seemed to stretch endlessly, their eyes fixed on Him, unblinking and overwhelmed. An entire hour passed, yet their gaze remained steady, unshifting. Shri Thakur ji, observing their silent reverence, thought to Himself, it seems today I am destined to fast! Though He had come to partake in their offering, no words of invitation or discussion came forth. Finally, unable to resist, breaking the silence, Shri Thakur ji gently says, "Kakaji! Is there any food in the house? I am very hungry," Vidurji, startled and overwhelmed, exclaims, "Oh, Lord! Today truly our heartfelt wish has been fulfilled." However, they have nothing prepared for the occasion. In their eagerness, they ran hastily to fetch something. According to the well-known story, they return with bananas. Vidurji's gaze remains fixed on Shri Thakur ji as Sulabha ji begins peeling the bananas. In her devotion-filled distraction, she accidentally discards the fruit and offers the peels to the Lord. So engrossed is she in her love and reverence that she forgets which hand to extend, discarding the banana itself and offering the peel instead.

Shri Thakur ji accepts the peels with a smile, thinking to Himself, I will later speak of such devotion in the Gita that:

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।
तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमश्नामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥

Patraṃ puṣpaṃ phalaṃ toyaṃ yo me bhaktyā prayacchati |
Tadaham bhakty-upahṛtam aśnāmi prayatātmanah ||

"Whoever offers Me with loving devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water, I joyfully accept and partake of that offering, given with devotion by a pure-hearted soul."

But first let me test it practically, and he starts eating those peels one by one. Vidurji's gaze falls upon Sulabhaji, and he exclaims, "Oh, Sulabha! What are you doing? Is this how offerings are made? Let me do it properly." With great care, he washes his hands and brings bananas, skillfully peels them, removing the skin, and offers the fruit to Shri Thakur ji. Shri Thakur ji accepts the offering, takes the banana, and gently remarks, "Kakaji, the sweetness that was in the peel, is not present in the fruit itself."

This story echoes in the tale of Padmanabhadas too. He would offer food of chickpeas with great devotion, and in his offerings, he thinks of the flavors of dal, rice, kadhi, and vegetables. Those who receive the prasada would experience its rich taste, an embodiment of the heartfelt devotion that had been put into it.

Thus, Vidurji receives the Lord's grace. Then, the war became inevitable; it was now certain and could not be avoided. Despite all of Krishna's attempts, Duryodhana remained adamant, unwilling to heed any advice. After numerous efforts, the war was destined to occur.

Vidurji, however, is heartbroken. He does not want to witness the brothers fighting against each other. So, after much thought, he decides to leave. He embarks on a pilgrimage to avoid being part of the war and to find solace in spiritual practices.

For 36 years, Vidur ji and Sulabha ji travel together on this sacred journey. They visit various holy places, following the customs, making donations, observing fasting, and chanting, fulfilling the prescribed rites at every pilgrimage site. They adhere to every rule and practice of the tirthas (holy places), demonstrating their deep devotion and commitment to spiritual growth.

At this point, the great war of Mahabharata had taken place. The Kauravas were destroyed, the Yadavas were vanquished, and the Lord had returned to His divine abode. However, Vidur ji, who was on his pilgrimage, had not received any news of these events. He had not heard anything about the war, the victory of the Pandavas, or the downfall of the Kauravas.

While continuing his travels, Vidur ji eventually meets Uddhava ji. Uddhava ji, with great reverence, shares all the news with him. He tells Vidur ji everything that had transpired: the battle had occurred, the Pandavas emerged victorious, the Kauravas had perished, the Yadavas had met their end, and the Lord had ascended to His divine realm.

As Vidur ji and Sulabha ji listen the news, they feel overwhelmed. They are overwhelmed with the realization that they had not had the chance to witness the Lord's divine presence or hear from Him in person before His departure. The news of these events, especially the departure of the Lord, deeply affects them both, leaving them with a profound sense of longing and regret that they could not be there in His final moments.

Uddhava ji says, "How fortunate you are, Vidur ji! People usually remember God at the end of their lives, but at the end of His time, the Lord remembered you. He told me that if you were to meet, I should convey His message that He has left a message with Maitreya Rishi. He wanted you to go and meet him."

Then, a beautiful sat-sanga unfolds between Uddhava ji and Vidur ji, where they fondly remember the childhood Leelas of the Lord. They recall how the Lord performed many beautiful and divine leelas in Vrindavan. The memories of those divine acts filled their hearts with reverence and love for the Lord.

Vidur ji, after this beautiful interaction with Uddhava, set off to meet Maitreya Rishi. When Maitreya Rishi meets Vidur ji, he identifies Vidur ji immediately and greets. "Welcome Yamaraj! Welcome Dharmaraj!" Vidur ji gets surprised, and Maitreya Rishi responds, "I know you well, Vidur ji. In your past life, you were Yamaraja. Due to the curse of Mandavya Rishi, you were born as the son of a maid.

When we look at figures like Dhritarashtra, Pandu, or Vidur, we see that all of them are children of sage Vyasa."

In this way, they met each other. They did beautiful discussions. It is said that whenever you meet a scholar or a saint, just ask all your doubts to them. Thus, Vidur ji asks the question that was not only related to him but also to every human being, it is a question that belongs to us all. He asks:

सुखाय कर्माणि करोति लोके न तैः सुखं वान्यदुपारमं वा ।
विन्देत भूयस्तत एव दुःखं यदत्र युक्तं भगवान् वदेन्नः ॥

Sukhāya karmāṇi karoti loke na taiḥ sukhaṃ vā anyad upāramaṃ vā |
Vindet bhuyas tat eva duḥkhaṃ yadatra yuktaṃ Bhagavān vadennah ||

'O Gurudev! Everyone in this world works hard to get the happiness. No one wants sorrow. Still why a person gets sorrows in his life? There is no one who works for the sorrow. Even a person who commits suicide, commits it to get happiness. So, even if the process to get it is not good, everyone wants the happiness only. Who wants the sorrow in this world? Everyone strives for happiness yet they remain unhappy. And then they do many discussions upon this. They answer, "because no one searches for the happiness where it lies and therefore, they remain unhappy". No one can get fragrance near the heap of waste it will only give a foul smell. Similarly, this world is the home to unhappiness. No matter how much one desires, longs for, or aspires to happiness, every happiness ultimately leaves, bringing sorrow in its wake." Any happiness ends with a sorrow and you long always for happiness. Even if you are ask for the happiness but the worldly happiness always give sorrow in the end. Because, God has made many things in pair. Happiness is a coin that has sorrow on its opposite face. Any coin with only king's face is always a false one. So, when you accept a king, you also accept a cross. Because the cross is there on the opposite face of it. Similarly, while asking for happiness you also invite sorrows. As all the things we imagine to get for happiness always result in sorrow.

Why is it sorrowful? Because, whenever the happiness comes, a person starts waiting for sorrow. When we get some money, what do we do? We keep them as our savings thinking they will be helpful in our bad times. So, a person seeks for sorrows in the happiness too!

The second reason for that is we tend to compare our happiness with others and it brings us sorrow.

The third reason is, we keep preparing for the happiness to come but never try to enjoy it. When the happiness comes, we don't feel it. We keep preparing for that only. Because we keep only preparing and managing that. "Because we remain a manager, we don't try to be a master. We keep managing happiness but fail to truly experience it. Many reasons have been given by scholars, saints, and sages about why this sorrow arises. Numerous causes of sorrow have been explained."

Shri Mahaprabhu ji says, 'दुःखाभावं सुखं चेति पुरुषार्थद्वयंमतः ।' **('Duḥkhābhāvaṃ sukhaṃ cheti puruṣārtha-dvayaṃ mataḥ')** There are two 'Prushartha' (1) lack of sorrow and (2) feeling of happiness. These two are the methods of experiencing Purushartha by a human being.

Further, they ask the history of the creation and evolution. How the world was created? They say from Manu and Shataroopa.

Just as the bible has the story of Adam and Eve, Shri Bhagavata ji has the story of Manu and Shataroopa: "Further, the question was raised about the history of creation—how the universe came into existence. It was explained that from the navel of the Lord emerged a lotus, from that lotus came Brahmaji, and Brahmaji manifested Manu and Shataroopa. This is considered the first couple. Just as the Bible speaks of Adam and Eve, the Shrimad Bhagavatam mentions Manu and Shatarupa."

"The sons of Manu came to be known as humans. A command was given to expand the progeny through maithuni (procreation). However, it was said, 'Oh! The earth has been taken to the netherworld by Hiranyaksha. First, establish the earth within the universe and create an environment suitable for the expansion of procreation.'"

Then it was said that Hiranyaksha had taken the earth to the netherworld. At that very moment, Lord Varaha manifested from the nostrils of Brahmaji. Say, 'Varaha Bhagavan ki jay!' True to the nature of a boar, Lord Varaha advanced by sniffing, as the earth's inherent quality is fragrance, which is perceived through the nose. Hence, this incarnation emerged from the nostrils.

Lord Varaha searched for the earth and eventually engaged in a fierce battle with Hiranyaksha. He defeated Hiranyaksha and retrieved the earth by holding it in His tusks. He then established the earth within the universe, setting it in the solar system. Seasons were formed, and favorable conditions emerged on earth, making it suitable for habitation.

With the earth established and prepared, the command was given to expand the creation through procreation."

"Two sons and three daughters were born to them: Akriti, Devahuti, and Prasuti were the daughters, while Priyavrata and Uttanapada were the sons.

Devahuti was married to the sage Kardama. The story of their marriage is renowned, as the marriage was undertaken with a vow and a commitment from Kardama Rishi that once a son was born, he would renounce the world and embrace asceticism. But, following the marriage, Kardama Rishi goes in deep meditation.

Devahuti serves him tirelessly, sacrificing her own well-being in the process. When Kardama Rishi notices her selfless devotion and realizes that her desires and aspirations have never been fulfilled, he compassionately instructs her, 'Go and bathe in the sacred lake.' After bathing in the lake, Devahuti regains her youthful appearance.

Kardama Rishi then creates a magnificent celestial chariot with nine stories. Together, they enjoy a divine journey in this marvelous chariot. They give birth to nine daughters, and as their tenth child, the divine Kapila Bhagavan gets birth.

Say "Kapila Narayana bhagavana ki Jay!"

Lord Kapila is the founder of the Sankhya philosophy. There are two types of Sankhya: Theistic Sankhya (Seshwara Sankhya) and Atheistic Sankhya (Nirishwara Sankhya). The Sankhya presented in the Shrimad Bhagavata is Theistic Sankhya. It explains how a soul can achieve self-realization through understanding the distinction between Prakriti (nature) and Purusha (the individual soul). This path is known as the Sankhya path.

Once Kapila bhagavana's mother, Devahuti, was sitting before him, she feels that this divine incarnation has appeared specifically to shower grace upon her. Even today, the sacred Bindusarovar in Siddhpur is a place of reverence. It is believed that when Kardama Rishi performed penance there, tears of joy fell from Lord Vishnu's eyes, giving the lake its name, Bindusarovar."

"On the banks of Bindusarovar, Lord Kapila was seated. Devahuti looks upon Him and thinks, 'This is the Lord Himself who has come to my home in the form of a child.' Approaching Him, she asks profound questions. Devahuti does not view Him merely as her son. She has established in her heart that Kapila is a Supreme Being and thus asks questions for her own spiritual upliftment.

Her first question was: What are the characteristics of a true saint? What defines a virtuous person, a noble soul, or a saintly being?

In response, Lord Kapila describes sixteen qualities of a saintly person. He began by explaining the virtues and nature of such individuals, saying,..."

तितिक्षवः कारुणिकाः सुहृदः सर्वदेहिनाम् ।
अजातशत्रवः शान्ताः साधवः साधुभूषणाः ॥

Titīkṣavaḥ kāruṇikāḥ suhṛdaḥ sarvadehinām |
Ajāta-śatravaḥ śāntāḥ sādhavaḥ sādhubhūṣaṇāḥ ||

'**तितिक्षवः**' **('Titīkṣavaḥ')** The one who has patience is a saint. '**कारुणिकः**' **('kāruṇikāḥ')** The one who is merciful is a saint. Thus, Kapila Muni gives the characteristics of a saintly being. "A saint, a mahatma, a noble soul, a sadhu, or a Vaishnava—what are their characteristics? The foremost quality of a Vaishnava is tolerance. To fight is the act of a weak person, while to endure is the mark of true strength. We often believe that fighting is a sign of power, but in reality, fighting is the act of the weak. Who is truly strong? The one who can endure. Endurance is not a sign of weakness but of immense inner strength and self-control. Such a person remains steady in the phase of difficulties, displaying patience, compassion, and resilience."

In the Eleventh Skandha there is a discussion between Uddhava ji and Bhagavana that, '**किं शौर्यम् ?**' **('Kiṃ śauryam?')** "What is true valor (Shaurya)? '**स्वभावविजयं शौर्यम्**' **('svabhāva-vijayaṁ śauryam')** When asked this question, the Lord replied, 'True valor is self-mastery.' Defeating others is not a great achievement; the greatest courage lies in conquering oneself. This requires immense strength and inner resolve. Even those in high positions of power, holding great authority, often fail to overcome their own weaknesses and desires. Defeating others may seem easy, but the challenge of mastering oneself is far greater."

A Vaishnava is the one, who conqueres himself. A person can become a true Vaishnava when he learns endurance. A fight or conflict happens where people talk only of their rights and not of duty and there remains no unity. The community, or a family in which people talk of their duties remains united till long. So, wherever people talk of duties more, there is more unity in them. So, just think what do you talk about more? The rights or the duties? What do you emphasize in daily talks! Are they rights or duties? One has the right to speak about his rights only when he has fulfilled his duties.

Just ask yourself before speaking about rights that, am I fulfilling my duties of a son or a husband or a wife or a father? There are duties assigned to everyone and one must talk of

rights only after fulfilling the duties. And that is the very difference between the Indian and Western cultures. Western cultures talk about the rights. What are my rights? They teach their children about their rights to be taken from parents. And the Indian culture philosophy always talk about the duties. Have you fulfilled your duties? If yes then you can talk about your rights.

Once a person asked to Gandhi ji that 'what must be discussed about? the rights or the duties? Gandhi ji gave a beautiful answer that, "If everyone fulfill their duties properly then the rights will automatically be given to them. But, we always think about the rights first.

Rather, always ask yourself that have I fulfilled my duties? Everyone at home keeps thinking that 'I am sacrificing everything for this home and all the others are enjoying their life'. That's the fact. But, every household must have a person who behaves just like an incense stick, the one who can sacrifice everything but can keep the home united. In older times there were such elderly people who kept their family united with the thread of faith and love.

लिहाज़ आँखो का रिश्तों का डर नहीं रहता ।
जब किसी एक शख्स के हाथ में घर नहीं रहता ॥

Lihaaz aankhon ka rishton ka dar nahi rahtaa |
jab kisi ek shakhs ke haath mein ghar nahi rahta ||

"There remains no respect for elders and the fear of relation when a household doesn't have its command in the hands of a strong person."

There must be someone in the household who is like a pillar—a person to whom everyone respects, whose decisions are final and unquestionable. Such a person serves as the anchor for the family. Everyone must respect that person's decision once they give their verdict. There should be no further debate. This creates an order within the household.

A family doesn't need rigid control, but it does need a sense of structure and governance. Just as our country is free and independent, it still operates within the framework of a constitution. Freedom thrives only when it is supported by a well-defined structure.

Without a framework, freedom can sometimes devolve into chaos. Just as a nation or an institution has a constitution, a family too needs its own set of guiding principles. What is our

family's constitution? We must decide where our boundaries lie. This is why there should be someone in the family who, even at the cost of sacrificing personal desires, ensures harmony among all. Such a person must be willing to give up their rights if it brings happiness to everyone. However, if everyone in the family or society starts focusing solely on their rights without considering their responsibilities, it becomes nearly impossible to maintain unity. Balance is only achieved when there's a collective effort toward the greater good.

Just as the fragrance of sandalwood emerges only when it is rubbed, the essence of a Vaishnava's virtue reveals itself only when their body is worn in service to others. Without selfless service, the true fragrance of Vaishnavism does not arise.

A Vaishnava is characterized by '**कारुणिकः**', **('kāruṇikaḥ')** the one who has compassion. It is not enough to serve the Lord and fulfill ritual duties alone. One must also reflect: Do I have compassion for all living beings? The true measure of devotion lies in extending kindness and empathy to every form of life."

How empathetic and kind are our Shri Mahaprabhu ji and Shri Gusai ji! They have kindness towards every jeeva, soul. Just like them a Vaishnava must be kind and empathetic.

'सुहृदः सर्वदेहिनाम्' **('Suhṛdaḥ sarva-dehinām')** They have sarvatmabhava (they see everyone with the same love, compassion and empathy, for them all are the forms of God). They are '**अजातशत्रवः**' **('ajāta-śatravaḥ')** i.e. they have no enemies. Saints do not consider anyone as their enemy. Even if someone is jealous from them, they won't have any jealousy for anyone. '**शान्ताः**' **('śāntāḥ')** They are calm and composed. There is a difference between loneliness and peace. Many times, we consider loneliness as peace. If you all leave and I remain here alone, or someone is alone at home, then they think how peaceful it is. But believe me after 10 minutes of such peace we will start thinking about our responsibilities. It is a human nature that when body works, mind feels peace and when our body rests, our mind runs. Just for an experiment, stop doing all the work and sit in a sofa, you will find your mind racing here and there. So, there lies a difference between loneliness and peace. Peace is something that you can feel among a crowd too and in loneliness often you will become restless.

So, the sixteen characteristics of a saint are described here by Kapila Bhagavana. Further, she asks the question that 'What is the Swaroopa of Bhakti? Here, they discussed four forms of

Bhakti (devotion) (1) Tamas Bhakti, (2) Raajas Bhakti, (3) Satvik Bhakti and (4) Nirguna Bhakti. So, there are four types of devotees. And here they discussed about the devotion.

Who are Tamas Bhaktas? Ravana, Kamsa, Shishupala – these are Tamas Bhaktas. Shrimad Bhagavata states that even if one approaches God with enmity, it leads to liberation. If you must harbor hostility, let it be towards God alone, in a manner that no other thoughts or beings occupy your mind. Even if you cannot cultivate love for Him, harbor such enmity that your thoughts remain solely focused on Him. In doing so, God will still grant you liberation. Let your mind be consumed by Him alone.

Second are the Rajas bhakta. Those who approach God with some laukik or worldly desires are known as Rajas Bhakta.

Satvika Bhaktas (devotees) are those who approach God for salvation, that they want to be liberated from the cycle of birth and death. And the Nirguna bhaktas (devotees) are those who approach God to offer Him happiness.

Now whether you call it Bhagavati Devotion, Nirguna Devotion or Pushti Bhakti, they all are the same. They are the devotees who always think of His happiness. They think, "What must I do to please my Thakur ji"

A Maryada devotee thinks what should I ask from thakur ji today for my happiness but a Pushti bhakta is the one who thinks that what I would offer to God today so that He becomes happy.

It is the fundamental difference between both of the devotions. Thus, they discuss about the bhakti and then Devahuti ji gets liberation. Then Kapila Bhagavaana leaves towards the east.

Now let us rest here the Third Skandha.
Say, "Krishna Kanhaiya Laal ki Jay!
'Shri Goverdhan Nath ki Jay!

●

The Supreme Being has created various aspects of existence, and Shri Mahaprabhuji has outlined four key principles here: Dharma (righteousness), Artha (wealth), Kama (desires), and Moksha (liberation). These are collectively known as the 'Chaturvidha Purusharthas' (the four objects of human life). Every living being seeks to attain these four goals, whether they believe in God or not, whether they are theistic or atheistic.

Dharma is essential for everyone throughout their life. No one desires unrighteousness. Even someone who lies to others does not wish to be lied to. A person may deceive others, but they desire honesty and truthfulness from others. Even a dishonest boss, when hiring employees, seeks trustworthy and honest individuals. This highlights the universal value of righteousness and honesty in all interactions, regardless of personal beliefs or actions.

Religion (Dharma) encompasses principles that every person desires, whether consciously or subconsciously. The ten characteristics or attributes of Dharma, known as the Dashalakshana, have been outlined to guide individuals toward righteousness and moral living. These ten attributes are:

धृतिः क्षमा दमोऽस्तेयं शौचं इन्द्रियनिग्रहः ।
धीर्विद्या सत्यमक्रोधो दशकं धर्मलक्षणम् ॥

Dhṛtiḥ kṣamā damo 'steyaṃ śaucaṃ indriya-nigrahaḥ |
Dhīr vidyā satyaṃ akrodho daśakaṃ dharma-lakṣaṇam ||

These ten attributes of Dharma are universally desired by all individuals. Even someone prone to anger does not wish to be the target of others' anger—they expect others to remain calm and composed with them. Similarly, everyone prefers others to be peaceful and cheerful in their demeanor. Every aspect of Dharma is something people inherently long for, which is why Dharma Purushartha is fundamental. Everyone seeks means of happiness. Artha Purushartha reflects the universal desire for material wealth and comfort. Kama Purushartha signifies the longing for sensory pleasures and fulfillment of desires. And everyone gets pleasure by liberating from Kama i.e. Moksha Purushartha. It embodies the ultimate liberation, the joy of being free from all attachments and possessions.

Initially we think, "it would be wonderful to have a child" and once child is born, we think it would be peaceful when it would go to school. Isn't it this we often feel? Similarly, we desire, "If only we could build a house of our own, life would be perfect." When the house is finally built, the excitement dwindles, and if we aren't taken on a trip within a year, we might start feeling restless and complain, "Why are we stuck here?" Why does this happen? Didn't we once long for that house? And now, leaving it behind feels like joy. So liberation is the nature of a human.

If you ask a child, "Which period do you enjoy the most in school—sports, drawing, or English?" Their answer will likely be, "The time when the bell rings to signal the end of school!" This is because humans naturally enjoy freedom. It is inherent in our nature. We find joy in letting go of what we have, moving on to something new. To put it simply, do you enjoy earning money more, or spending it while shopping? Most would agree that shopping is more enjoyable. The act of letting go, of spending, brings greater joy than holding on. This highlights that liberation is the natural state of human beings.

In the Dharma Prakarana the story of Daksha is narrated and the lineage of Manu's daughter is described in detail. "Yajna Narayana Bhagavan Ki Jai!" Prasuti was married to Daksha, and they had sixteen daughters. Through them, the entire family of Dharma is introduced. Out of these, thirteen daughters were married to Dharma.

Their fourteenth daughter was married to Agni deva (The fire God), her name is 'Swaha'. So, whenever we do a fire sacrifice, we chant 'Swaha, Swaha', as it is the name of the wife of the fire god. Their fifteenth daughter 'Swadha' was married to the Ancestors (Pitra-Deva) and therefore whenever we do a fire sacrifice for the ancestors, we chant 'Swadha, Swadha'. Their Sixteenth daughter 'Sati' was married to Mahadevaa ji. 'वैष्णवानां यथा शंभुः' **('vaiṣṇavānāṁ yathā śambhuḥ')** Shri Mahaprabhu ji says, "If you really want an example of a true vaishnava, then it is Mahadeva ji, there is no supreme devotee of God like Mahadevaa ji". Now, a grudge has ensued between the father-in-law (Dakshaa Prajapati) and the son-in-law (Mahadevaa ji).

Mahadevaa ji is a true devotee. He was engrossed in the meditation and was remembering God when his father-in-law came. He (Daksha) was so arrogant that he couldn't understood it and took it as an insult when Mahadeva ji didn't stand up on his arrival. Dakshaa took it as an

insult and decided to take revenge. He thought, "I won't let him take his part from any yagna now on". He ordered to not offer any Ahuti (the name for the parts of things offered in the fire during a sacrifice) to Mahadeva ji. But, Mahadevaa ji is not only a son-in-law of Dakshaa, He is a devotee to God. And whoever offends a devotee, makes God angry. God does not grant the wishes of those who offend a devotee. That is why, perhaps, committing an offense against God may be tolerated, and even an offense against the Guru might be forgiven, but one must always fear offending a Vaishnav. So, always remain cautious to ensure that no offense is committed against a Vaishnav.

Daksha says, "To insult Mahadeva ji, I will conduct a sacrifice myself. In that sacrifice, I will invite everyone except my son-in-law, Mahadevaa ji.

Then, he conducts a great yagna in which he invites all the beings. When Devatas are going towards the yagna in a vimana (aircraft), Sati notices them and asks, "Where are these devatas going?" Narada ji says, "oh! Are you not going to your father's? She asks, "Why? What's the matter? Narada ji informs her, "Your father is conducting a great fire sacrifice and has invited everyone! are you not going there?

Then Sati says to Mahadevaa ji, "My father is having a great yagna'. Narada ji says, "at the time of such a great celebration, daughters should go earlier. They are the grace of every celebration. They must participate in arrangements. Are you not going to go? Hearing this, Sati develops a desperate desire to go there.

Mahadeva ji says, "we are not even invited there". Devi Sati says, "There is no need for any invitation to go to guru's, God's, father's and a good – hearted person's home. One must go as soon as the news arrives. We must not wait for invitation.

Saying this she gets ready for her father's home and reaches to the place of yagna. Her father turns his face off her in anger. Her mother lowers her gaze in shame. Sati Maharani realizes, "An entire yajna (sacrificial ritual) was conducted, but no share was offered to Mahadeva ji. My father performed this yajna to insult my husband. Mahadeva ji tried to stop me, but I did not listen. I disobeyed my husband's command." When this realization strikes her, she gets disappointed and decides to end her body. She invokes the fire through yoga (yogagni) within herself. Surrounded by blazing flames, Sati Maharani begins to burn. Nandi, the loyal

attendant of Mahadevaa ji, runs as fast as he could to inform Mahadeva. Reaching him, Nandi delivers the heartbreaking news: "Sati Maharani has perished in the yogagni."

Mahadeva ji gets filled with rage. He loosens his matted locks, shakes them violently, and strikes them against the ground. From this act emerges Virabhadra, a fierce and powerful being. Mahadeva commands, "Go, Virabhadra! Take my ganas (divine attendants) with you. Destroy the entire yajna and leave nothing standing." Mahadeva ji then begins performing the Tandava, the cosmic dance of destruction, shaking the heavens and earth with his fury.

It was as if the end of the world had begun. The peaks of mountains starts to crumble, and the very currents of motion changed direction. Mahadeva, filled with boundless fury, took up his pellet drum and began performing the Tandava, the cosmic dance of destruction. The tremors of his rage echoed across the three realms, causing chaos and terror everywhere. Meanwhile, Virabhadra, leading the ganas, stormed the sacrifice. Those chanting "Swaha, Swaha" had their tongues severed. Those offering sacrifices had their hands cut off. The entire yajna was reduced to ruins. The destruction sent waves of panic throughout the three worlds.

Even Daksha, the instigator of the insult, met his fate as his head was severed by him. This became a reminder that even a sacrificial ritual conducted in opposition to a devotee will never succeed under the watch of the divine. Later, it is said, Daksha's head was replaced with that of a goat, restoring him to life as a symbol of repentance. Further, the narrative tells us many other stories. So, in this way, in the Dharma Prakarana (the part of the narrative that explains the duty) the story of Daksha is narrated.

In the Artha-Prakarana of Shrimad Bhagavata, 'Dhruva-Charitra' (the story of Dhruva) is narrated. It is a very famous story. There was a king named Uttanapada with his two wives Suniti and Suruchi. Spiritually talking, every being taking birth is 'Uttanapada' because everyone in the mother's womb has head down towards the earth. So, 'Uttanapada' means the one whose legs are upwards. Now, when a person takes birth, the two things have their effect on his mind: Aruchi (here it means the second wife of Uttanapada) – the wishes and Suniti – the ethics.

Generally, all of us give weightage to our desires and we don't focus on what is needed. If there is anything that a person loves the most, it is his own opinion or the thinking. Because, no

matter how a thing is beneficial to someone, he won't do it if his mind is not ready. If his mind tells to eat sweets even after having diabetes, he will eat them. Even after reading the label of 'injurious to health' he will eat that if his mind says yes. So, at least try to accept what science says if you don't believe on saints and religious sayings! But no! we will only do as our mind says!!!!

So, a person loves his mind the most. He does only what his mind directs. A horse follows our directions till we have its reins in our hands. But when the reins are gone, the horse takes us wherever he wants. Many times, people say I didn't want to eat that but somehow, I ate it. In such situations, just accept that our mind is ruling us and we don't have its reins in our hands.

So, there are two ways of leading life, to live by desires or to live by ethics. Desires are always welcomed but ethics are not. Both of Uttanapada's wives have a child. The child of Suruchi is Uttama (meaning 'the best'), because everyone who leads their lives by desires, want 'uttama', meaning the best for them! They always keep searching for the latest, new. They will like buying the latest mobile even if they have bought one only a month ago. So, the people who live their lives by desire, always want the best.

And the name of the child of Suneeti is 'Dhruva'. Dhruva means perpetuity, eternity! It is like when one thinks, all the worldly things are there, but what will accompany me? What is that which will give me salvation! What is it that will be there with me even after my soul will shed this body. So, Dhruva means that which is forever. So, Dhruva is the son of Suneeti.

Once, Dhruva and Uttama were playing together. During the play, Uttama went and sat on his father's lap. Dhruva saw that and he also went to sit in his father's lap. As soon as he reached to his father, Suruchi came and pulled him apart.

She scolds Dhruva saying, "If you want to sit on your father's lap then go to the forest right now and do the penance to take birth from my womb the next time. You will get the right to sit in his lap only after being my son". Disappointed Dhruva goes to her mother.

Now, Suneeti is more intellectual. There must be an intellectual person at every home. There must be someone who can make a child understand the reason behind the scolding, to make him understand what is beneficial for him and what is not! So, Suneeti is intellectual and says

to her son that, "oh my dear son, I think mother Suruchi loves you more than me". Then Dhruva asks, "why do you think so? She has scolded and insulted me!". "No, dear! Many times, God does not express his wish directly. He uses people for it." It is us who must understand His signs. We must understand that the words may have come from Him only. Many times, He sends us the signs through a guru, a saint or a Vaishnava or any relative and we must have that understanding to decode his signs.

'See! I have never told you to find God. And also, I think that Suruchi is not only your mother but she is also your guru. Because, only a guru can suggest a way like that. And dear son! She is correct too! As the lap you are longing for is not eternal. So, what is the meaning to sit on such a place. Instead, you must try to get the place on Paramatma's lap from where no one can get you up. If you really want to get someone, get the Paramatma."

In this way, the mother commands five-year-old Dhruva to go for penance. Our thinkers have said that India won't stop having great men until it has such ideal mothers. There will be some guides or teachers too who will guide and direct them on the path of righteousness. Their thinking will turn into ideology and it will definitely take us to the path of progress and prosperity.

Now, Dhruva has left his home for the penance. Narada ji is worried about Dhruva's decision. To check Dhruva's determination, he tries to daunt Dhruva with the fear of wild animals and the wildness of forest. Instead of getting terrified, Dhruva says, "I don't care of anything else. Now, the soul aim of my life is to find Paramatma. I don't have any fear now. When Narada ji saw his determination, he preached Dhruva with the Dwadashakshar Mantra (The twelve syllabled Mantra). Now, Dhruva has got the direction of guru also. Narada ji sends him to Vraja telling him to do penance in Madhuban on the banks of Shri Yamuna ji. He blesses Dhruva to get the grace of God. Now, Dhruva ji has started for Vraj chanting the mantra "ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय:" **('oṁ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya')**

He has reached to Madhubana on the banks of Shri Yamuna ji. On the banks of Shri Yamuna, drinking its sacred waters daily, he meditates upon the Lord. He chants the twelve-syllable mantra. He has renounced food. Gradually, he gives up water as well. Sustaining himself on leaves, he later abandons even that. Living on air, he eventually renounces that too. He attains

the realization of the universal self within his own soul because the same one soul pervades all beings. When he achieves this state of universal oneness, he restrains his life force too. As his life force gets stilled, the very life force of the three worlds begins to waver. Indra grows anxious, thinking, "Oh no! Someone is performing penance to claim my throne!" Alarmed, he rushes to the Supreme Lord. The Lord reassures him, "This is my devotee. He is not meditating for Indra's throne—he is devoted to me, surrendering himself entirely in my worship."

Dhruva ji was in deep penance when The Supreme Lord appeared in his mind. His mind gets filled with immense joy. He was able to see the Lord clearly in his meditation, but after a while, the Lord disappears. Dhruva ji becomes restless. He opens his eyes—and the very form he had seen in meditation was now standing before him. The Lord has manifested from within his heart, from within his very soul, and now is standing before him in divine radiance. Overwhelmed, Dhruva ji gazes at the Lord. His entire being is trembling with devotion. A surge of bliss runs through him, his body is covered in goosebumps. Tears are streaming down his eyes. He wants to speak, but words fail him. 'वाग् गद्गदा द्रवते यस्य...' **('vāg gadgadā dravate yasya')** - his voice trembled with emotion. This is the true sign of devotion. He is such in an awe that he has no words to say or to praise him.

Chaturbhuja Narayana (God with four hands) touches his cheek with his shell and as soon as it touches him, He venerates Him with a stuti (a hymn)

योऽन्तः प्रविश्य मम वाचमिमां प्रसुप्तां
संजीवयत्यखिलशक्तिधरः स्वधाम्ना ।
अंन्याश्च हस्तचरणश्रवणत्वगादीन्
प्राणान्नमो भगवते पुरुषाय तुभ्यम् ॥

Yo 'ntaḥ praviśya mama vācam imāṃ prasuptāṃ
saṃjīvayatyakhila-śakti-dharaḥ svadhāmnā |
Annyāś ca hasta-caraṇa-śravaṇa-tvagādīn
prāṇān namo Bhagavate puruṣāya tubhyam ||

O Lord, I bow to You, I offer our salutations." For even this praise is not truly mine —You, who dwell within us, are the One making me speak. I am not the one beholding Your divine form; the very ability to see comes from You alone. I have not truly heard the sacred stories; the

power to listen itself is Yours. At the root of all existence is the Supreme Lord. Whatever I see, whatever I speak, whatever I hear — it is all through Your divine energy. You are the One residing within my very soul.

In his prayer, Dhruva ji humbly requests, "O Lord, grant me the company of a true devotee, so that through their association and the path of satsanga, I may cross this ocean of worldly existence."

As a divine blessing, Dhruva ji attained Dhruva-loka — an eternal, immovable celestial abode. Even today, in Nathdwara, there is a place known as Dhruva Bari (a window named after Dhruva ji), from where the Lord grants uninterrupted darshan to Dhruva ji. From there, Dhruva ji continually beholds the Lord's divine presence. Such is the boundless grace of Shri Thakurji, who bestowed upon him the eternal Dhruva-loka.

Many events of Dhruva ji's life are discussed here like the event when he vanquished Yakshas and did many other glorious deeds. He then arrives near Lakshman Jhula (a place now in Uttarakhanda) and gets engaged in the deep penance. There, the sacred Ganga continues to flow peacefully. Ultimately, placing his foot upon the head of the death itself, Dhruva ji ascends to the Dhruva-loka.

In his lineage was King Anga, whose son was Vena. However, Vena turned highly irreligious. He abolished dharma and karma among the people, prohibited yajnas, and oppressed his subjects greatly. When the suffering of the people became unbearable, they revolted. Vena was slain, and from the churning of his arm, Lord Prithu manifested. "Bow to Lord Prithu!"

It is said that Prithu was the one who "milked" the Earth, bringing forth its riches. The organized cities, agriculture, minerals, and all forms of civilization that we see today were first established through the governance of King Prithu.

As time passed, King Prithu renounced his kingdom and retreated to the forest for penance. Pleased with his devotion, the Lord appeared before him and said, "King Prithu, ask for a boon!"

With folded hands, Prithu humbly replied, "O Lord, grant me ten thousand ears! For with just two ears, I cannot fully satisfy my longing to hear Your divine leelas(stories, deeds). Let every

pore of my being become an ear, so that I may eternally relish the nectar of Your divine leelas. Let my eagerness for listening to Your glories never fade."

Moving forward in the narrative we come across the Moksha Kanda (the part dedicated to the Liberation). This part of the narrative introduces the tale of the Prachetas and the story of Puranjan. Puranjan represents the individual soul (jiva). Just as a living being gets entangled in the illusions of the world, Puranjan too gets entangled in worldly delusions. The entire narrative reveals how the soul, lost in material existence, ultimately realizes its true purpose and attains liberation.

Here, let us rest the katha of the Fourth Skandha.

'Shri Krishna Kanhaiya laal ki jay'

Shri Goverdhana Nath ki jay'

●

The Fifth Skandha (Sthana Leela)

26 Chapters, Vaikuntha Vijaya Sthiti

The Fifth Canto of Shri Bhagavata ji narrates the story of the reign of King Priyavrata. When King Nabhi was performing the Yagna, Vrushabh-deva ji incarnated. 'Hail Vrushabh - dev ji'. He is the one who is known as Adinath ji, the first 'Theerthankara' of the Jain sect. Jayanti was his wife. When Indra stopped the rain. He made the precipitation occur un-naturally by the power of his penance. 100 sons were born to him and he preached about 'Moksha' i.e. Salvation. While preaching to his sons, he told, the 83,99,999 life-forms among 84 lakh life-forms exists to let a jeeva enjoy, but only the 'manushya – yoni', the life of a human being offers the chance to practice devotion. Therefore, a jeeva (soul) can do anything while in any other life form, but the devotion (bhakti) can only be practiced during this human life, it is the only time when a jeeva can do bhakti. This is the reason why Human body is considered special than the others. Why so? 'બડે ભાગ માનુષ તનુ પાવા I સુર દુર્લભ સબ ગ્રંથ હિ ગાવા II' **('Bade bhaag manush tanu paava, sur durlabh sab granth hi gaava'** i.e. it is a luck to have this human body as we can recite and read all about the Divine). Why this Human body is praised? Because, even though every other life

form can speak or make sounds but it doesn't reach to the Divine, only a human being's recitation reaches to the ears of the Divine. Every other life form has eyes, they do see but only a human being can do darshan with such feelings that can bring them salvation.

Each and every sense organ of a human being is unique. They are not meant for indulgence and downfall. If even one of the eleven senses gets engaged in God, a person can be freed from the cycle of birth and death. Such powerful senses are possessed by humans. Ears exist in every living being; all creatures can hear. But humans have such ears that, if used to listen to divine discourses, they can attain liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

A human has eleven sense organs and each and every sense organ can serve as the ways to salvation, but we disgrace them as the ways to downfall. They are not the means to downfall but they are the ways to salvation, they are the ways to get the God. You can find many narratives as the evidences of the fact. One can attain salvation through their eyes as well. The story of Krishna Das Adhikari exemplifies this—he saw a dancing courtesan in Agra, performing to please others. Upon witnessing her dance, he realized that she was a divine soul. He thought, "If she dances in devotion before the Lord, He will accept her, and she will attain liberation."

He brought her from the marketplace and made her dance before Shri Nath ji. Kirtan was sung. She danced to the words of devotion. As she danced, her mind became absorbed in God. Shri Nath ji Himself held her hand and took her into His divine leela in her very physical form. It is the example of His grace. So, The eyes are enough for liberation.

And such are the ears. There are many narratives that exemplify the fact that liberation can be attained through ears, one is that of Dinkardas ji.

Even our tongue is enough, Gajendra said, 'He Hari' only once and Narayana reached to liberate him riding His Garuda. There are many other examples.

So, there are many life forms to enjoy. Let us take the examples of 56 delicacies. We offer 56 delicacies to Him. There are many reasons and bhavanas (feelings) behind doing that. One among them can be explained as: we do seva while in the human form, and during this seva, we offer Him bhoga. So, there are a total of total 84 lakh life forms. We do seva in only Human

form then what about the other 83,99,999 life forms? We don't do seva in these remaining ones! So, when we calculate the total of 8+3+9+9+9+9+9, it comes to 56. So, when you offer 56 delicacies, you complete the seva for the remaining life forms too! In this way, we do seva for the remaining life-forms too!

So, a jeeva can indulge in worldly pleasures in every other life form. But we should not waste this human body in indulgence because we don't know that when we would get this human form again?

Do you think that after watching the karma done by you in this life, God will again give you the Human form in next life?

Just like when a new actor enters the field and plays his first role exceptionally well, he will keep receiving offers for similar roles. Similarly, if someone plays the role of a villain very well, all the offers they get will be for villain roles. In the same way, God has sent you here to play a role. The role you play and the way you live your life will determine the life form you will take in your other births. Many people spend their entire lives in useless activities, many others keep fighting, and many of them are always busy trying to seize what belongs to others. One must set his/her path in his/her own way.

God might think 'I have made this jeeva a human. The jeeva wants to live like an animal, then I should make it an animal.

Bhagavan has given us this beautiful body. In this body we have senses and each of our sense is governed by a deva. For example, lord Indra governs our hands, sun governs our eyes... and so on. So, when Bhagavan gives us this human body and we misuse it, these devatas get displeased. And they request God to not give us Human form again.

Once, two friends were going somewhere, they saw a beggar on their way. One of the friends gave the beggar some money. Seeing this, the second man tells him to not give any money to such beggars in future as they don't use the money, they buy something addictive with it. The man who had given the money thought it would have been better if I hadn't given it to him, now I will never give money to him.

Similarly, Bhagavan gives us the human form. However, we indulge in material pleasure. So, if he will again give us the human form the devas will not support it saying he will spend it indulging and then He won't bestow us with the human form again. So, make Shri Bhagavata ji your guru as you won't get human form again and again. If you are unable to believe a human, make a scripture your guru, either it is Shri Bhagavata or Shri Bhagavata Geeta, or Ramayana. You can also make a thought or an ideology your guru. Live by that thought, hold onto that ideology. But there is no guarantee that this human body will come again. This opportunity has been given by Shri Thakurji, don't let it slip away."

Take any form of life other than a human. Is there any form where you have the facility to serve the beloved, take them in your arms, perform romantic rituals, enjoy with them, sing their praises, offer prayers, or chant their name? Is there any form of life during which such opportunities exist? The task that cannot be performed in any other form of life, that should be the purpose of this human life. Everything else will happen anyway. But this task should be accomplished. Let me do this in this birth.

Therefore, Soordas ji says, 'just like a student who falls in an examination feels inferior while attending the same class again, a person should be ashamed of taking a birth again in this world! Therefore, one should grab the opportunity to be free from the cycle of birth and rebirth in the present birth only.

So, keep in the mind that the time is always moving and you cannot buy the time back even in the exchange of money. Remember, everything in this world can come back but time can never. So, even if you have to lose, lose everything else but not time. Don't waste it. Even after having every luxury and a lot of money during the life time, you cannot buy time. When it comes to get only 10 minutes from Yama-Raja (God of Death) against all of it, you won't get a single minute. So, which is more valuable? Ten minutes or all the luxuries? Many times, people waste whole day for fighting over trivial issues, but remember, things can come back but what about the time that you spent in fighting?

Rishabhdeva ji preaches "don't waste your time, and worship God".

King Dushyanta had a son named "Bharata". When the time came, he became the king. It is said that our country 'Bharata' is named after him. When the time came, He renounced his

kingdom and went into the forest.

When you observe the stories of Kings in Bhagavata, you notice that they remain on their throne for a less span of time and for the welfare of their citizens. And when they find it appropriate, they progress for the welfare of their own. Many people realize that we have to leave these worldly things and go for self-welfare but they don't work on it, they remain confused.

So, Bharat ji renounces his kingdom and starts living in the forest in a hut. He has decided to find God chanting His name and to end the cycle of birth and rebirth through it. Daily, he bathes in the river and starts telling the beads of his rosary. In this way, he starts living a peaceful life of devotion. But, as we know, time doesn't stop, no one can predict it. Time can change everything before one can expect.

One morning, Bharat ji went to bathe in the river. Every morning, he stood in the water up to his waist. When the sun rose, he would offer water with his hands to the Sun God. One day, while closing his eyes and filling his hands with water for the offering, he heard the roar of a lion. Hearing the roar, several deer who had come to drink from the river got scared and ran away. One of them was about to deliver a child. The deer, frightened by the lion's roar, jumped into the river. The shock caused her to deliver the child in the river. The foul, carried by the current, drifted into the hands of the king, Bharat ji."

The king due to his kindness, takes it with him to his hut. He brings the soft grass grown on the banks of the river and starts feeding it.

Compassion is a beautiful thing... but when did compassion quietly turn into attachment — even the king didn't realize. The foul was saved, yes, but after that... it should've been left in the forest to live its own life. That's where it truly belongs. But then the thought crept in — if not me, who will look after her? And that's where the shift happened. That's the fine thread between compassion and attachment. Compassion says — help, support, and then set them free. Let them live on their own terms. But the moment one says — it will eat only if I feed it, it will live only if I protect it, it will survive only if I stay — this 'I' places the jeeva at the center. And the moment the 'I' enters... compassion turns into possession. And that's the trap — where care becomes control, and love becomes attachment.

Now, even while turning the beads, he started thinking of that foul. Every time his chant begins with 'Hari-Hari' but by the time he opens the eyes, it becomes 'haran-haran'(deer). 'Hari' starts to fade, and 'Haran' takes over. Isn't that exactly what happen with us too? We sit down for seva... but the moment the bell rings, know this — the deer has leapt. The mind gets distracted. The divine turns into distraction. The prayer becomes pursuit. And in that silent shift... devotion slips into illusion." That deer... not the one in the woods — but the one that leaps through the mind. The one that steals away your stillness... that's the real deer. You sit down with your mala, trying to center yourself —and the moment the doorbell rings, know this — the deer has leapt again. The has begun to run. Not outside... but inward — away from the Divine."

Tulsidas ji explains that Bharat ji developed an attachment to a deer and therefore, he was reborn as a deer in his next life. So, the question arises — O human, how many things are you emotionally attached to? How many people, situations, or roles have you attached with? You believe you are the one managing everything. You feel it's all happening because of you. But what will happen to you if all your attention remains tied to the temporary things? Here, the king's attachment became so strong that the deer took the place of the Divine. 'Hari-Hari' was forgotten, and the whole day turned into a chase — constantly running after something or the other.

Once the deer saw a herd of deer and it went with them. It thought that these is my own species and went with them. Now, king Bharat got worried for it. He got worried for its whereabouts, its food and its likings. On the other hand, the deer had no feeling for Bharata. Bharata left his body remembering that deer. Our scriptures say that where a person has his/her mind at the time of death, there he/she gets the next birth. So, Bharat in his next birth becomes a deer. But, he retains his past life memories and that's why by fasting, he leaves the body of the deer too.

In the next life, he gets the birth in a Brahmin family. Now, in this birth he decides to not get entangled in any thought. He decides to remain neutral everywhere and for everyone. So, people gave him the name 'Jad-Bharata'. He accepted everything that he had got but remained neutral. He had no love or affection, or no hate for anyone. He remained neutral, just like the banks of the river! The banks of a river remain steady whether there is flood or drought, in the same way, for the moments of happiness and sorrow in the life, Bharata has

decided to remain neutral. Due to this nature of him, he seems of no use to anyone. At last, his brothers give him the work to protect the farm. There too, he lets animals and birds to graze upon his land. Irritated sisters-in-law tell him to leave their home and he leaves, because he has no love or affection for anyone.

So, after leaving the house, he was going somewhere, mid-way he finds royal procession of king Rahugan. The king was going to get the blessings of Kapila Bhagavan in the east. He was going there in a palanquin and in the mid-way a palanquin-bearer falls ill. When the king comes to know about the palanquin bearer, he orders his men to bring someone who can do this work. His men find Jad-Bharata and asks him to bear the king's palanquin. Jad-Bharata gets ready to do it and becomes a palanquin bearer. Now, Jad-Bharta, who sees God in every being jumps whenever he finds any insect in the way. He keeps atma-bhav in every being and that's why he fears of killing any living being under his foot. So, he jumps over every-time he finds any ants or insects or their row. Now, whenever he jumps, the palanquin of the king also gets disturbed and the king gets hurt in his head. One jump, two jumps and when he does so the third time, the king gets angry.

He orders the palanquin bearers to stop and starts abusing Jad-Bharata. Abusing him he comments on his body and strength. Listening to this Jad-Bharata thinks, now I must introduce myself to the king.

Then Bharat ji says, 'It doesn't count how my body looks; fat or thin, dark or fair, these are the dharma of a body, but I am the soul. As soon as the king listens to these words, he gets enlightened. He gets to know that this man is not ordinary. He falls in Bharataji's feet and asks Bharata to introduce himself.

Then Bharata ji introduces himself to the king and they start on a beautiful discussion.

Then there comes the story of Bhavatava. Bhagavata ji also has the description of 'Nav-Khanda' (Nine-Lands), Seven-Seas, astrology, geography and many other subjects in it. Bhagavata ji says the Earth is round in shape. Scientists discovered it just two hundred years ago but our scriptures have the word 'Bhoo-Gola' (Bhoo – Earth, Gola – Round) for thousands of years. Our scholars have given us the calendar that has all the information about solar and lunar eclipses, full moons and no moons, and many other things that are still going on as

calculated. In-fact, they also tell us about the eclipses that are going to happen even after 50 years.

Whenerver we hear the news about eclipses on television, we often hear that this eclipse has happened in two hundred years, and it is worth watching. Listen, it will get repeated in two hundred years but the moment in which you are living will not get repeated. So, we always wish to live and savor the moments that will happen again but the moment in which we are living will not get repeated even in millions of years and therefore, every second is valuable.

The word jyotish means 'the light of God'. It is a whole discipline. It is a part of Veda. Wonderful are its calculations. But, in the present times, the people who are studying it are not knowledgeable enough and therefore there are many misconceptions about it. But still, astrology is a miracle for this world. Let us venerate it. Then there comes the description of 'Naraka' (hells)

Here we rest the katha of the Fifth Skandha of Shrimad Bhagavata ji.

●

The Sixth Skandha (Poshana – Leela)

19 Chapters

The sixth canto is about the 'Pushti – leela', Poshana – Leela, '**पोषणं तदनुग्रहः**' **('Poṣaṇam tadanugrahaḥ')**. The meaning of the word Poshana is 'to enable devotees to sustain on the path of bhakti' or simply to shower grace upon devotees. Our path is referred to as the Pushtimarga (Path of Grace), and Pushti means Poshan (nourishment), which signifies the Lord's grace. In this path, it is not we who decide to move further; it is the Lord's mercy that guides us. We do not serve on our own; it is the Lord's grace that makes us serve. In this path, the one who acts is the Lord Himself. Only by His grace can love for the Lord arise in the heart. Only by His grace can the desire to serve Shri Thakur ji emerge. By His grace, one can attain a connection with Brahma. By His grace alone can one hold the divine sweets in their hands. Otherwise, nothing happens by our own desire. We have many desires, but how many are

fulfilled? Only when the Lord's grace aligns with our desires do our wishes come true. This is the Poshanleela.

Then comes the katha of Ajamila known as 'Ajamilakhyana'. Once there was a brahmin named Ajamila. Once he was travelling through a forest and he saw something of which he developed a greed. Therefore, it is said that don't see those things that disturb your mind. We think that there will be no harm in seeing once, but things always start with one.

And so, Ajamila got so much distracted that he even left doing the rituals of a Brahmina. He started living with a keep.

Once, some saints arrive in that village and asks some people if any good brahmin lived there so that they could get some food. The people were young and they thought to play a prank on them. So, they send them to Ajamila's home.

Now, the word 'Aja' means 'maya' (illusion). The one who is mixed with maya is 'Ajamila'. They told saints that they will get pious food at the home of Ajamila.

The saints reached Ajamila's place. He was away and there was the lady with whom he was living and she was pregnant. Saints understood upon reaching there that we have been ditched by the people. Still, they asked for the food and they got it there. It is said that if saints go to anyone's home, they bestow their grace there. So, they thought to do good for Ajamila. After dining there, they asked her for 'Dakshina' (things offered to the saints due to respect). When she asked what they wanted as Dakshina, they told we don't want anything but a promise that you will name your child 'Narayana' (A name of Vishnu). They told to do so because they thought Ajamila won't remember God normally, but if he speaks the name Narayana, he will get the grace of God.

Now, the child takes birth and it is very dear to Ajamila. He keeps calling the child whole of the day. In this way, Ajamila becomes 88 years old. Now, at the time of his death he sees the representatives of Yama (the death god). He gets scared and calls his son 'Narayana'..., his son wouldn't listen but God listened!

Bhagavan sends His representatives to take Ajamila with them. So, here both the representatives have reached to take Ajamila with them and are discussing about Ajamila. Yama's representatives say, 'Ajamila is a sinner as he didn't fulfill the duties of a brahmin during his life. But God's representatives say, 'As he has recited the name of God in his last time, we will take him with us.

अज्ञानादथवा ज्ञानात् उत्तमश्लोकनाम यत् ।
सङ् कीर्तितमघं पुंसः देहेदेहो यथानलः ॥

Ajñānād athavā jñānāt uttama-ślokanām yat |
Saṅ kīrtitam adhaṃ puṃsaḥ dehedeho yathānalah ||

Representatives of God further say that the name of God works like fire. Just how the fire burns everything in whether it is thrown intentionally or unintentionally, the name of God taken before death burns every sin of a soul. 'ભાયેં કુભાયેં અનખ આલસ હૂઁ.' **('Bhāvaiṃ kubhāryuṃ anakh ālasa hu')** – the name of God recited by any soul in any situation never goes waste.

So, make it a habit. Don't think to recite the name of God whenever you wish, instead make it a habit. Because, at the time of leaving this world, you won't have control over your mind. But if you have the habit of reciting his name, you can recite his name unknowingly too! And it will bring you salvation. Therefore, you must have a habit to recite His name. Further, the stories of the veneration by Daksha Prajapati and curse by Narada are described in the book. In the story of Daksha Prajapati, the description of his sixty daughters is given. Once Brihaspati, the guru of Devatas, gives up his position as their Guru due to insult done by Indra. Then, devatas lose their guru. Not having a Guru is a shortfall because without a Guru one does not have any guidance. They can be easily defeated by Asuras without a guide. So, they appoint Vishwarupa as their Guru. Now, Vishwarupa became their Guru and he gave them the knowledge of 'Narayana-Kavacha'. Now, Vishvarupa's mother was an Asura and therefore he gave a part of it to Asuras. When Indra came to know it, he killed their Guru. Now, Indra was the culprit of killing a Brahmin. Sage Tvashta got angry on him as Vishwarupa was his son. He decides to arrange a yagna and have a son who will kill Indra. He arranges for it and starts it. Performing the Yagna, sages are chanting mantras and giving their offerings reciting 'Swaha'.. 'Swaha'....

But, there was a mistake in the mantra. The words in the mantra which meant 'slayer of Indra' were misspelled and Instead of the slayer of Indra, a demon named Vritrasura appears from it, who will be slayed by Indra. Vritrasura is terrifying and enormous and with him they begin the preparations to fight with gods and attack Swarga(heaven). To fight against Vritrasura, sage Dadhichi gives his bones to create the Vajra (thunderbolt). The Supreme Being enters the Vajra and with that weapon, Indra, mounted on the elephant Airavata, has come to fight the battle. When Vritrasura goes to fight, his gaze falls upon the Vajra. Through the Vajra, Vritrasura gets a vision of the Lord. He realizes, "Oh! My death is certain now! In this thunderbolt, I see God Himself. Vritrasura praises Him. Vritrasura is a demon, yet he is a devotee. He saw God even in death. He has no regret for his death. His fate is in the hands of God, and he finds joy in it. He venerates God with wonderful prayer. The fourfold goals of life—dharma (righteousness), artha (prosperity), kama (pleasure), and moksha (liberation) — are explained by Shri Mahaprabhu ji in the verse named 'Chatushloki' in Shodash Granth. Similarly, Vritrasura, in his prayer, speaks of these fourfold goals. He talks about the dharma of Vaishnavas, their meaning, and what kama and moksha are. So, there is a beautiful discussion of the fourfold goals of life. Shri Mahaprabhuji says,

पुष्टिमार्गे हरेर्दास्यं धर्मः अर्थो हरिरेव हि ।
कामो हरिदिदृक्षैव मोक्षो कृष्णस्य चेद् ध्रुवम् ॥

Puṣṭimārge harer dāsyaṃ dharmaḥ artho harireva hi |
Kāmo harididṛkṣaiva mokṣo Kṛṣṇasya ced dhruvam ||

(In the Pusthimarga, service to Hari is righteousness; Hari alone is wealth; the only desire is the vision of Hari; and liberation is the assured attainment of Krishna.)

Devotion to the Lord is our true religion. 'अर्थो हरिरेव हि' **('artho harireva hi')** means that wealth itself is the Supreme Lord. 'कामो हरिदिदृक्षैव' **('Kāmo harididṛkṣaiva ')** means the desire to see God is the true longing of a Vaishnav. And 'मोक्षो कृष्णस्य चेद् ध्रुवम्' **('mokṣo Kṛṣṇasya ced dhruvam ')** means that liberation is to have one's heart fully devoted to the Lord's feet. This is the essence of a Vaishnav's salvation."

The dharma, artha, kama, and moksha of an ordinary person and those of a Vaishnav are different. Therefore, the fourfold goals of life are explained here to distinguish between them.

अहं हरेर्तव पादैक मूलं
दासानुदासो भवितास्मि भूयः ।
मनः स्मरेतासुपतेर्गुणांस्ते
गृणीत् वाक्कर्म करोतु कायः ॥

Aham harer tava pādaika mūlam
Dāsānudāso bhavitāsmi bhūyaḥ |
Manaḥ smaret asupater guṇān te
Gṛṇīt vāk karma karotu kāyaḥ ||

(I am rooted at the very base of Your lotus feet, O Hari. May I become, again and again, the servant of the servants. May my mind remember the virtues of the Lord of Lakshmi; may my speech sing them, and may my body act in their service.)

My mind constantly remembers You. My tongue sings Your praises. Serving You is our true religion." The Lord says, "Ask something from Me." Vritrasura replies, "After having asked You, I no longer feel the desire to ask for anything else. If I must ask, then I ask from You, because once I have found You, who possess everything, You become mine. What else remains to be asked for?"

One day, Bhagavan visited a devotee, thinking, "Let me test My devotee." He entered the courtyard by opening the gate. The devotee came to welcome Him, saying, "Prabhu! Please come, please come." At that moment, God asked, "Whose cart is lying in the courtyard?" The devotee replied, "Prabhu, it is Yours." They then entered the drawing room, and God saw a TV. He asked, "Whose TV is this?" The devotee replied, "Prabhu, it is Yours." "And whose sofa is this?" God asked. The devotee answered, "It is Yours, God." God kept asking about each item, "Whose is this?" and the devotee would answer, "It is Yours." In this way God toured the entire house, asking about every valuable item. "Whose is this? Whose is that?" and every time, the devotee would reply, "It is Yours, God."

As they wandered around in the house, they entered the room of seva, where Thakur ji was seated in the temple. God asked, "Whose Thakur ji is this?" The devotee replied, "Everything is Yours, but this is mine, Prabhu! You are mine because when someone who owns everything, becomes mine, then everything automatically feels like it is mine."

'अहं हरेर्तव पादैक मूले' **('Aham harer tava pādaika mūlam')** – In terms of Dharma, they expressed 'I wish I could even serve the servant of your devotee who has taken refuge in Your lotus feet." In terms of Artha, they expressed "I do not desire anything else apart from You." And while expressing 'Kama' they said,

अजातपक्षा इव मातरं खगाः ।
स्तन्यं यथा वत्सतराः क्षुधार्ताः ॥
प्रियं प्रियेव व्युषितं विषण्णा ।
मनोऽरविन्दाक्षदिदृक्षते त्वाम् ॥

Ajātapakṣā iva mātaraṃ khagāḥ |
Stvanyaṃ yathā vatsatarāḥ kṣudhārtāḥ ||
Priyaṃ priyeva vyuṣitaṃ viṣaṇṇā |
Mano 'ravindākṣadi-dṛkṣate tvām ||

(As unfledged birds yearn for their mother,as hungry calves long for their nourishment; as a beloved woman, sorrowful after separation, longs for her dear one— so does my mind yearn to behold You, O lotus-eyed Lord.)

May the longing to see You arise in my heart, may it awaken in my eyes. When my eyes open, I may see You. Such intense desire to behold You is my 'kama'.

That's why, in Venu-Geeta gopies (the female cowherds) say 'अक्षण्वतां फलमिदं', **('Akṣaṇvatāṃ phalam idaṃ')** (This is the fruit for those who have eyes) and 'पूजां दधुर्विरचितां प्रणयावलोकैः ॥' **('Pūjāṃ dadhur vicitāṃ praṇāya-valokaiḥ')** (They offered worship of many kinds through reverent gestures and loving glances.) there where 'does' see God and it appears that they are praising Him by their eyes

Here, Vritrasura requests, "I must have the desire of seeing you like that of chicks waiting for their mother who has gone to bring food. But again, I see chicks leave their mother after learning to fly.

Then he says, 'स्तन्यं यथावत्सतराः क्षुधार्ताः' **('Stanyaṃ yathā-vatsatarāḥ kṣudhārtāḥ')** I must have the desire to see you like that of a hungry calf waiting for its mother who was away for whole of the day to graze. When it sees the cow, it goes to her and jumps around. It doesn't go to feed

immediately, but it jumps around and wants to feel it's mother's presence. O! God! I may have that desire in my mind for you but then I see when the calf starts eating grass, it too leaves its mother.

So, they said, 'प्रियं प्रियेव व्युषितं विषण्णा', **('Priyaṃ priyeva vyuṣitaṃ viṣaṇṇā')** may your desire remain in my mind just like that of a lady who lounges for her lover. Thus, it is the 'Kama' of a devotee.

ममोत्तम श्लोकजनेषु सख्यं
संसारचक्रे भ्रमतः सर्वकर्मभिः ।
त्वन्मायया त्मात्मजदार गेहे
ष्वासक्तचित्तस्य न नाथ भूयात् ॥

Mamottama śloka-janeṣu sakhyaṃ
saṃsāra-cakre bhramataḥ sarvakarmabhiḥ |
Tvan-māyā-yātma-tmatja-dāra gehe
ghvā-sakta-cittasya na nātha bhūyāt ||

Once a lady was going to meet her lover, she was in such a hurry that she didn't notice a devout performing salah in her way. She runs over him putting her leg on his back. When she gets back the devout scolds her for the earlier incident saying, 'didn't you see me offering namaz there'? The lady, in turn, says, 'Oh! Please forgive me for that but isn't it strange that I, who was going to meet my human lover, was so lost in love that I couldn't see you praying there but you, who was in the thoughts of That Spiritual lover, were in your physical senses and could sense me going over you? In this way Vritrasura describes 'Kama' and describing 'Moksha' he says,

May my mind always be in You. 'Moksh' for a devotee is to always remain in thoughts of God. A devotee never wants to get free from the cycle of birth and death! He wants to take birth one after another to serve God. A devotee wants to take birth in a vaishnava family where there the seva is performed. He wants to offer service to God and wants to enjoy that. So, for a devotee, 'Moksha' is to serve God forever.

After the story of Vritrasura, there comes the story of Chitraketu. They have described the story of his prior birth first. After a long time, a King and a Queen got a child but out of jealousy another queen of him kills that child. The king and the queen repent it.

By the grace of God, they got the chance to call the soul of the dead child back. When they inform the soul about the mourning of its parents, the soul says that it has taken many births and in each one it had a mother and a father. The soul then tells them about its journey over the births. It says that just like the air that takes the fragrance from flowers and loses it over the course and then gets the foul smell and again leaves it, a soul also takes a body and leaves it and with that body it sheds all its desires.

After this story of a soul giving the explanation about the cycle of birth and death, there comes the story of the birth of the children of Diti and Aditi and Maruta-gana. Then there comes the description of Punsavana Vidhi.

Now let us rest the Katha of Sixth Skandha.

'Shri Krishna Kanhaiya Laal ki Jay'

'Shri Goverdhana Natha ki Jay'

●

The Seventh Skandha (Uti Leela)

'Uti' is the desire to act, to do karma. Shri Mahaprabhuji says there are three types of Desires, 1) good desire, 2) bad desire and 3) the mixed desire.

Good is the desire of Devas, bad is that of asuras and mixed is that of humans. There are fifteen chapters in Shrimad Bhagavata dedicated to this leela of bhagavana.

King Pareekshit asked Shri Shukdeva ji, "Is God biased? In every story, I see that God supports the devas and opposes the asuras. This seems to be a sign of partiality, and it might lead to an accusation of bias against God."

Shukadeva ji then explains, the same question was asked by Yudhishthira during the Rajasooya Yagna. He asked 'Is Bhagavana biased?' Then they said, 'just like a doctor, who cuts the finger of a patient when it gets rotten due to an amputated wound, does not have any personal grudges with the patient, Bhagavan also does not have and grudges with Asuras but to save the world from getting destroyed, he kills Asuras and saves Devas. Because the only

object of Bhagavana is to establish Dharma in the world. And it doesn't have anything to do with Devas and Asuras. He treats both of them equally for this.

To answer this question, Shukadeva ji told the story of Prahlada. He says, "Kayadhhu is expecting a baby and her husband Hiranyakashipu (a demon) is a great opponent of Bhagavana Vishnu because He killed his brother Hiranyaksha.

He constantly thinks to take revenge of the murder of his brother.

To take the revenge, he thinks to get a boon from Brahma ji and leaves his home to do penance. He has left Kayadhu, who is pregnant, behind. But she gets the good company of Narada ji. Just like Pareekshit has got the darshan of Bhagavan in his mother's womb, Prahalad has got the good company of a saint. And his intellect has become pious in the womb itself.

Hiranyakashipu did a severe penance. Brahma ji pleased and came to give him a boon. Brahma ji said, 'ask for a boon, I will grant it', he asked for the boon of immortality. Brahma ji denies it saying, 'even I am not immortal'. When the world gets dissolved, I also get destroyed. Ask for something else. Then he asks for the boon, "I may not die either in the day or at night, I may not die in the home or out, I may not be killed by any human or animal, I may not be killed by any weapon, I may not die in any of the twelve months and I may not die on the land or in the sky. Brahma ji says, 'May it be'

Whenever I come upon the story of Prahlada, I think that Bhagavan, if wants to shower His grace, can shower his grace by any means, even if there exist many restrictions. Hiranyakashipu tried to trick Brahma ji through his boon but Bhagavan found a way to reach to Prahlada. That's why I always say,"keep faith". Even if you feel that you have no way open, you always have a way from where God reaches you. Be assured, he definitely sends someone to rescue you, to keep you safe. So, don't lose faith or hope in Him. The conditions may turn unfavourable; you couldn't see any path but don't lose your faith.

Now, after getting the boon, Hiranyakashipu starts thinking that I am the God. He announces that if anyone wants to worship, then he must worship the King, I.e. Hiranya Kashipu.

Now, Prahalad has grown up and the king has arranged for his education under the deciples of Shukaracharya. They will come and train him the Asura-Niti i.e. the ways of Asuras. They

started teaching Prahlada daily. But, when they leave, Prahlada gathers other students and starts chanting God's name.

One day Hiranyakashipu thinks to test Prahlada. He summons Prahlada in his court and takes him on his lap. Then, he asks, 'tell me what have you learnt?' Prahlada says, 'Father! There are nine ways to worship Bhagavan'

श्रवणं कीर्तनं विष्णोः स्मरणं पादसेवनम् ।
अर्चनं वन्दनं दास्यं सख्यं आत्मनिवेदनम् ॥

Śravaṇaṃ kīrtanaṃ Viṣṇoḥ smaraṇaṃ pāda-sevanam |
Arcanaṃ vandanaṃ dāsyaṃ sakhyaṃ ātma-nivedanam ||

("Hearing (His glories), chanting (His names), remembering Vishnu, serving His feet, worshipping, offering reverence, servitude, friendship, and complete self-surrender.")

Listening to this, Hiranyakashipu gets angry, 'Where did you learn all this?' He summons Prahlada's guru and says, "Guruji! Teach him Asura-Niti. He must not get the habits of a worshiper of God.' So, they again started teaching him the Asura-tradition.

After sometime, He again summons Prahlada, and asks, "tell me what have you learnt Prahlada? He says, '**जाके प्रिय न राम वैदेही, ताहीं तजीये कोटी सम बैरी, जद्यपि परम सनेही' ('jaake priya na Ram - Vaidehi, tahi tajiye koti sama bairi, yadyapi parama sanehi')** means you should know those as your enemy who don't like God. Now Prahlada's father gets angry that where is he learning all this! He intimidates Prahlada for worshinping God and says, "if you won't stop worshipping God, I will forget that you are my child and kill you.

Prahlada answers, "O father! God is the saviour and he is the destroyer too... we are no one to do all this!"

See! Arjuna also faced the same problem. He thought that if I will kill, all will be killed! He forgot that the one whom God saves can never be killed and the one whom He has decided to kill, cannot be saved by anyone. Bhagavan wants to remove this arrogance of Arjuna. Arjuna became arrogant for two things during his life: (1) if I will kill, they will be killed and (2) (of which Arjuna was unaware) if I won't kill, they will be saved. But, who is Arjuna to kill or save others?

Here, Hiranyakashipu again threatened Prahlada saying, "don't recite the name of God, else you will be punished! He tried everything to kill Prahalada, he threw Prahalad into well, threw him before elephant to crush him, and at last he let Prahlada sit in the lap of Holika, but nothing happened to Prahalada because God was saving him. Now, Hiranyakashipu gets tired.

One day, He calls Prahlada in his royal court. Meanwhile, he orders to heat a pole till red. Hiranyakashipu thinks, if Prahlada denies this time, I will tell him to hug this pole so that he will be burned alive.

Now, he makes Prahlada stand before that red heated pole and asks where is the Pramatma whom you worship. Tell me where is He? I want to see him! Prahlada says, Father, your question itself is wrong. You must not ask where is he? Instead, you must ask for the place where He isn't present! Because he is everywhere. And, when his father says, I want to see Him, Prahlada gets very happy and starts praying God, "O God! Please come as my father has wished to see you for the first time. Shower your grace upon him today. Then Prahalad says, "he is present everywhere, Hiranyakashipu says, If he is present everywhere then is he present in this pole too? Prahlada says, "yes father! He is there in that pole too! His father says, then go and hug that pole!

Prahlada starts towards the pole chanting the name of Bhagavan at every single step. Suddenly, the fire starts burning in all the Agni-Kunda (Fire places where saints do Yagna), saints start chanting Vaidik Mantras, wind takes the form of storm and the directions start giving a different aura. A sound like lion's roar starts from the pole. Prahalad is moving slowly towards pole and as soon as he hugs the pole, it blasts and Prabhu Narasimha emerges from it.

His eyes are red in anger and his locks are moving in the air. Paramatma has incarnated in the form of Narasimha i.e. half lion – half human. As soon as Hiranyakashipu sees Bhagavan Narasimha, he attacks Him with his mace. A fierce battle happens between them and at the end, Bhagavan takes Hiranyakashipu in his lap and reaches at the door of the palace. He tells Hiranyakashipu that see you are not in the sky or on the earth, you are in my lap, in front of Me, you are not in your home or out of it, I am not a human or an animal, see at my nails, they are not any sort of weapon, they are my nails. The time is that of Adhika Masa (the extra month that comes every two and a half years i.e. the time is other than the twelve months of the year) and it is not the time of morning or evening, it is the time between the day ends and night comes, and saying this, Bhagavan tears Hiranyakashipu with His nails.

As soon as Hiranyakashipu is slain, all the devatas come there in their space-crafts and showers flower upon Bhagavan Narasimha. "Hail Shri Narasimha Bhgavana'. Whole of the universe is praising Him, but Bhagavan is still angry and now all start fearing that now the world will get dissolved in His anger, there will be apocalypse. If his anger doesn't end, the result will be the destruction of all the three worlds. Now, they all want to calm Him down but no one is getting any ways to do that.

Devatas get scared and run away and ask Lakshmi ji to do something. She tells, I will calm him. As soon as she goes to Him, Bhagavan roars and Lakshmi ji too gets scared. Then all of them decides to let Prahlada try, because he is the reason behind this incarnation of God.

Prahlada joins his hands and goes to Him fearlessly. Upon seeing him, Paramatma gets emotional. Bhagavan takes him and makes him sit on his lap. Just like a cow who cleans its calf with the help of tongue Paramatma starts cleaning Prahalad.

He praises Prahlada, "O dear, you faced many problems still you didn't complaint, you didn't ask for help!

Prahlada says, '**स वै वणिक:' ('sa vai vaṇikaḥ')** the one who asks for anything in exchange of bhakti is a businessman. And I know you are so kind and loving that you won't deny any help when needed. I have faith.

Then Prabhu says, 'dear Prahlada, "I want to give you something, just ask for a wish! When a jeeva comes to meet you he takes something from you but when Paramatma comes to meet you, he gives you something. Prahlada denies many times that I don't want anything and Prabhu insists him a lot. At last, Prahlada says:

As you are insisting, I ask that I may not feel any urge to ask for anything from you. May you shower your grace upon me in this way only.

Prabhu says, I want to shower my grace upon you. I know you don't have any wish but I want to enjoy my godliness by giving you. I always give to my devotees regardless of their wish or desire to get but I enjoy giving as a mother who gets peace of motherhood by feeding her child. So, I want to give you.

Then Prahlada says joining his hands, 'O God! If you want to give me anything then please bless my father that his soul wouldn't get any suffering and would get moksha.

Bhagavan says, 'a person is lucky to have a son like you as he becomes the reason for the liberation of 21 generations of his family, seven of their father, seven of their mother, and seven of their in-law's generations. If someone has a relative like you at their home, the whole family gets liberation.

Then Prahlad ji praises Bhagavana by a beautiful composition saying 'O Bhagavana! you don't get happy by any means, you only get happy by the true love of your devotees. 'પ્રીતમ પ્રીત હી સો પાઈયે, યદ્યપિ રૂપ ગુણ શીલ સુઘડતા ઈન બાત ન રીઝીયે.' **('Pritam preet hi so paaiye, yadyapi roop gun sheel sughadta in baat n rijaiye')** O God! You don't get attracted towards the materials you only get happy with the love of devotees only.

Then there is the descriptions of Tripura-Dahana, Madhava Dharma, Varna Dharma, and Stree-dharma in the story.

Now, let us rest here the Katha of the Seventh Skandha.

Shri Krishna Laal ki Jay!

Shri Goverdhana Natha ki Jay!

●

The Eighth Skandha (Manavantara Leela)

There are twenty-four chapters in this canto. There is a time calculation given in our Hindu Scriptures. In that, there comes a word called Manavantara. A Manavantara is a period of time during which Manu, Manuputras, Indra-deva, Sapta-rishis and Bhagvada – Avatara happen.

In one Kalpa, there are 14 manavantaras and in this way Bhagavata ji has the whole description of time calculation. Then there comes the story of Gajendra Moksha.

There is a big forest in the low-land areas of Trikuta mountain. There lived an elephant named Gajendra. He had many mates and offsprings. He had all the happiness of the world and when

this happiness comes it lets you forget the death, the eternal truth. See, it is a hint and we have to understand the hidden meanings. Gajendra is the representation of a Jeeva, the lake is the representation of this world and the allegator is the time. See, Gajendra is made an elephant, the soul has been given the simile of an Elephant. Whenever we ask something to a jeeva, they give their introduction through their elegant past. An elephant is the representation of elegancy. So, a jeeva gives their introduction through their past elegancy. But there exists the eternal truth of death. Death is certain.

When Gajendra was enjoying in the lake with his family, the allegator clutches its leg. It is said that the power of an allegator increases tenfold while in water. So, it started pulling Gajendra and he started to drown in the water. His family left as soon as they see him drowning.

People tend to say that ask for help when in need but when someone approaches for help, they don't help. So, his family went away and he was left alone. See, the journey of life is the same! No one goes with those who are on the funeral pyre. No one comes with you in death.

धनानि भूमौ पशवश्च गोष्ठे भार्या गृहद्वारि जना: श्मशाने ।
देहश्चितायां परलोकमार्गे कर्मानुगो गच्छति जीव एक: ॥

Dhanāni bhūmau paśavaś ca goṣṭhe bhāryā gṛha-dvāri janāḥ śmaśāne |
Deha-citāyāṃ para-loka-mārge karmo-nugo gacchati jīva ekaḥ ||

(Wealth remains on the earth, cattle stay in the cowshed,the wife remains at the doorway of the house, and relatives at the cremation ground. The body lies on the funeral pyre;on the path to the next world, the soul alone goes on, accompanied only by its deeds.)

The things that you have earned are to be left behind and the deeds you have done goes everywhere with you. Therefore, the karma and dharma done during the life time are the assets that always remain with a soul. The things written in the fate do not last with life, they are there to be erased through karma itself. There is no rest in this cycle.

What is fate? It is what we write through the pen of our karma. Karma returns in the form of fate. We write it ourself.

So, everyone ran away and Gajendra was drowning. At last, only its trunk remained out of the water. It called for its family but no one came. So, in the last it remembered God. It took a lotus

and started calling Him saying 'He Hari!' And Paramatma came on his Garuda. 'હે ગોવિંદ, હે ગોપાલ, હે ગોવિંદ રાખો શરણ, અબ તો જીવન હારે. હે ગોવિંદ, હે ગોપાલ.' **('He Govind, he Gopal, he Govind raakho sharan, ab to jeevan haareHe Govind, he Gopal')** When it said 'ha' Paramatma started with Garuda for there and as soon as it chanted 'ri', Paramatma has liberated the allegator. Now, here arises a question that why did Pramatma liberated the allegator first? Many people give different explanation for this. Some say as the allegator held the leg of a devotee it must get the liberation first. As Shri Thakur ji first showers his grace on those who serve His devotees.

Now just imagine the situation when someone forgets to invite his best friend for the celebration of any occasion. Everyone ask the friend that when are you going to attend the function and they say I am not invited. I am their friend for a long but they forget to invite me. Now, when someone else tell them that they have forgotten to invite their best friend. He gets shocked and reaches to invite them.

He invites just the night before the function and the friend says, 'you forget me earlier and invited everyone else, it is not to be done, now, I won't come to attend. Such people are to be told as worldly people. They deny if you remember them at the last moment but here, it is Paramatma who comes first even if you remember Him last. So, when Gajendra calls him, he reaches to save him and then Gajendra praises Him with a beautiful composition saying him the ocean of grace.

Next, there comes the katha of Samudra Manthan in Chakshusha Manavantara. Bhagavan made both Devas and Asuras understand the situation and then he took the form of a big turtle and served as the base for the Churner of Ocean, Mount Mandarachala. Hail, Kachchhapa Bhagavana! they made serpent Vasuki the rope. The churning of the ocean starts and it is said that there came 14 precious things out of it. First of all, there came Kalakoota, the most poisonous potion ever. Why so, it is because whenever we go to do a good deed there comes the poison of criticism. But a Vaishnava drinks that poison. They drink it, but they don't swallow it nor keep it in on their tongue. They keep it in their neck. So, a Vaishnava must drink the poison of criticism. But they must not spill it in their talks. Why so? Because whenever a person criticises or complaints about it, they lose their good deeds. Have you seen those who work hard but don't have any humility in their words? So, a Vaishnava must not keep the

poison of any taboo in their mind or in their words. So, when Kalakoota came out, Shiva ji kept it in His throat and got the name 'Neelakantha' then there came 'Kamadhenu' a cow which was taken by rishis. Then there came a horse named 'Uchchaishrava' which was taken by King Bali. Then came 'Airavata' the elephant, which was taken by Indra. 'Koustubha' a precious stone was taken by Prabhu and 'Kalpavrukhsha' went to the heaven. Then there came Lakshmi ji who married to Vishnu ji. Then there came Bhagavan Dhanavantari, who had the pot of elixir in hand, on Dhanaterasa and he took the form of Mohini and said 'don't fight over this, this elixir is thinner on the upper layer and thicker in the bottom. Mohini was so beautiful and captivating that every Asura was captivated and became ready to follow everything she told.

So, Mohini said that, "let me distribute the thinner elixir to Devatas and then I will give you the thicker. Asuras said, "Do as you wish, if you want devatas to drink it first, let it be.

Then all the Devatas sat in a que to have elixir. See, a Kumbha fare is going to be held in some time. Where do we have these fares? They are places where the drops of this elixir were dropped during the battle between devata and asuras. It is said that whenever during the revolution, the earth comes in a particular nakshatra and muhurta these places effect like elixir. When a jeeva bathes there, they get that elixir.

So, the elixir too couldn't solve the dispute between Devatas and Danavas (gods and demons). So, one should never think that having elixir will end the disputes and problems. They will be there until you will have Kathamruta – The elixir of Katha. The only way to end the disputes is the Katha – amruta.

So, when Mohini was giving elixir to Devatas, Rahu sensed something wrong. He went and sat between Sun god and Moon god and had it. Bhagavan attacked him with His Sudarshana and severed his head. Now due to the effect of elixir, they became two- Rahu and Ketu.

Then there comes the story of Shukracharya who makes Asuras alive after death by using the knowledge of Sanjeevani. After it, they attacked the heaven again and devatas had to run away. They did hide in the caves. Seeing this their mother gets sad and goes to sage Kashyapa. She asks him for a remedy for her children and rishi Kashyap says her about 'Payo-Vrata'. Then when there came the favourable time of 12th day of month Bhadrapada Bhagavan incarnated as Vamana Bhagavana on this earth. 'Hail Vamana Bhagavan'.

When he incarnated as Vamana Bhagavana, Devatas became happy and gave him many gifts like Kamandala (a water pot), a chhatra (an Umbrella), a Manji-mekhala (a belt) and a danda (a stick). Having all these, Vamana Bhagavan reaches Bharucha, at the banks of river Narmada, where King Bali was performing a fire sacrifice.

Vamana Bhagavana had a highly bright aura around him seeing which everyone was dazzled. Everyone got stood. **'स्वागतं ते नमस्तुभ्यं' ('svāgatam te namas tubhyam')**, O Lord! You are welcome. What should I do to please you! Please tell if you want anything, King Bali requested.

We often get confused about giving something to a sage or a saint. So, Bhagavana Vamana says, "I don't want anything. I am a satisfied Brahmin. So, if you really want to give me anything, I want three paces of land measured by my paces.' King Bali laughed and said you are so small and also want a small thing. Listen o sage! The one who asks from me never asks from anyone else later. If you tell me I can give you many villages, if you want I can give you many cows and if you want I can give you many precious stones. Just tell me whatever you want.

Bhagavana says, 'If you really want to give, give what I have asked or I will leave. I don't want as you wish, I want as my wish.' King Bali says, 'Alright ask me.' He takes water in his hand to give his acceptance, meanwhile Shukracharya says, "Stop! Stop! Do you know who is he? He is Bhagavan himself who has come to take everything from you. If you will give, you will lose everything.'

King Bali says, 'If it is so, then no other is as lucky as me! The one who give to all of the world has come to me!' So, you must remember a thing that you must do the good deed, you must do the seva, you must give things but when God gives you the opportunity to give, then you must not let it go! Just grab that!

Here, Shukracharya is warning King Bali, but Bali denies saying it's not good to lie. Then, Shukracharya preaches the 'Shukra-neeti'

स्त्रीषु नर्मविवाहे च वृत्यर्थे प्राणसंकटे ।
गोब्राह्मणहिंसायां नानृतं स्याज्जुगुप्सितम् ॥

Strīṣu narmavivāhe ca vṛtyarthe prāṇa-saṅkaṭe |
Gobrahmaṇa-hinsāyāṃ nānṛtaṃ syāj jugupsitam ||

Following are the conditions where you can lie.

'स्त्रीषु' ('strīṣu') You can lie to your wife. If a person has to hide their capabilities, then they can lie. But these all are the concepts of Shukra-neeti, Asura-neeti. So, we don't have to learn it.

'नर्म विवाहे च' ('narmavivāhe ca') So, according to Shukra-neeti, one can lie for marriage and for business too! there are so many other statements of Shukra-neeti given here. But, king Bali didn't heed and took the vow to give the three paces of land. As soon as he took the vow, Bhagavan became Virata (ginormous) from Vamana (small, tiny form) and in His two paces he took the two lokas(worlds) and then asked Bali for the third pace. Bali kneeled and said to put the third pace on his head and offered himself to him. Then, Bhagavan made Bali the king of Sutala loka and became his gatekeeper.

After sometime Laxmi ji got tensed about Him. When she asked Narad ji about Him, he said, He is there at Bali's place and playing the role of a gatekeeper.

Then, came the day of Rakshabandhana. Lakshmi ji went to King Bali that day with her plate of Rakhi. King Bali was seated on his throne there and she made him her brother.

Bali said you have tied me the Raksha, then now tell me what do you want in your blessings or gift?

She says, "I don't want anything else then your gatekeeper. And from that day on the tradition of tying Rakhi on the brother's hand became popular.

Then, there comes the katha of Matsyavatara. There was a king named Satyavrata. One day he was standing near Krutamala river. He took a palmful of water and there came a fish in his hand. He took it to his home and put it in the pot. Then, the fish expanded itself to get rarely fit into the pot, the king then puts it in the pond and it again expanded itself when it was put into a lake, it again did the same. At last, the king took it to the ocean, where again it expanded itself to fit the size of the ocean. King sensed something and then joining his hands he asked it, "who are you?" Hail, Matsya Bhagavana.

Bhagavan tells him that, "Pralaya (dissolution of the world) is going to happen in sometime. Whole of the world will get drowned in the water, then a boat will come to you. Save all the vedas and the species of animals and plants on that. Then, I will come there in this fish form, tie that boat on me and I will protect you during that time.

It happned as Paramatma said and Bhagavana Matsya saved the whole world. The details of this whole story are given there in Matsya-Purana.

Let us now rest the story of the Eight Skandha of the Bhagavata-Purana'

Krishna Kanhaiya Laal ki Jay

Shri Govardhan Nath ki Jay

●

The Ninth Skandha (Ishanu Katha)

There are 24 chapters in this canto. The stories of devotees are given here. Also, there is the description of lineage of various kings. A question one can think about here is, 'How can a person tell the stories of the families of other kings when he knows that the listener is going to die in seven next two or three days.

They say, "they are not the kings but they are the devotees and they are praised here.' Listening to the stories of devotees God gets happy.

Then there is the story of Sudyumna, the story of Naabhaaga who is the son of Nabhag. He went to study and when he returned, he saw that all their property was distributed in his brothers and when he asked about his share, they said you have got our father in your share.

Remember! You are lucky to have parents. The era now is the era in which one must make friends. You must make friends with your parents, you must make friends with your son. But, I will advise the youngsters here that don't make friends with your parents. Let them be the parents, because you can get many people to make friends with but you won't get many hands to give you blessings. They are not there to shake hands with; they are there to give you blessings with their hands. Because, if they shake hands with them, you will be left out without blessings.

There is a trend to say thank you for everything someone does for you. If a child also does something for you, you say thank you. But, I would advice the elder ones to bless your youngsters when they do anything for you. Your blessings will help them for lifetime. So, whenever you want to thank your young ones, don't say 'thank you', bless them instead. Remember, blessings of parents never go useless. So, one must urge to take blessings. It may happen that one's intellect stops to respond, his luck stops to support or his motivation to do any karma dies, but blessings never leave a man. In times of need, blessings always help a man and therefore if there is anything to collect, they are blessings. Blessings of elderly and parents.

Let us continue with the katha of Naabhaag; Naabhaaga says, I am lucky to have my father with me. After that, he serves his father so well that it was compared with the worship of Mahadeva. At last, he gets all the wealth and lives happily.

Then, there is the story of king Ambarisha. He was a famous devotee of Dvarkadheesha ji. He was a Chakravarty (the ruler of four continents) and still he did the seva on his own. Once, sage Durvasa decides to test him. King used to do fasting on the day of the Ekadashi. Sage Durvasa with his disciples went to his palace on the day of Ekadashi and asked for the food. King welcomed him and said to have food there. Then, sage Durvasa and his disciples go to bathe to the river and don't return for a long. It is said that the fast goes unfruitful if the day of Ekadashi ends without eating. Therefore, the king ate the leaves of Tulsi (Basil leaves) to complete his fast.

When sage Durvasa comes to know that the King has eaten without his guests, he gets angry and leaves a 'Krutya' (a being formed from the energy of Penance) on the king. Seeing this, Bhagavan attacks Durvasa with his Sudarshana Chakra (the weapon which is in the form of a disc). Rishi Durvasa, in fear, runs to seek refuge. But everyone denies. At last, he goes to Bhagavan himself and asks for protection crying, "save me, save me from this 'Sudarshana Chakra'". Bhagavan then says, '**अहं भक्तपराधीनो**' **('aham bhakta-parādhīno')** i.e. I act as my devotee wish. Go and ask for forgiveness from the one you have wronged. Rishi Durvasa goes to Ambarisha and asks for forgiveness. In this way, the story of Ambarisha comes to end.

Next, there is the story of King Harishchandra, king Sagar, and king Bhagiratha, who made Ganga ji descend on Earth for his ancestors. When he goes to Ganga ji asking for her descend,

she says there is no one on the earth who can sustain my force. Mahadva ji then says, 'I can do it' and he holds Ganga ji in his locks. From his locks, River Ganga descends on the Earth and Bhagiratha takes her to the place where his ancestors get salvation. In this way, Bhagiratha guides Ganga ji on the Earth.

Then comes the story of 'Rama-Janma' i.e. the birth of Rama. His family is known as Soorya-vamsha. In this family, there came Khatyanga father of Deergha-baahu. Deergha-bahu was father to Raghu, Raghu had Aja as his son and son of Aja is Dasharatha. Maryada-purushottama, i.e. the best among honourable men, Rama was a son of Dasharatha. Tulsi-das ji has written in Shri Ram-Charita-Manas that

अवधपुरी रघुकुल मनि राऊ वेद विदित तेहि दशरथ नाऊ ।
धरम धुरंधर गुननिधि ज्ञानी हृदय भगति मति सारंग पानी ॥

Avadhkul raghukul mani raau, ved vidit tehi dasharath naau |
dharam dhurandhar gunanidhi gyaani, hridaya bhagati mati saarang paani ||

Dasharatha is the king of Avadha. He has three queens, yet there is no successor of the throne. He was worried that who will take the throne after him, who will serve his people, who will protect them?

श्रृंगी ऋषिहि वशिष्ठ बोलावा ।
पुत्रकाम सुभ जग्य करावा ॥

Shringi rishihi Vasishtha bolaava |
Putrakaam subh jagya karaava ||

In his worries, he sends message to Vashishtha Muni to bring up a solution. He goes to his Guru and tells everything about himself. One must always be cautious to tell his things to anyone because if one shares his happiness, it may cause jealousy in the listener and if one shares sorrows, he may be laughed upon. Only a good guru can listen to these. So, Dasharatha goes to his guru and shares his worries. His guru preaches about the 'Putra Kameshthi Yagna (a fire sacrifice that is done with the aim to get a progeny). Dasharatha arranges and performs the said fire sacrifice. Bhagavan Yagya-Narayana gets pleased and appears there with a pot of prasadam. The prasada is distributed in all the three queens and the time is about to come

नवमी तिथि मधुमास पुनिता ।
सुकल पच्छ अभिजात हरिप्रीता ॥

Navamī tithi madhumāsa punitā |
Sukala paccha abhijita hariprītā ||

Then on the ninth day of the waxing moon of the Chaitra month, the man who gives happiness to all took birth on this earth- Hail Shri Ramchandra. Hail the Four Brothers! Hail Avadhapuri Dhama!

There is a brief Ramayana in Bhagavata Purana too. It describes the whole character of Rama in brief. Let us bow to Shri Rama.

Next there is the story of king Nimi, the destruction of Kshatriyas by Parashurama, the description of Chandravamsha, Yayati and Rantideva.

This Rantideva was so kind that God was also happy with his kindness. God tested him by not allowing him to get any food for many days. And when he got some, gods came in the form of dog and took it. He gave it to the dog. God pleased and said to ask for something then Rantidev said, "if you want to bless me then O God! Bless me with the sorrows of everyone. May I get the sorrows of others and they may sleep peacefully. Rantideva was truly a kind king.

Let us rest the story of the Ninth Skandha here.

Krishna Kanhaiya Laal ki Jay

Shri Goverdhan nath ki Jay

●

The Tenth Skandha (Nirodh leela)

90 Chapters (3 Interpolated Chapters)

There is a total of 90 chapters in this book and Shri Mahaprabhu ji considers 3 interpolated chapters, which have a mention in Mangalacharana

चतुर्भिश्च चतुर्भिश्च चतुर्भिश्च त्रिभिस्तथा ।
षड्भिर्विराजते योऽसौ पंचधा हृदये मम ॥

Caturbhiś ca caturbhiś ca caturbhiś ca tribhis tathā |
Ṣaḍbhiḥ virājate yo 'sau pañchadhā hṛdaye mama ||

When you recite this shloka, you remember the whole tenth canto of Shri Bhagavata ji. It is the prakarana vibhaga and in this one shloka, Shri Mahaprabhuji remembers the tenth canto.

It is Nirodha-leela **'प्रपंचविस्मृतिपूर्वकं भगवदासक्तिः निरोधः ।' ('Prapañca-vismṛti-pūrvakaṃ Bhagavad-āsaktiḥ nirodha')** (Nirodha is exclusive attachment to Bhagavana arising from the forgetting of worldly involvement) God has the biggest heart. All the twelve bodyparts of God can be seen through eyes but the heart cannot be seen. It can only be felt. It should be earned through your deeds and this tenth canto is the heart of Bhagavan.

King Pareekshit, spoke naturally, revealing his feelings, to Shri Shukdevji:

कथितो वंशविस्तारो भवता सोमसूर्ययोः ।
राज्ञां चोभयवंश्यानां चरितं परमाद् भुतम् ॥

Kathito vaṃśa-vistāro bhavatā Somasūryayoḥ |
Rājñāṃ cobhaya-vaṃśyānāṃ caritaṃ paramād bhutam ||

O Gurudeva! Till now, you described many stories in brief and in short, but now we are going towards the story of my 'Ishta' (Shri Krishna) so, I request you to not cut it short. Please say it in detail, tell me every event of the life of my beloved Bhagavan Shri Krishna, whom I admire the most.

निवृत्ततर्षैरूपगीयमानाद्
भवौषधाच्छ्रोत्रमनोऽभिरामात् ।
क उत्तमश्लोक गुणानुवादात्
पुमान्विरज्येत विना पशुघ्नात् ॥

Nivṛtta-tar-vairūpagīyamānād
bhavauṣadhāc-chhotra-mano 'bhirāmāt |
Ka uttama-śloka guṇānuvādāt
pumānvira jyet vinā paśu-ghnāt ||

(From the glorification of the Supreme Lord — free from worldly taint, sung by the noble, the medicine for material existence, and delightful to the ear and the mind — who among humans would ever turn away from it, except one who is a slayer of animals?)

That would be a suicidal person who would not be interested in the story of God. At that, Sootji spoke,

एवं निशम्य भृगुनन्दन साधुवादम् ।
वैयासकिः स भगवानथ विष्णुरातम् ॥

Evaṃ niśamya Bhrigu-nandana sādhuvādam |
Vaiyāsakiḥ sa Bhagavān atha Viṣṇur ātam ||

You can notice that there were Pareekshit and Shukdeva ji Maharaj doing the Katha then, why Soot ji spoke here? To answer this, it is said that when King Pareekshit asked about Bhagavan, Shukadeva ji went into 'samadhi', the state of trance. Now, God got tensed that, who will preach Katha to Pareekshit for his salvation? Then, God Himself came in the heart of Shukadeva ji and therefore here the word स भगवानथ विष्णुरातम् **(Sa Bhagavānātha Viṣṇur ātam)** i.e. 'now onwards Bhagavan is going to tell the Katha' comes. And therefore, Soota ji came in between.

The Tenth Skandha is told by Bhagavan Himself. King Pareekshit has asked many questions like 'if Balarama took birth from the womb of Rohini ji then why he was called son of Devaki ji? Why did Bhagavan stayed in Vraj instead of staying at the home of Vasudeva ji and where did Bhagavan stay with Nanda ji and other Gopa (Cowherds). What leelas did He do in Madhupuri

and Vraj? Why did He kill Kamsa if he was his uncle? How many years did he live with the people of Yadu - Vamsha? How many wives did he have? And so on.....

The king further says, "I asked what I knew and there remains much. I request you to not confined to the answers of my questions only, leelas (activities) of thakurji are numerous and I want to listen to all those". As soon as the king tells this, Soota ji says, "the katha of Prabhu and questions about him are like Ganga ji which makes you pure, pious." Then he starts

There came a time when this earth became impious due to the bad deeds of people. Saddened by this it takes the form of a cow and goes to Brahma ji. Brahma ji says, "I know about your pain, let us go to The Ksheer-Sagar to get the solution." Reaching there, they venerate Nararayan with 'Purush-Sookta'. Then, Bhagavana pleases and appears in the mind of Brahma ji and says, "instruct all the devas to take birth on the earth in Vraj-Bhoomi. I will soon incarnate there".

Devatas start to take birth there in different forms: trees, cows or creepers, leaves, or medicinal plants. They have taken many forms and have started living there so that they can watch His leela and can become a help in completing it.

Meanwhile in Mathura, Devaki and Vasudev are getting married. A person has taken the whole responsibility of their marriage function and he is, Kamsa, Devaki's brother.

If an egoistic person gets a responsibility, he enjoys it. So, Kamsa has done all the arrangements for the marriage and after it he is excited to accompany Devaki to her in-law's place as her protecter, loving brother.

As soon as he draws the reins of the horses of their royal horse-cart, a celestial voice eco in sky, "O foolish Kamsa, "the eighth child of the one you are going to leave at her in-law's is going to kill you in the future". As soon as he hears this, Kamsa gets angry and draws his sword out and holds Devaki from her hair to kill her. Immediately, Vasudeva holds his hand and pleads saying, "O Dear! Will you kill your younger sister? A younger sister is said to be as a daughter, and your act of killing her will bring you infame and disgrace. I promise you that whenever we will have a child, I will bring it you. But Kamsa imprisons them. The time passes and during that Devaki

gives birth to six children one by one. Kamsa kills all of them. It is said that these six were the flaws of Devaki's character. Now the time when Prabhu will incarnate is near. Devaki has conceived for the seventh time. Through the divine intervention of Yoga-Maya, the embryo is transferred to the womb of Rohini, by Maya.

Rohini was residing in Gokul and Shesha ji has taken birth as the elder brother of Bhagavan. Now it is the time when Bhagavan will take birth on this earth. The favourable planet conditions have occurred. In the present times too, when the occasion of Janamashtami comes, eight and half shlokas (couplets) are recited in Haveli.

There is a fine description of the purifying of the five elements.

Describing the time Shukadeva ji speaks:

अथ सर्वगुणोपेत: काल: परमशोभन: ।
यर्ह्योवाजनजन्मर्क्षं शान्तर्क्षग्रहतारकम् ॥
दिश: प्रसेदुर्गगनं निर्मलोडुगणोदयम् ।
मही मंगलभूयिष्ठ पुरग्रामव्रजाकरान् ॥

Atha sarva-guṇopetaḥ kālaḥ parama-śobhanaḥ |
Yahahyevā jana-janmākṣaṃ śāntar-kṣa-graha-tārakam ||
Diśaḥ prased urgaganaṃ nirmalo-dugaṇodayam |
Mahī maṅgala-bhūyiṣṭha pura-grāma-vraja-kārān ||

The planets have come in the favourable conditions and the best time has come. All the directions are brightened and the dead fires in the sacrificial places have begun to flicker again. The water current has been slowed down and a softer, peaceful, fragrance-full wind has begun to blow. The sky is full of pious sounds. The divine midnight has come and the celestial nymphs have decided to offer their art to Him. They have started dancing in the heavens.

The sound of their ghunghroos is echoing and the sound of trumpets and drums is also echoing. At the midnight a beautiful and divine son has been born to Devaki. 'Shri Krishna Kanhaiya laal ki Jay!

तमद्भुतं बालकमम्बुजेक्षणं ।
चतुर्भुजं शंखगदायुदायुधम् ॥
श्रीवत्सलक्ष्मं गलशोभि कौस्तुभं ।
पीताम्बरं सान्द्रपयोदसौभगम् ॥

Tamadbhutaṃ bālakam ambuje-kṣaṇaṃ |
Caturbhajaṃ śaṅkh-gadā-yudāyadham ||
Śrīvatsa-lakṣmaṃ gala-śobhi kaustubhaṃ |
Pītāmbaraṃ sāndra-payodasa-ubhagam ||

Narayana with the four hands appears before Devaki and Vasudeva. He tells Devaki and Vasudeva about their boon in which they had asked for a son like Him. He says, there is no one in this world who is similar to me and therefore I have come in the form of your son. Vasudeva and Devaki say, 'but we have asked for a son, we hadn't asked for Bhagavan, please take the human form for us.'

Prabhu takes the human form then. He appears in the form of a beautiful baby and then orders, "take me to Gokul. Maya has taken birth there. Take me to Nanda baba's place and bring Maya here with you. Vasudev ji takes a basket, lines it with a silk liner and puts Lalan in it. He puts that basket on his head and when Prabhu is on someone's head, he gets free from every bondage. He gets a way for everywhere. Vasudev ji has also got a way for there. Shri Yamuna ji also has given the way to go to Gokul. After reaching there, he puts Thakur ji near Yashoda ji and brings Maya with him. When Maya comes, it shows herself off. Maya starts crying loudly. Everyone gets to know about the birth of the child. Kamsa also comes to know. The eighth child has born and it is a girl child.

As soon as Kamsa gets to know that it is a girl child, he comes running, holds the girl with its legs and when he goes to kill her it goes in the sky and takes the form of eight-handed Maya devi and says, 'O fool! The one who will kill you has reached a safer place already.' then Kamsa calls a meeting of Asuras.

On the other hand, at the same time in Gokula the nature is showing good omens. Nanda-Baba is watching a beautiful young boy in his dreams. He is asleep and is watching the beautiful face of Lalan who playing a flute. When His eyes open, he wonders, who is this boy

and he again goes to sleep. Again, in his dream he sees a little boy walking here and there in his home making beautiful sound of his small anklets. Again, he wakes up and again his eyes get open. All the night he watches such dreams again and again.

He watches a young boy coming from the jungle with his cows after grazing them. And in this way the whole night passes.

At its time, The Sun rises and it seems it is the golden sun that has risen in Vraj. The golden rays of the sun are shining over the land and it seems that the earth has come to enjoy the Nanda-Mahotsava in form of a queen wearing a Golden saree. The peacocks think, Paramatma, who will wear our feathers has arrived on this earth, so, let us congratulate Vraj and they start chirruping from the terrace of Nanadalaya (the Palace of Nanda)

God thinks, I have taken birth here and these Vrajavasis (people living in Vraj) are not welcoming me'! So, He starts crying loudly. Sister of Nanda-Baba has come to stay there to help her sister-in-law in delivery. When she passes outside the room of Yashoda, she listens the Lalan crying and sees that there is a little 'nilamani' (the one who has a blue stone like aura) baby sleeping beside Yashoda ji and as soon as she watches the baby she realises, it is not any ordinary jeeva, it is Paramatma Himself, who has come here.

'O Yashoda! Wake up! **'ધન્ય યશોદા ભાગ્ય તિહારે જિન ઐસો સૂત જાયો હો.' ('Heri he, Nandraay ke anand bhayo, heri he, bhaiya ho, aaj Nandraay ke aanand bhayo.')** O Yadshoda! You are so lucky to have such a beautiful child! Yoshada ji wakes up and feeds her son. She gets so overwhelmed that she gets tears of happiness in her eyes, that she is unable to utter a word.

According to his schedule Nanda-Baba was already in the cowshed early in the morning. SuNanda ji rushes to the kitchen and takes both hands full of mishri and runs to cowshed and congratulates Nandababa... 'Badhai ho- Badhai-ho' Nanda baba says, "what has happened?" She says, "It's a good news!" He is asking again and again and Sunanda ji sings 'હેરી હે, નંદરાય કે આનંદ ભયો.' હેરી હે, ભૈયા હો, આજ નંદરાય કે આનંદ ભયો.' i.e. 'It is good news, Nanda-rai ji has got eternal happiness! Everyone is celebrating in Vraj and everyone has got Badhai. Cowherds are coming to Nanda's palace with their pots of curd and milk. The milkmaids are getting ready and coming to the palace of Nanda.

'નાચત ગોપી કરત કુલાહલ, મંગલચાર થયો, હેરી હે, બૈયા હો, આજ નંદરાય કે આનંદ ભયો.' 'નંદ ઘેર આનદ ભયો, જય કન્હૈયા લાલ કી. વ્રજ મેં આનંદ ભયો. નંદ ઘેર આનંદ ભયો, જય કન્હૈયા લાલ કી.' આપ સબકો નંદમહોત્સવ કી બધાઈ હો, બધાઈ હો... **('Nachat Gopi karat kulaahal, mangalchaar thayo, heri he, aaj Nanad raaya ke Anand bhayo.' 'Nand gher Anand bhayo, jay Kanhaiyaa laal ki !' Aap sabko Nand Mahotsava ki badhai...)** i. e.

'Every one is dancing and celebrating because Nanda Baba has got eternal happiness' Nanda Ghera Ananda Bhayo, Jai Kanhaiya Laal ki,,,,

Let us rest here the Katha of the fourth day.



|| Shrimad Bhagawata ||

DAY - 5

We celebrated the birth of Shri Thakur ji yesterday. Pushti-marga considers these celebrations important. If you want to celebrate everyday, bring Shree Thakur ji at your home. He will make you celebrate every-day. Even, watching the (mukharavinda) face of Prabhu daily is also a celebration for a Vaishnav.

Shri Thakurji has arrived in Gokul. Among all the Skandhas of Shrimad Bhagavata, the Tenth Skandha is the most extensive, consisting of 90 chapters. Shri Mahaprabhuji explained its meaning by dividing it into various sections (prakaranas).

In one of the verses, he says:

चतुर्भिश्च चतुर्भिश्च चतुर्भिश्च त्रिभिस्तथा ।
षड्भिर्विराजते योऽसौ पंचधा हृदये मम ॥

Chaturbhishcha chaturbhishcha chaturbhishcha tribhistathā |
Shaḍbhir virājate yo'sau panchadhā hṛdaye mama ||

This means: "In five distinct ways, o Lord! Please reside in my heart—through groups of four, four, four, three, and six."

While explaining the division of the Tenth Skandha into sections (prakaranas), Shri Mahaprabhuji gives us precious guidance. He says that the first section of the Tenth Canto

consists of four chapters, known as the "Janma Prakarana" (Birth Section), which narrates the divine birth (Prakatya) of the Lord. The next reference "chaturbhishcha" (four) points to four different qualities or modes: Tamasic (dark/inert), Rajasic (passionate/activity-driven), Sattvic (pure/balanced), and Nirguna (beyond all qualities). In this way, Shri Mahaprabhuji identifies five distinct sections (prakaranas) within the Tenth Skandha, each representing a divine aspect or stage of Lord Krishna's life and leela.

Among the ten types of divine leelas, this is classified as the "Nirodha Leela." In the Tenth Canto of Shrimad Bhagavata, whatever leelas (divine plays) the Lord performs, their ultimate purpose, their core intent is to bring about the dissolution of the ego (ahamta, ahankara) and possessiveness (mamata, mamatva) of the individual soul (jiva), and to direct the mind and heart of the jiva fully toward the Lotus Feet of the Lord. '**प्रपंचविस्मृतिपूर्वकं भगवदासक्ति निरोधः ।**' **('Prapancha-vismriti-pūrvakaṁ bhagavad-āsakti-nirodhaḥ.')** — True renunciation (nirodha) is not simply forgetting the world, but forgetting it through deep attachment to God. Here, "prapancha" refers to the illusion created by ego and possessiveness—this is the very maya (illusion) that binds the jeeva. The goal, therefore, is not just to forget the world like one might forget things after taking a sleeping pill. Mere forgetfulness of the world is not the goal—what truly matters is the attachment to God that makes the world fade away naturally. Thus, every leela the Lord performs in the Tenth Skandha serves a higher spiritual function: To draw the heart of the devotee toward Him, to bring about absorption (nirodha) in Him, and to establish divine love (bhagavad-prem) that transcends worldly illusion.

This is the essence of Nirodha Leela — the divine play of deep detachment from the world and absolute attachment to the Lord. A true devotee cannot bear even a moment without the presence of the Lord. And in that very moment, the Lord too decides: "Now, I too cannot stay without you." On the day when the devotee truly feels from the heart: "O Lord, I do not seek anything from You. I simply need You." — that very day, the Lord also responds, "I, too, no longer need anything from you — I only need you." Why does the Lord not reveal Himself to us? A simple and honest answer is: Because we are still able to live without Him. The day we truly feel, "Now, I cannot live without the Lord," — that very day, the Lord, too, will no longer remain without us. This is mutual nirodha — a divine state where both the soul and the Supreme Being become inwardly absorbed in each other, beyond all desire, beyond all demands — just a pure longing for presence, for belonging.

In our devotional literature, especially in Varta Sahitya (the narratives of the Pushtimarg tradition), there are countless instances where this profound truth is revealed: The devotee cannot live without the Lord, and the Lord cannot live without the devotee.

Let us now enter the divine leelas of the Tenth Skandha.

King Pareekshit, standing at the threshold of death yet fully immersed in devotion, began asking profound questions about the leelas of the Supreme Lord. As he asked, Shri Shukadevji, the great sage and seer, was drawn into a deep spiritual trance — as if he entered a state of samadhi. In that moment of complete absorption, it was no longer just Shukadevji who spoke. It was as if the Lord Himself descended into the heart of Shukadevji and began narrating His own story. Thus, the Tenth Canto is not merely a narration;

It is Bhagavan Himself speaking through Shukadevji, revealing His divine leelas, not just as historical events but as living truths meant to awaken love and devotion in the hearts of His devotees.

This sacred section of the Shrimad Bhagavata is therefore not a story about God — it is a story by God, spoken through the lips of a realized soul whose heart was a temple where the Lord had already taken residence.

The joy of Nanda Mahotsav was wholeheartedly embraced by the people of Vraj. That is why — we don't "distribute" during this festival, we "give it away" freely, lavishly! Because this incarnation of Krishna is unique. He is not the one who calculates and distributes grace. He is the one who showers it abundantly — to be seized, not weighed. To "distribute" (વહેંચવું) means the giver decides who gets how much. But to "give it away" (લૂંટાવવું) means the receiver's capacity and devotion determine by how much they can take. So, Krishna says: "I have come to give away divine bliss — Anand . It's up to you how much you can seize from me." How much joy, how much love, how much grace you can receive — it depends on you. Hence, we don't distribute — we pour it out. We let it be seized! Some may wonder, "Why this way of throwing things around? Wouldn't it be better to give something properly into everyone's hand?" Ah, but if it were given into each hand, then everyone would receive just one item, equally. But when someone opens their heart like a begging bowl, filled with love and surrender, the Lord fills it to the brim — and beyond. Such is the nature of Krishna — the Lord of divine joy and unconditional grace. Even in looting His grace, a devotee must know how to take it.

That is why, right at the beginning of the Tenth Canto, it is said: 'बभूव प्राकृतः शिशुः' **('Babhūva prākṛtaḥ śiśuḥ')** — "He appeared to be an ordinary child." So, what kind of child is this? The scripture calls Him "प्राकृतः" **('Prākṛtaḥ')** — seemingly natural, human. Does this mean He is truly an ordinary being? Shri Mahaprabhuji offers a beautiful interpretation here "प्राकृतः" **('Prākṛtaḥ')** (Prakrita) here does not mean bound by nature; it means the one who performs leela (divine play) according to the nature and capacity of the devotee. He becomes what the devotee can relate to. He moulds Himself to the devotee's bhava (emotion), nature, and longing. Here, in Vraj, the Lord took form as a child not because He is limited, but because His divine play adapts to the heart of the devotee. As the devotee is, so the Lord reveals Himself. That is why Nanda Mahotsav holds such a special place in our tradition.

On this day, the Lord didn't just take birth in Gokul - He manifested joy in the hearts of all. Each and every Vrajvasi felt "The Lord has taken birth in my home." "He is born for me." That is why so many celebrations are held in our tradition.

Nitya Utsav (daily celebrations), Naimittik Utsav (occasional or special events), Parvanik Utsav (seasonal or calendar-based festivals), Patotsav (temple anniversary), Mahamahotsav (grand spiritual gatherings), and the supreme among them — Anand Mahotsav, the festival of divine joy itself. Among all scriptures, Shrimad Bhagavata holds a unique and supreme place. What makes Bhagavata ji so much greater than other Puranas? It is this: In other Puranas, the character of Krishna is often described as an incarnation (avatar) of Vishnu — a powerful form, yet one among many. But in Shrimad Bhagavata ji, Krishna is not presented merely as an avatar. Here, Krishna is the source of all avatars, the Purna Purushottam — the complete and supreme Personality of Godhead. It is His life, His divine play, His leela, which is at the center of this great text. Where other texts narrate stories of God, Bhagavata ji reveals God's own heart. It does not just describe what He did — it makes us feel what He is.

In the scriptures, even in the Vedas, the word "Vishnu" has been used in two distinct contexts: Sometimes to refer to a celestial deity, and at other times to refer to the Supreme Being, Parmatma Himself. In the same way, the name "Krishna" appears in many Puranas. But in most cases, it refers to Krishna as an avatar, a divine incarnation of Vishnu.

However, in Shrimad Bhagavat, the Krishna who is revealed is not just an avatar.

He is the Avatari — the one from whom all avatars emerge. According to the Saraswata Kalpa, it is in this very Dwapar Yuga that the Supreme God Himself descended to earth in form of Shri Krishna. And Shri Bhagavat ji is the sacred narrative of this very Kalpa. Therefore, Shrimad Bhagavat Purana is unique Purana.

In the Vedas, the Supreme Being, Parmatma, is described as: 'आनंदमात्र करपाद मुखोदरादि' — **('Ānandamātra kara-pāda-mukhodharādi')** The One whose entire form, from head to toe, is made of pure bliss. Every limb, every expression, every gesture — is nothing but (divine joy). That very form of bliss is Parmatma, and He is none other than Krishna. Whether you say Krishna, or say ANanda (bliss), or Rasa (divine flavour), or Prema (love) — they are all synonyms, pointing to the same divine principle, the Krishna-tattva. In the Upanishads, He is described as: 'रसो वै सः' **('Raso vai saḥ')** — He is rasa itself. Elsewhere, He is called Anandrupa, the very form of bliss.

And elsewhere again, Premaswarupa, the embodiment of divine love. So, with many names and descriptions, the same Krishna-tattva is revealed through different perspective. And the same Anandarupa Parmatma, spoken of in the Vedas, manifested in the house of Nanda Baba. That's why we say during Nanda Mahotsav: "Nanda gher ANanda bhayo" — Bliss has born in the home of Nanda.

Who has come to Nanda's house? Well, it's said that joy has arrived. The same joy that is described in the Vedas has now arrived at Nanda's house. Its name is Krishna, so we say, "Jai Kanhiya Lal Ki." But it is indeed that joy from the Vedas. It is the Supreme Soul who has come Himself.

When the people of Braj received the news that Nanda Baba has been blessed with a child, they celebrated Nanda Mahotsava. The description of the Nanda Mahotsava is written in eighteen verses of the Srimad Bhagavata. It is as if the joy of the 18,000 verses of the Bhagavata has been condensed into these eighteen verses. It is as if the Gopis have adorned their souls, and the Gopas have set out. The Gopis are going there with pots of curd and milk. Now, throughout the entire Braj Mandal, there is one sound that resonates everywhere.

'નંદ ઘેર આનંદ ભયો, જય કન્હૈયા લાલ કી. વ્રજ મેં આનંદ ભયો, જય કન્હૈયા લાલ કી. નંદ ઘેર આનંદ ભયો, જય કન્હૈયા લાલ કી. દાઉજી કો ભૈયા ભયો, જય કન્હૈયા લાલ કી... રાધાજી કો સૈયા ભયો, જય કન્હૈયા લાલ કી, નંદ ઘેર આનંદ ભયો, જય

કન્હૈયા લાલ કી. બધાઈ હો, બધાઈ હો, બધાઈ હો.' ('Nanda Gher Anand Bhayo, Jai Kanhaiya Laal ki, Vraj me Anand Bhayo, Jai Kanhaiya Laal ki, 'Nanda Gher Anand Bhayo, Jai Kanhaiya Laal ki, Dau ji ko Bhaiya bhayo, Jai Kanhaiya Laal ki ... Radha ji ko Saiyan Bhayo, Jai Kanhaiya Laal ki, 'Nanda Gher Anand Bhayo, Jai Kanhaiya Laal ki... Badhai ho, Badhai ho...)

In Vraj, the sound of Nanda Mahotsav has begun to echo from all directions. The sound spread throughout the three worlds. The sound reached Vaikunth as well. In Vaikunth, where Lakshmi ji sits on a golden throne, the words reached her ears: "Nanda Gher ANanda Bhayo, Jai Kanhaiya Lal Ki." Just then, Narad ji arrived, bringing with him the yogurt from Nanda Mahotsav. It is said that even in the path of Pushtimarg, there are three things that one must experience to truly enjoy bliss: (1) The sakhadi (coocked rice of Prasada) of Annakut, (2) The gulal from the dol utsava (Holi celebration), and (3) The yogurt from Nanda Mahotsav. Those who have not tasted these three things, they have not truly experienced the joy. Narad ji offered the yogurt as prasad. Lakshmi ji asked, "But what kind of yogurt is this?" "Ah! This is the yogurt from the Nanda Mahotsava, the celebration of the birth of the Supreme Soul Himself, who has manifested as a child in Braj. He has assumed such a beautiful form. I have seen so many avatars, but never has the Lord taken such an incarnation," Narad ji said in awe.

This time, the Lord has not been incarnated, but He Himself has taken birth. Lakshmi ji's mind stirred with excitement. "Oh! Narad ji, I too must have the darshan. Please make arrangements for me," she said. Narad ji replied, "In Vaikunth, there is one Lakshmi, but in Vraj, **'लक्ष्मीसहस्त्रलीलाभिः सेव्यमानं कलानिधिम् ।' ('Lakshmī-sahasra-līlābhiḥ sevyamānaṃ kalanidhim')** there are thousands of Lakshmi ji. If you go as a queen, you won't gain anything in Vraj. But if you go as a servant, you will be able to serve the Lord." He took her to Belvan, disguised as a human, and said, "Here, take a garland of flowers, and now go to Nanda's house." If anyone asks, say, "I am Nanda Baba's servant, come to tie the toranas." Lakshmi ji walked on, and all the Gopis stood in surprise. "Who are you? Where are you going? What is your purpose?" they asked. Lakshmi ji, nervous, replied, "I am Nanda Baba's servant, come to tie the toranas and collect vadhai (things given to anyone due to happiness)."

"Oh! You want some Vadhai", Gopis said and took off all their ornaments and placed them in Lakshmi ji's lap. Lakshmi ji looked at the jewels in her lap, then looked at the Gopis. She thought to herself, "The whole world would stretch out their hands to me to fill their lap but here they are filling out mine. How fortunate these women are to fill Lakshmi's lap with their

offerings!" When a person is happy, they naturally wish to give; when they are sad, they want to receive. A person who is always joyful is always a giver, spreading happiness wherever they go.

What to do now? "Oh! Narad ji, please find a way." Narad ji moved forward. "Move aside, move aside," he said, and eventually, he opened the door of Nanda's courtyard and guided Lakshmi ji inside. He closed the door from outside and said, "Go, have the darshan." Lakshmi ji entered the courtyard. When she entered the inner chamber and looked around, she saw Nanda's son, the little child, resting in a golden, jewel-encrusted cradle. Yashoda ji was gently rocking the cradle. Lakshmi ji gazed at the child, and as her eyes fell upon his divine face, she became so mesmerized that she thought to herself, "I have witnessed so many avatars. I have had countless darshans of You in Vaikunth, but the form You have assumed now is unique! It is a form full of such sweetness that I have never seen. There is an ethereal radiance on Your face, like a blue gem. Your eyes are large, like the petals of a lotus. There is a beautiful redness on Your face. Your hair is so gracefully styled. Oh Lord, such beauty I have never witnessed. Let me, with utmost reverence, bow down in full prostration before You."

As soon as Lakshmi ji performed her full prostration, someone opened the door. Thousands of Braj devotees entered the courtyard. While everyone saw Lakshmi ji as she arrived, no one saw her as she was about to leave. 'श्रयत इन्दिरा शश्वदत्र हि' **('Śrayata indirā śaśvadatra hi'** i.e. The goddess Lakshmi is forever dwelling here). From that moment onward, the prosperity of Braj increased manifold. The reason was that Lakshmi ji made her permanent residence there. As the scriptures say, 'तत आरभ्य नंदस्य व्रजः सर्व समृद्धिमान् ।' **('Tata ārabhya nandasya vrajaḥ sarva-samṛddhimān'** i.e. From that time onwards, the entire Braj became prosperous, as Nanda's house was graced by the presence of Lakshmi ji).

Then, the Dhadhi-Dhadhan (a couple that sing hymns and mythological stories and geneologies. Dhadhi is the male and Dhadhan is the female) came. Even today, in Kathiawad, people arrange for the Dhadhi Leela. The Dhadhi and Dhadhan come and sing the genealogies. All of this is a tradition and system of our Pushtimarg, rooted in the leelas of Srimad Bhagavata. The Dhadhan said to the Dhadhi, "You don't speak at all. You don't know how to ask for anything. Whatever is given, you will accept it. You don't speak; let me speak." The Dhadhi replied, "I never speak in front of you, do I?"

હોય ? The Dhadhi and Dhadhan have arrived at the courtyard. In Nanda's house, Yashoda ji is seated with the child in her lap. They sing the genealogies of Nanda Baba's lineage and perform beautiful dances in front of everyone. The Dhadhi Leela is unfolding, and while the Dhadhan was dancing, she had many thoughts in her mind—thinking about asking for a diamond necklace, diamond earrings, and various other things.

As she danced, her eyes fell upon the face of the child, and she realized that this is not an ordinary child; this is the Lord Himself, who has manifested at Nanda's home. She thinks to herself, "If I ask for anything from Him, no one would be as unfortunate as me"

Yashoda ji was overjoyed and said to the Dhadhan, "Oh! Dhadhan, your dance is so beautiful. Ask for anything you want from me." The Dhadhan replied, "Nothing, just allow me to embrace your dear child once. I don't wish for anything else."

In this way, many divine leelas have been described in the narrative. In Nanda's house, the Nanda Mahotsav is unfolding layer by layer. The chanting of Vedic mantras fills the air as Nanda Baba performs various rituals. He has come to perform the auspicious bath. In every corner of Nanda's house, amidst the Nanda Mahotsav, the Gopis and Gopas are singing together in unison, 'નંદ ઘેર આનંદ ભયો, જય કન્હૈયા લાલ કી. વ્રજ મેં આનંદ ભયો, જય કન્હૈયા લાલ કી. હાથી દીને, ઘોડા દીને ઔર દીયે પાલકી. નંદ ઘેર આનંદ ભયો, જય કન્હૈયા લાલ કી.' (Nanda Gher Anand Bhayo, Jai Kanhaiya Laal ki, Vraj me Anand Bhayo Jai Kanhaiya Laal ki, Haathi deene ghoda deene aur deeye palaki, Nanad Gher Anand Bhayo Jai Kanhaiya Laal ki). Yashoda ji, deeply moved, was filled with immense joy in her heart.

Nanda Baba gives so much in charity, so much that people begin to leave Nanda's house, unable to find any more space to hold the gifts. They tell Nanda Baba, "Now, there is no more room to store anything in the house! You have given so much!" Nanda Baba has become 'Mahamana' (great-hearted). When the Supreme Soul enters a person's life, their mind becomes vast. At that point, a person doesn't just enjoy their own joy but shares it with others. The scriptures describe the various forms of Nanda Mahotsav. The divine singers have sung, **'વ્રજ ભયો મહેર કે પૂત, જબ યે બાત સુની, આનંદે સબ લોગ ગાવત ગનિત ગુની' ('Vraj bhayo maher ke poot, jab ye baat suni, aanande sab log gaavat ganit guni'** i.e. When the people of Braj heard this, they were filled with joy, and all began singing and dancing, counting the virtues of the Lord)," as sung by Surdas ji. The sound of this Nanda Mahotsav reached even Kailash. Lord Shiva was

meditating in Kailash when the words of Nanda Mahotsav reached his ears. His meditation was disturbed. He saw Narad ji passing by and asked, "Narad, where does this sound come from?" Narad ji replied, "It is the Supreme Lord, who has manifested in Vraj as the child." Lord Shiva realizes that up until now, I have been meditating on Him, but now, I have been blessed with the opportunity to get direct darshan of the Lord Himself.

Lord Shiva said to Narad ji, "Oh Narad, I too want to go and have the darshan. I wish to touch His feet." Narad ji replied, "But in this form, who will let you enter Nanda's house? And He has manifested in the form of a child. If he sees all the serpents and scorpions, He will be frightened. What should we do?" So, Lord Shiva assumes the form of a yogi. Even today, after Nanda Mahotsav, during Radha Ashtami, the Jogi Leela is done in the Haveli. Lord Shiva Himself decides to visit Nanda's house to have the darshan of the child. He takes on the form of a yogi takes his tong like instument in his hands and chants "Alakh Niranjan, Alakh Niranjan," as he walks into the courtyard of Nanda's house. Yashoda ji, with a golden tray filled with jewels, steps out to give charity, and the divine moment unfolds.

As Yashoda ji gives the tray to him he says, "Oh! I do not need all of this." Yashoda ji asks, "Then what do you want?" Lord Shiva replies, "If you wish to give something, then show me your child. I do not desire anything worldly." Now, Yashoda ji thinks, "This ascetic may take my little child away and make him an ascetic!" She replies, "Ask for whatever you want, and I will give it to you, but I will not show you my child."

Lord Shiva, thinking to himself, realizes that if he continues in this manner, she wouldn't agree. So, he decided to show some fear and said, "If you do not show me the child, I will leave empty-handed." It is considered an ill omen if an ascetic leaves your house empty-handed. Yashoda ji firmly replied, "If you wish to leave, then go, but you will not have darshan of my child." Having spoken this Yashoda ji goes inside. Lord Shiva, realizing that he has no other option, thinks to himself, "What should I do now? I have already spoken." Lord Shiva then goes to the banks of the Yamuna, feeling the sadness in his heart. Tears begins to flow as he laments, "I came all the way from Kailash to have darshan, and now the Lord refuses to show Himself to me." Lord Shiva begins crying, feeling deeply sorrowful at not being granted the darshan he so longed for. 'ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।' **('Ye yathā māṃ prapadyante tāṃstathaiva bhajāmyaham')** As Shri Krishna says in the Bhagavad Geeta, "In the way a devotee thinks and surrenders to Me, I respond accordingly." Here, when Lord Shiva cries, Lord Krishna too begins

to cry. He weeps continuously, neither drinking the milk nor resting in his cradle. He just keeps crying. Yashoda ji becomes alarmed. "What has happened to my child?" Gopis gather around, and one of them says, "It seems someone has cast an evil eye on him. But who will remove it?" Another replies, "Perhaps some great sage from the Himalayas could remove it." Yashoda ji says, "Oh! One such sage came this morning. He must not have gone too far. Go, search and bring him back." Gopis begin searching all around Vraj. One of the Gopis, while searching, arrives at the banks of the Yamuna and finds Lord Shiva sitting there, weeping with tears.

The Gopi approaches and says, "Oh Baba, mother Yashoda has called for you." Lord Shiva, surprised, asks, "Yashoda ji is calling me? For what reason?" The Gopi says, "you know how to remove the evil eye, right? Living in the Himalayas, I learned this very art of removing the evil eye. The villagers call me Baba and ask me to remove the evil eye." Lord Shiva has now received the opportunity to witness this divine moment. Who would let go of such an opportunity? Chanting "Alakh Niranjan," Lord Shiva moves towards Nanda's house and reaches the inner courtyard. There, Yashoda ji was standing with the child in her lap. The Gopis, seeing Lord Shiva, say, "Please remove the evil eye from the child." Lord Shiva thinks, if I get ready in this way, I will get only the darshan, to get something more I must take the child in my lap. Then he says, "It's not possible to remove the evil eye from such a distance, you have to give the child in my lap to remove it. Listening to this, Yashoda ji got scared that what if he will take my child with him? So, she denies to give the child in Baba's lap. Watching this, Lalan starts crying loudly. She runs and gives Lalan in Baba's lap and says requests, 'Please remove the evil eye.'

Lord Shiva, having taken the child in his lap, begins to lovingly touch the tiny feet of the child and place them on his forehead. He gently places the little hands of the child over his heart. Yashoda ji, standing at a distance, observes and calls out, "Oh Baba! Are you removing the evil eye or are you absorbing it yourself?"

Lord Shiva replies, "In our Himalayas, this is how the evil eye is removed." As he touches the child's feet to his heart, tears begin to flow from his eyes. "Until now, I have meditated upon you in Kailash, but today, I have felt the touch of Your delicate feet." At that very moment, the sound of Nanda Mahotsav echoed in all directions. Lord Shiva, holding the child in his lap, begins to dance in joy. The only sound that filled the air was, "Nanda gher aNanda bhayo, Jai Kanhaiya Lal Ki."

Many divine leelas have been described in the Nanda Mahotsav, and our singers have sung them. The Vraj devotees, upon hearing the news, began preparing themselves and adorning themselves with their finest ornaments. The Gopis, too, started preparing for their meeting with the Lord. One must always ensure to present themselves in the most beautiful manner when they go to the Lord. One Gopi was applying sindoor (vermilion) to her forehead when another Gopi approached her.

The Gopi asked, "What are you doing?" The other replied, "I am preparing myself to go to Nanda Mahotsav, but why are you applying sindoor to your forehead?" She said, "Yes, seeing this, Shri Thakorji will be very pleased." The first Gopi responded, "Oh, pleased, you say?" And, in that moment, she took the entire box of sindoor and applied it all over her forehead. Another Gopi was applying kajal and was asked, "What are you doing?" She replied, "I am preparing myself for the Nanda Mahotsav. When the Lord sees the kajal in my eyes and admires my beautiful eyes, He will be very pleased." The first Gopi, surprised, asked, "Oh, kajal makes the Lord happy?" And, without a second thought, she took the entire kajal and applied it all over her face.

Meanwhile, the Gwal-bals were running around, splashing curd and milk everywhere, dancing, jumping, and singing. The air was filled with pure joy, and the sound of Nanda Mahotsav spread throughout the entire Vraj.

In the midst of all the celebrations, Nanda Baba suddenly remembered, "Oh, I completely forgot to give the annual tax offerings to Kamsa!". In recent times also, when Nanda Mahaotsva is celebrated, everyone wear saffron-coloured garments, except for Nanda Baba, who wear white clothes. There is a deeper significance behind Nanda Baba's white clothes, and many other explanations are also given for it. But the reason is, Nanda Baba remembered that the year was coming to an end, and he had forgotten to pay the annual taxes to Kamsa. He thought to himself, "I must go and offer the tax and also give Kamsa the news of the child born at my home."

With this thought, Nanda Baba decided to go to Mathura. He first spoke to the Gopas and said, "I am leaving for Mathura. Please take care of Gokul while I am away."

He then set off towards Mathura, carrying with him the tribute for Kamsa and the joyful news of his newborn child.

Shri Shukdev ji, while narrating, said:

गोपाल गोकुलरक्षायां निरूप्य मथुरा गतः ।
नंदः कंसस्य वार्षिकं करं दातुं कुरुद्वहः ॥

Gopān gokula-rakṣāyāṃ nirūpya mathurāṃ gataḥ |
Nandaḥ kaṃsasya vārṣikaṃ karaṃ dātuṃ kurūdvaha ||

To give the annual tax, Nanda Baba went to Kamsa's palace. He also shared the joyous news with Kamsa, saying, "I have been blessed with a child after so many years." Kamsa was pleased and offered his blessings in return. Afterwards, Nanda Baba went to meet Vasudev ji.

Vasudev ji said, "That child is mine." Nanda Baba replied, "The statement is true. My child is yours only! Is there really any difference between us?" But they couldn't quite understand each other. However, Vasudev ji expressed his concern, "I feel uneasy. I sense fear lurking somewhere. You left Gokul all alone and entrusted Gopas with the care. What if something goes wrong there?" If we interpret this spiritually, the meaning is: '**गोपान्गोकुलरक्षायाम्**' **('Gopān-gokula-rakṣāyāṃ')** — Gopa refers to the mind, and Gokul refers to the body. "Go" refers to the senses and their collective functions. So, when the mind entrusts the body to the senses, leaving it under the influence of the mind, something disturbing might occur. The mind often misleads a person in all directions. Whenever life is left to the trust of the mind, there is bound to be some disturbance, because it is the mind that leads us astray.

At this point, Shri Shukdev ji, while narrating, continues by saying that the demoness Putana, sent by Kamsa, enters Vraj.

कंसेन प्रहिता घोरा पूतना बालघातिनी ।
शिशूंश्चचार निघ्नन्ती पुरग्रामव्रजादिषु ॥

Kaṃsena prahitā ghorā pūtanā bālaghātinī |
Śiśūṃścacāra nighnantī puragrāmavrajādiṣu ||

'**कंसेन प्रहिता घोरा**' **('Kaṃsena prahitā ghorā')** The demoness Putana, sent by Kamsa, is described as a dangerous force. She is called '**घोरा**' **('ghorā')** i.e. intensely dangerous, she is a child killer. She applied poison to her breasts and came to feed the newborns under the guise of offering

nourishment, intending to kill them by feeding them poison. Putana is a metaphor for ignorance (अविद्या) **('avidyaa')**, which harms and distorts life.

Shri Mahaprabhuji directs, Putana represents the manifestation of ignorance. In the Panchaparva, it is said that ignorance comes in five forms: Dehadhyasa (identification with the body), Pranadhyasa (Identification with the life force), Indriyadhyasa (identification with the senses), Antahkaranadhyasa (identification with the mind), and Swarupa-Vismriti (forgetfulness of the true self). These are the five forms (or phases) of ignorance that shape human existence and prevent spiritual growth.

Dehadhyasa refers to the misconception that the body is the self. People with this mindset believe that as long as the body exists, everything exists. Their philosophy is "Enjoy life as much as you can, because after death, no one will be there to judge." This was part of the ancient Charvaka philosophy, they are also known as Dehadhyasi.

This ignorance—represented by Putana—thus enters the world, distorting our true perception and keeping us entangled in the illusions of the material world.

यावत् जीवेत् सुखं जीवेत् ऋणं कृत्वा घृतं पिबेत् ।
भस्मीभूतस्य देहस्य पुनरागमनं कुतः ॥

Yāvat jīvet sukhaṃ jīvet ṛṇaṃ kṛtvā ghṛtaṃ pibet |
Bhasmībhūtasya dehasya punarāgamanaṃ kutaḥ ||

The philosophy of the ancient Charvakas was focused on living life in the moment, indulging in pleasure while one can. They believed in enjoying life fully, saying, "even if you have to Borrow, you must enjoy, because once you die, no one will come to check." This viewpoint was widely popular in ancient times, and such a materialistic perspective still exists today. The idea is that this life is short, so one should experience everything and live without restraint.

However, true wisdom lies in self-control and discernment. In life, the most important thing is to understand when to say "yes" and when to say "no." Whether or not one learns scriptures, the essence of wisdom is knowing how to make these decisions. If a person learns this discernment, the essence of all knowledge and teachings comes naturally. This is the key to understanding: learning the difference between indulging and practicing restraint.

Yogis often focus on Pranadhyasa, the identification with the breath, and believe that everything is controlled by the breath. They think that life functions through breathing and that pranayama governs our existence. However, they overlook the fact that when a child is born, no one teaches it to breathe yet it breathes on its own. Who trains a newborn to take a deep breath, hold it, and then exhale? The child simply breathes, without any practice.

We may think we are consciously taking breaths, but the reality is that we are not the ones doing it the breath is simply happening. If someone asks us to do pranayama for even ten minutes, we feel exhausted, but from the moment we are born, we breathe without a pause. Have we ever felt tired of breathing? We might think, "After all these years of breathing, I deserve a rest." But no matter how much we rest, breathing continues. So, when we say "everything happens by the will of God," what does it really mean? If we say God is the one making everything happen, then does that mean God is like the engine in a car, making everything move? Just as the engine makes the car move, the steering wheel is in our hands, guiding the direction. This symbolizes that while God is the ultimate source of power, He gives us the freedom to steer our lives.

As the scriptures say, '**कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते**' **('Karmaṇy-evādhikāras-te')** i.e. "In action, you are free, but in the result, you are not." All the power to act comes from the Supreme, but the choices we make and how we direct those powers are up to us. The power to see, to speak, to hear, to move—everything comes from the Supreme. But what we choose to see, say, hear, or where we choose to go, that freedom is ours. In other words, the Supreme gives us the power to act, but it is up to us to decide the course of our actions. Whatever we do, the consequences, or the results, are aligned with the choices we make. In this way, the breath, just like all the powers in us, is directed by the Supreme, yet it is we who direct how we use it in our lives.

Indriyadhyasa and Antahkaranadhyasa refer to the identification with the senses and the mind, respectively. The mind, intellect, consciousness, and ego are collectively known as the Antahkarana Chatushtaya (the four aspects of the inner self). This Antahkarana can be clouded by Adhyasa (illusion) and Swarupavismriti (forgetfulness of one's true nature), resulting in ignorance of our true self.

These five aspects are all forms of ignorance. When we identify ourselves with the body, senses, mind, and intellect, we lose sight of our true spiritual identity.

Therefore, in relation to the Brahmasambandha (connection with the Supreme), it is said **'ब्रह्मसंबंधकरणात् सर्वेषां देहजीवयो: सर्वदोषनिवृत्ति: ।' ('Brahmasaṃbandha-karaṇāt sarveṣāṃ deha-jīvayoḥ sarva-doṣa-nivṛttiḥ')** This means that by establishing a connection with the Supreme, all the faults and impurities of the body and the soul are eradicated.

In the context of Dehadhyasa (identification with the body), the five defects of the body are described in Siddhant-Rahasya

सहजा देश कालोत्था लोकवेदनिरूपिता: ।
संयोगजा: स्पर्शजाश्च न मन्तव्या: कथन्चन ॥

Sahajā deśa-kālotthā loka-veda-nirūpitāḥ |
Saṃyogajāḥ sparśajāśca na mantavyāḥ kathañcana ||

i.e. there are five defects a jeeva have and they are defined by birth, nature, culture, by society and veda, by association, or sensory experience and they should not be considered as the identification of the self.

These are the five defects of the body. Shri Mahaprabhuji beautifully explains them in Subodhini ji. He says they are Dehadhyasa (Identification with the body), Pranadhyasa (Identification with the breath or life force), Indriyadhyasa (Identification with the senses), Antahkaranadhyasa (Identification with the mind, intellect, ego) and Swarupavismriti (Forgetfulness of one's true nature). These five are considered the five phases of ignorance (Avidya), which affect both the body and the soul.

In Shri Bhagavataji's teachings, it is explained that the Lord destroys the demons (Asuras), but these demons are not the physical beings; they represent the erroneous tendencies or Adhyasa that exist within us. For example, Dhenuka Asura, who was destroyed by Lord Krishna, is symbol of Dehadhyasa of Vrajawasis (residents of Vraja). Kaliya Naag, who was subdued by Krishna, represents the Indriyadhyasa of Vrajawasis.

So, God does not destroy the demons outside; He destroys these ignorant tendencies (Adhyasa) that exist within the beings, specifically the Vrajwasis (the devotees in Braj).

Whenever we hear the stories of Krishna defeating demons like Dhenuka Asura or subduing Kaliya Naag, we should internally reflect that, just as Krishna destroyed Dhenuka Asura, He is

also removing our Dehadhyasa. And as Krishna subdued Kaliya Naag, He is destroying our Indriyadhyasa.

Each Asura represents a specific form of ignorance. When the devotees of Braj remove these illusions from within, they will earn the privilege to experience the divine Raasa (spiritual bliss or dance with God).

Putana, the demoness, enters Vraj with the intention of taking the lives of the newborns. She looks at the vast mansion of Nanda and, with her evil intentions, decides to carry out her plan. Putana has made a resolution: she would not just search for and kill the enemy of Kamsa, instead, she would kill all the newborn babies she finds.

She enters Nanda's house disguised as a beautiful woman. This is symbolic of ignorance: it may appear attractive on the surface, but its consequences are dreadful. Ignorance often appears enticing and beautiful, much like Putana, but its results are harmful and destructive.

So, ignorance enters in the form of Putana, she enters Nanda's house, disguised as a beautiful woman. In the courtyard of Nanda's house, Yashoda ji is sitting with little Krishna in her lap, preparing to put him to sleep in the cradle. Putana enters and her eyes meet Yashoda ji's. However, as soon as Putana comes into her sight, Shri Thakurji (Lord Krishna) closes His eyes, not allowing her His gaze.

This conveys a profound spiritual truth: God gives darshan to everyone, but He does not give His divine gaze to everyone. God may appear before thousands of people, and places like Shreenathji allow thousands of devotees to see the deity, but not all of them receive the Lord's direct gaze. God doesn't give His divine sight easily to anyone.

Lord Krishna closed His eyes when Putana entered, and there are multiple interpretations of this action, as explained by various scholars and spiritual teachers: among various explanations given by scholars one says that Putana is a child killer, and it is not appropriate to look at the face of someone who causes harm to children. Shri Mahaprabhu ji interprets since Putana's form symbolizes ignorance (Avidya), Lord Krishna closed His eyes to avoid looking at her as His eyes represent divine knowledge and if his gaze falls upon ignorance, that would immediately be destroyed. This would interrupt the Leela of killing Putana.

Another interpretation says Lord Krishna closes His eyes to invoke Shiva in His mind. He is silently saying, "My task is to enjoy the butter and sweets from the Gopis, and it is your task to handle the poison and the evil. You take care of that, while I continue with my divine play."

Another interpretation says Pushtimarg emphasizes that Lord Krishna chooses not to see the flaws (the doshas) of His devotees but instead embraces their virtues (guna). The act of feeding the child and giving milk symbolizes a virtue, while poisoning symbolizes a flaw. Since Krishna's divine nature is about accepting the good and ignoring the bad, He closes His eyes to the evil nature of Putana, choosing to focus only on her service (feeding the milk), not her sinful actions (poisoning the milk).

Lord Krishna thinks deeply as Putana enters and decides that He should give His divine sight on her. Thus, He closes His eyes. Putana, disguised as a beautiful woman, enters there. She is appearing very attractive, so much so that Yashoda ji thinks that she might be a queen or someone from a noble family because of the aura of elegance and charm she radiated. She sits beside Yashoda ji and starts conversing with her, engaging in sweet, gentle talks. While they were talking, Yashoda ji suddenly remembered some household chores and for a moment, her trust in Putana grew. She felt comfortable, as if Putana was trustworthy, not suspecting her evil intentions. '**पूतान् नयति पूतना इति ।**' **('Pūtān nayati pūtanā iti')** they have given many interpretations for the name Putana.

It has many meanings. The word "Putana" can symbolize the one who nurtures (as she was feeding the child) and the one who takes life (as her true intention was to kill the child with poisoned milk). In a deeper sense, Putana represents the dual nature of the world — she appears attractive and nurturing on the surface, but underneath lies destruction and ignorance.

In our Dharmashastras, the two characters, Manthara from the Ramayana and Putana from the Bhagavat hold deep symbolic meaning as they are not merely individuals, but representations of mental tendencies or vritti that enter our lives. These vrittis, or tendencies, are alive within us today. Gokul symbolizes our life and our body, and within it, these demon-like tendencies live on, often leading us astray. Only God can remove or subdue these vrittis, which is why these two characters are significant in spiritual texts. Manthara in the Ramayana symbolizes the vritti of negative thoughts, the inner voice that tries to lead us towards

mischief, jealousy, and destructive actions, and Putana in the Bhagavata represents the vritti of impure intentions which destroy our pious and pure intentions.

Many times, when you have a pure thought or a noble intention, such as wanting to listen to a sacred story, do a manoratha, or perform a good deed, there may be someone who appears and questions, "Is this the right time? Do you think you're in the right stage of life to be involved in this?" They may offer various arguments and doubts, subtly discouraging you. This kind of vritti (mental tendency) is Putana, the one who tries to steal your pure thoughts and intentions. You should recognize it and not let it affect you.

The Manthara tendency can be seen where everything is going well in the household, but someone, like Manthara, introduces a negative thought or doubt, which leads to division and discord among family members. This tendency seeks to sow seeds of conflict and separation. It is important for Vaishnavas to be cautious and aware of this destructive influence.

In the story of Putana, we see Yashoda ji who is so trusting that she places her beloved child in Putana's lap, believing she will take care of him for a while. However, Putana sees this opportunity and decides to carry out her evil plan. She begins to feed the child her poisoned milk, taking advantage of the trust placed in her.

However, Lord Krishna, in His divine wisdom, immediately understands the situation. He knows that Putana has come to harm Him, but also recognizes the need to redeem her, as her story goes back to a previous life. Putana is said to be the sister of Bali Raja, a great king, in her previous life.Bottom of Form

When Lord Vamana incarnated and went to Bali Raja, his sister, upon seeing this child, felt a deep maternal desire. She thought, "If only I had a child like this, how much joy it would bring me. I would nourish Him with milk daily and experience the bliss of motherhood." However, when Vamana transformed into the Virat form and took everything from Bali Raja, the sister's feelings became conflicted. She also thought, "I should destroy this child, for He has taken everything from my brother." These two emotions—one of maternal love and the other of aggression—arose simultaneously in her. As a result, she became Putana, embodying both the nurturing and destructive aspects of her nature. God granted her the experience of motherhood, as He manifested as a child, and in turn, He also redeemed her, despite her evil

intentions. 'ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।' **('Ye yathā māṃ prapadyante tāṃstathaiva bhajāmyaham')** "As one surrenders to Me, I respond in kind."

In this case, Putana's conflicting emotions were met with a divine response—God gave her the experience of motherhood and later purified her through His grace. Just as God responds to our intentions, whether positive or negative, His actions always lead to ultimate redemption and transformation. This is a profound lesson about how divine grace can transform even the darkest aspects of our nature into opportunities for spiritual growth.

While feeding her milk, Lord Krishna begins pulling her life force towards Himself. As He does so, she cries loudly and her body begins to distort into a more terrifying form. She grows to an enormous size and falls, her body sprawling across several miles. The Lord, through His divine power, extracted her life force, and the mighty sound of her life leaving her body echoed through the air. The Brajwasis, hearing the sound, rush towards the scene. They are shocked to see Putana's grotesque form, with the Supreme Lord above her. Yashoda ji, in a state of concern and relief, quickly takes her child into her arms. It seemed as though Putana prepared her own funeral pyre as many trees fell upon her body. As Vrajwasis perform the funeral rites for Putana, Yashoda ji, feeling a deep sense of protection for her beloved son, decides that she would never let Krishna leave her side again. I will never let anyone take him away from me," she vowed.

The sentiment shared here reflects deep devotion and a reminder of the importance of keeping Shri Thakurji (Lord Krishna) close to us at all times. Just as Yashoda ji's love for Krishna made her vow never to let her child leave her side, we too should maintain that same intensity of attachment and love for the divine. We often think that how would we manage with Thakurji while on traveling or being out of the town. So, we leave them with anyone else and arrange many things for him. But remember, even if you arrange everything for your thakur ji, He will always be happy with you. So, always try to take them with you. We should not leave our thakur ji with anyone.

In the teachings of Shri Harirajji and Shri Gokulnathji, we learn the important principle that we should never leave the Lord to rely on others. If possible, keep Shri Thakurji close, cherish Him, and give Him the love and attention He deserves. Even if we must make certain sacrifices or

adjustments, we should always keep the Lord near us, for His presence is our ultimate source of joy. The Lord does not come to our homes for the material benefits we can offer, nor for the luxuries or decorations. Shri Krishna comes to our homes because of the love we offer Him. Vaikunth is perfect in every way—what can we possibly offer that is greater than what He already has? So why did He leave Vaikunth and come to us? It is only out of His divine love for us, not for anything we can offer in return.

The divine teaching here emphasizes the supreme importance of always keeping Shri Thakurji close to us, never leaving His presence in the hands of anyone else. The reason He left Vaikunth and came to you is because He desired to be served and loved by you. Vaikunth offered no shortage of luxury or opulence, yet Lord Krishna chose to come to the simple, pure love offered by His devotees. So, never leave him in hands of others.

After Putana's death, the Vrajwasis performs her funeral rites. Despite the evil intentions she harbored, it is said that the fragrance of sandalwood emerged from her body as she was burned. This fragrance spread throughout the entire Vraj.

Yashoda Ji recites the 'Putana Kavacha' and circles the tail of a cow over Paramatma, the Supreme lord. She does that to protect her child from the evil eye in case He had been struck with it. In this way, they detailed the leela of 'Putana Vadha' (Killing of Putana by Lord.) One day, Yashoda ji came running to Nanda Baba and told, "Baba! Arrange for a grand celebration, invite all to have Prasada here, let the auspisious instrument be played here! "But what has happened?", he asked. She said, "It's a matter of great joy! If you hear it, you will be delighted! What is it then? he asked. Then Yashoda Ji says, "our little one has turned onto his side. See, Vaishnavas always seek for an excuse for a celebration, to fulfil their manoratha (cherished desires). They think like: It's my birthday today, invite everyone, arrange for Satsanga, arrange for the recitation of Patha and Keertana! The one who has his mind (mana) full of cherished desires (manoratha) is a true Vaishanva. It is so because, if we don't think of Prabhu, we would think of worldly matters. Let me tell a simple thing to you! If you won't think of good, you will think of the bad automatically. If you won't let your mind busy in any subject, it will get busy automatically. The nature of our mind is like water! Where ever water falls, it flows in the direction of slope. The mind is the same – it goes where the slope is! It is easily drawn towards the sin, that is the strange peculiarity of the mind. It feels weary in doing good deeds, but finds

pleasure in doing wrong. Then, how to direct it towards God! The answer is, 'always think of God.' The one who has Thakurji at his home always keep thinking of Shri Thakurji. He thinks, there is a celebration today, I have to prepare that 'Samagri' (food item which is meant to offer to Thakurji), I have to offer these ornaments and attire to Him etc.... And in this way he is always busy in thinking of Shri Thakur ji. It is way better to think of Shri Thakur ji rather than of worldly matters because the more you think of worldly matters, the more you get entangled in that and your life will end so. Therefore, try to think of Shri Thakurji always. He wishes that one must think of him. He doesn't like when you forget Him, or when you don't think of Him. We must remember the story of the lady who prepared the Samagri for the next twenty days and Shri Thakurji ate all of that in one single day! The lady asked, "What did you do?" Shri Thakurji said, "If you stop thinking about me, you will start thinking about the world. Rather than that, it is good to think about me.

It is rather true that if we don't think good, wrong thought are bound to surround us. If I were to give a solution for this, I would suggest a straightforward remedy: Think of doing a major Satkarma once in a year. You will get entangled in its thought! And for that reason, you will have Shri Thakurji in your thoughts. Similarly, think of a Sat-Karma half-yearly, then monthly, then for every Ekadashi and then weekly! If you develop a habit of doing this, your mind will remain engaged in the thoughts of Him. Bind your mind in the noble thoughts. If you don't do that, it will keep engaging itself in the worldly matters.

Thinking like this, Yashoda ji said to invite everybody and celebrate. Everyone had been invited. A big celebration is happening in 'Nandalaya' (The house of Nanda). Delicious Samagri (food) are being prepared and everyone is busy in work. So, Yashoda ji tied a cloth on a cart and made a cradle there. She kept Lalan in that and she also got busy in her work.

Now, Shri Thakurji thought that they all are planning the celebration for me only, and they have forgotten me. Many times, it happens with us too! We arrange for the Manorath for Prabhu and we forget Him. Therefore, I many times advice Vaishnavas that whenever you go for a Manoratha or for any alaukika nimitta (a program, celebration arranged to gain spiritual profit), don't bother about the worldly things. Never say sentences like, they didn't even ask for a chair! Or, they didn't even ask for a tea. Why did you go there? Did you went to get service or to do satsanga? If they will serve you, they can't serve God! અને તો જેને ત્યાં પણ અલૌકિક નિમિત્તે તમે

So, If you visit someone's place for a spiritual or divine purpose, you should never expect any worldly or practical dealings from those. If you insist on worldly expectations, the other person will be forced to shift their attention from God to accommodating you. Society should possess enough maturity to understand that whenever one goes somewhere for a spiritual reason, one must not carry any expectation of worldly transactions or favors.

Here, in Nandalaya, everyone has completely forgotten the Lord. The Lord says, "It is a celebration for me and they are not even thinking of me!" Whenever we forget God, He does something or the other so that our mind turns back toward Him. He has no interest in harming us; His concern is that we do not get ruined. If the mind remains absorbed in worldly life for too long, the world slowly begins to feel attractive. And when the world starts to feel attractive, disinterest in God arises, leading to the ruin of the soul. The Lord does not allow His devotees to be ruined. That is why something or the other happens, so that the devotee's mind returns to God.

A labourer was working somewhere, and the owner of the building lived on the fifth floor above. The labourer was breaking stones, and as he worked, there was a constant sound of breaking the stones was coming. The owner needed something, so he shouted down to the labourer, but the noise was so loud that the labourer could not hear him at all. The owner wondered, How do I call him? How do I get his attention? So, he came up with an idea. He took out a hundred-rupee note and dropped it down. The note fell nearby. While working, the labourer noticed it. He thought, A hundred-rupee note! He put it in his pocket and started hammering again. The owner shouted again, but the labourer kept working, so the sound drowned everything out. Then, the owner dropped a five-hundred-rupee note. The labourer picked it up, put it in his pocket, and went back to work. Then the owner dropped a two-thousand-rupee note, the labourer picked that up too and continued working, still not hearing anything. Finally, the owner picked up a small pebble and threw it so that it hit the labourer on the head. Immediately, the labourer looked straight up. In the same way, God often sends gifts, comforts, vehicles, wealth, even homes, but the soul does not notice. Then God sends a pebble in the form of hardship or crisis, and only then does the soul cry out "Hey Hari!" and come to Him running.

God's purpose is that the soul's vision and movement remain directed toward Him. Causing suffering to a devotee is not God's aim. God does not possess suffering at all, so how could He

give it? If someone were to say to the sun, "Rise at night. Show that you can rise in the darkness," the sun would reply, "The moment I rise, it can no longer be called night; it becomes day." In the same way, God and suffering can never exist together in one place. The absence of God itself is suffering. Forgetfulness of Him is suffering.

Here, in Gokul, the Lord thought, "Everyone has become absorbed in their worldly activities and has forgotten Me." At that moment, the demon Shaktasura entered the cart. The Lord struck it with His lotus foot. The cart broke apart with a loud crash. Hearing the noise, everyone came running and lifted little Lalaji into their arms. In this way, the Supreme Lord granted liberation to Shaktasura.

Here, Shri Mahaprabhuji teaches that through the breaking of the cart (Shakata-bhanjan), the Lord destroyed the worldly attachments of the devotees of Vraj. Those worldly attachments were the reason the Lord was being forgotten. From that moment on, everyone resolved that whatever the situation may be, their attention would always remain fixed on the Lord alone.

Once, Lalaji was seated in Yashodaji's lap when Trinavarta arrived there. He came in the form of a whirlwind, as a fierce storm carrying clouds of dust. Everyone's eyes were blinded by the dust. Trinavarta thought, "I will carry the Lord away," for the Lord was sitting in Yashodaji's lap. At that moment, the Lord increased His weight, so much so that Yashodaji could not lift Him. Holding Lalaji, she had to place Him down on the ground. I understand its meaning like this: whenever God begins to feel like a burden to us, we should know that Trinavarta i.e. a storm has entered our life. The Lord is the joy of our life. But when that joy itself begins to feel like a burden, you can not carry or fell it anymore. There are people who get tensed when they get seva at their home. They think, "oh! Now I will have to wake up early in the morning!" "Oh! Now I will have to do the seva!" Now I will have to offer the bhoga! When one keeps saying have to, have to, then Shrinathji says, "Yes, you certainly will have to."

When the Lord, instead of being a source of joy, begins to feel like a burden, one should understand that Trinavarta has entered one's life. This is the influence of rajoguna. That is why, in the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna asked the Supreme Lord: everyone knows what is sin and what is virtue, yet why does a person still commit sin? Everyone knows that what should not be done, then why do they do it? Even though all this is known, why does it still happen? To this, the Lord replied.

काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः ।
महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्येनमिह वैरिणम् ॥

Kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajoguṇasamudbhavaḥ |
Mahāśano mahāpāpmā viddhyenamiha vairiṇam ||

(Desire itself, born of rajas, when frustrated becomes anger; endlessly consuming, profoundly sinful. It obstructs remembrance of Shri Krishna, know this alone to be the true enemy here)

Because of this rajoguna, desire and anger arise, and through them a person is driven toward sin.

Trinavarta tried to lift the Lord. He carried Him up into the sky. As soon as Prabhu reached to the sky, He struck him with a single blow. Trinavarta fell down, was liberated, and through this act the Lord destroyed all worldly attachments of desire and excessive craving. Thus, uprooting worldly entanglements altogether. These demons are not merely demons; they represent demonic tendencies which existed within the hearts of the devotees of Vraj. By slaying one demon after another, the Lord is removing these inner tendencies. Further, there are many other leelas have been described.

When the Lord grew a little older, Vasudev ji thought, "My two children are in Gokul and now it is the time to do the naming ceremony of both of them." So, in Mathura, he said to his family priest, Garg ji, "You go to Gokul and perform the naming ceremony of my two children."

Garg ji went there. Describing this episode, Shri Shukdevji says, ...

गर्गः पुरोहितो राजन् यदूनां सुमहातपाः ।
व्रजं जगाम नन्दस्य वसुदेव-प्रचोदितः ॥

Gargaḥ purohito rājan yadūnāṃ sumahātapāḥ |
Vrajaṃ jagāma Nandasya Vasudeva-pracoditaḥ ||

Vasudev ji said to Garg ji, "Please go to Gokul and perform the naming ceremony of my children."

Garg ji came to Nand-baba and said, "I have come to perform the naming ceremony of your children." Nand-baba replied, "It is fine for you to perform the naming ceremony of Rohini ji's

child, but if you perform the naming ceremony of our child and Kansa comes to know of it, he will get angry."

Garg - ji knew that both these children were the sons of Vasudevji. Nand-baba said again, "You are the priest of King Kamsa. If you perform the naming ceremony of our child, King Kamsa will be displeased." Garg ji replied, "We will go to the cowshed and perform the naming ceremony in such a way that no one will come to know."

The next day, they did all the preparations. Everything was arranged properly according to the prescribed rituals. On one side, Rohini ji was seated, holding Dauji in her lap and on the other side, Yashoda ji was seated, holding Lalan in her arms. In our tradition, there are sixteen samskaras (sacraments), and the naming ceremony is one of them. The ritual for the naming ceremony was performed. When the time came to give the names, Garg ji's gaze fell upon the child sitting in Rohini ji's lap. Looking at the child's lotus-like face, Garg ji spoke,...

The child sitting in Rohini ji's lap will be supreme in strength above all others. Therefore, I name Him Bal. He will be the giver of joy to everyone; therefore, I name Him Ram. Say it aloud : "Balram ji Maharaj ki Jay"

Now Garg ji's gaze fell upon the child in Yashodaji's lap. With curly hair, lying peacefully, Lalan looked toward Garg ji with His beautiful lotus-like eyes. With just that glance, Garg ji understood that this was no ordinary child. Gazing at the Lord's lotus face, Garg ji spoke, ...

बहुनि सन्ति नामानि रूपाणि च सुतस्य ते ।
गुणकर्मानुरूपाणि तान्यहं वेद नो जनाः ॥

Bahuni santi nāmāni rūpāṇi ca sutasya te |
Guṇa-karma-anurūpāṇi tānyahaṃ veda no janāḥ ||

"What name shall I give this child? He manifests in every age, appearing in different forms and under different names in each Yuga. But merely seeing Him, my mind is drawn irresistibly toward Him. Therefore, I name Him Krishna. Say aloud "Krishna Kanhaiya Lal ki Jay! '**कर्षति इति कृष्णः** ।' – 'Krishna is the one who attracts.' While in other matters the mind needs effort to focus, the essence of Krishna is such that the moment one sees Him, the mind becomes His naturally. The meaning of the word Krishna is explained in the Upanishads in this way

कृषिर्भूवाचकः शब्दो णश्च निर्वृतिवाचकः ।
तयोरैक्यं परं ब्रह्म कृष्ण इत्यभिधीयते ॥

Kṛṣir-bhū-vācakaḥ śabdo ṇaśca nirvṛti-vācakaḥ |
Tayor-aikyaṃ paraṃ brahma kṛṣṇa ity-abhidhīyate ||

Who is Krishna? What is Krishna? The syllable 'कृ' (kri) – represents 'भू' (bhoo) which means sovereignty of the ultimate reality. The one whose present everywhere in the form of joy, that is Krishna. The residents of Vraj were delighted. In this way, descriptions of His various childhood leelas have been narrated.

As Lalan grew a little older, by afternoon all the Gopis would gather together. They would form a circle and place Lalan in the center. Every day, they would bring different toys and play different games with Him. During the afternoon gatherings, Gopis would teach Lalan something in turn. "Alright, Lalan, show us your beautiful hands," and Lalan would stretch out His hands to show them. "Very good, Lalan! Now show us your lotus feet," another would say, and He would show His feet by folding them gracefully.

Once Gopis thought, "Let's play a game in which Lalan touches their ears." They said, "Alright, Lalan, show us where are your ears?" and this clever little Lalan, Chatur Shiromani, (the one who is the most clever in this world) standing up, would gently hold the Gopi's ear and say, "Here they are!" in this way he grows performing such delightful, mischievous leelas. Once, Yashodaji brought beautiful anklets for him and placed them on His feet. Now Lalan began to walk on His little knees, making a soft chham chham sound of the anklets. He would turn around to see where the sound was coming from. Taking two more steps on His knees, the chham chham sound continued. He realized, "Ah! The sound is coming from my own lotus feet!" Filled with joy, Lalan would run around the courtyard of Nandalaya every day making chham chham chham chham sound of the anklets and get delighted.

Every day, when Lalan would swing in His cradle, the cow tied in the courtyard would feel, "How fortunate is Yashoda ji, to have the joy of swinging Lalan in the cradle!" The Lord has taken this birth to fulfil everyone's manorathas only. Thus, one day, while walking on His little knees, Lalan reached the cow sitting there. He grabbed the cow's horns. The cow stood up, and Lalan hung on, holding tightly to the horns. The cow then remembered, "Just as Yashodaji

swings Lalaji in the cradle every day, the Lord has come to fulfil my desire too!" So, moving her head up and down like a cradle, the cow began to swing Lalan gently. In this way, the Lord fulfils the various desires of His devotees in countless ways.

'ચલવન શીખવત યશોદા મૈયા' (Chalavan shikhavat yashoda maiya) i.e. now Yashoda ji is teaching her child to walk - holding up two fingers, Yashodaji would stand before Lalan. Then she would release her fingers and remain standing at a distance. Seeing this, Lalan would run toward her, chham chham chham, making the sound of His anklets as He ran. Wherever it seems that He would be fallen, Yashodaji would lift Him into her lap. The one who teaches whole of the world to walk, is toady learning to walk from Yashoda ji. To fulfil the manorathas of devotees, God does many things according to the devotees' bhava.

Now Lalan has grown a little older. He has found friends of His own age and has formed a little group, saying, "From today, let us establish our own little circle. There is only one rule for this: whatever we get, we share—if we get butter, we will share; if we get a beating, we will share it too!" Whenever these Gopangans make butter, while churning it, they remember Me with fondness. Now Lalan wants to fulfill every manoratha of them. Because, when the Gopis churn curd early in the morning, their hearts are full of thoughts like, "O Lord, we are preparing this foodstuff for You. But we are ordinary milkmaids; You are the King of Vraj. How can we possibly deliver a small pot of butter to You when there are nine lakh cows milking at your home every day? We are incapable to serve you this. We are not worthy of You. Yet still, in our hearts, the desire remains that this offering is for You."

The Lord says, "You may not be able to reach Me, but I can come to your home to fulfill your manoratha." "But Lord, everyone will call You a thief!" the Gopis reply. "No problem," the Lord says. "Let the world call Me a thief if it wishes, but I am determined to fulfil the manoratha of My devotees. Even if I am called a thief, I will fulfil your manoratha." That is why, when we recite the Girirajadharyashtakam, from the very first verse we declare: ...

भक्ताभिलाषाचरितानुसारी दुग्धादि चौर्येण यशोविसारी ।
कुमारितानन्दित घोषनारी मम प्रभुः श्रीगिरिराजधारी ॥

Bhaktābhilāṣā-caritānusārī dugdhādi-cauryeṇa yaśo-visārī |
Kumāritānandita ghoṣa-nārī mama prabhuḥ śrī-girirājadārī ||

(Ever moving in harmony with the loving desires of His devotees, He spreads His fame even through the playful stealing of milk and butter. Delighting the young maidens of Gokula, my Lord is Shri Girirajdhari.)

What is the nature of the Lord? He is One who acts according to the wishes of His devotees.

The Gopis say, "O Lord, please come to my home. I cannot come to You, for I am bound by worldly ties. I cannot reach You. Please, out of Your grace, come to me. I fear the world, so I will keep my doors closed—but my invitation is open; the window of my heart is wide open." And what is this butter, this navaneet? It is nothing but the ever fresh devotion that awakens in the hearts of the Gopis. This devotion itself is the butter. The Lord comes to accept this. Shrinathji says, "Let people call Me a thief." That is why it is said: '**दुग्धादिचौर्येण यशोविसारी**'**('Dugdhādi-cauryeṇa yaśo-visārī')** – He whose fame spreads by stealing milk and butter. Now reflect on this: does stealing ever increase one's fame, or does it diminish it? Has anyone ever heard, anywhere in the world, that someone stole and yet their glory increased?

God's ways are truly the opposite of the world's. He thinks of His glory even through acts of "theft." Shrinathji says, "When does My glory truly increase? If all the powerful and wealthy people come and offer Me grand chhappan bhog, My glory does not really grow through that. But when a simple, poor Vaishnav living in a small hut keeps a small bowl of butter in his home for Me, and I fulfil his manoratha even if I am called a thief, then My glory truly spreads. My glory increases when I am able to reach the homes of the simplest among the simple. Even though I am the King of Vraj, when the poorest of the poor feel, 'Shri Thakur ji is mine,' that is when My glory expands.

शेष महेश गणेश दिनेश, सुरेश जाहि निरंतर गावे।
जाहि अनादि अनंत अखंड, अछेद अभेद सुवेद बतावे ॥
नारद से शुक व्यास रटे, पवि हारे तऊ पुनि पार ना पावे।
ताहि अहीर की छोहरिया, छछिया भर छाछ पे नाच नचावे ॥

Śeṣa maheśa gaṇeśa dineśa, sureśa jāhi nirantara gāve |
Jāhi anādi ananta akhaṇḍa, acheda abheda suveda batāve ||
Nārada se śuka vyāsa raṭe, pavi hāre taü puni pāra nā pāve |
Tāhi ahīra kī chohariyā, chachiyā bhara chācha pe nāca nacāve ||

i.e. the one whose praises are sung by Sheshnag, Mahesh (Shiva), Ganesh, Dinesh (Surya), and Suresh (Indra) constantly, He whom the holy Vedas describe as beginningless, endless, unbroken, indivisible, and beyond all secrets. From Narad to Shuka and Vyas, all chant His name, yet they grow weary and still cannot find the limit of His glory. That very Lord dances for a small bowl of buttermilk as he fulfils the manoratha of the young daughters of the cowherds (Ahirs).

Even though I make this entire world dance to My will, I dance to my devotees' will.

The Lord of the world is standing in the courtyard of a Gopi and says, "Give Me a little butter." The Gopi replies, "First, you must dance..." and then you will get the butter, then you will get the buttermilk' and the Supreme Lord, who makes the three worlds dance, dances in the courtyards of the Gopis with a Chham Chham Chham Chham sound to fulfil the manoratha of an ordinary Gopi; it is then that His glory spreads.

When that all-powerful Supreme Lord becomes powerless and begins to play in the laps of His devotees, it is then that His glory spreads. Despite having such vast treasures filled in His own home, when He goes to the houses of the Gopis and accepts their offerings, it is then that His glory spreads. '**दुग्धादिचौर्येण यशोविसारी**' **('Dugdhādi-cauryeṇa yaśo-visārī'** i.e. He whose glory spreads through the stealing of milk etc.). In Vraj, those in whose houses the theft occurs actually cherish a great desire for it. They invite everyone. Every day, when the Gopis prepare offerings, they make a vow to Giriraj-bawa: "O Giriraj-bawa! Please be graceful. May Shri Thakurji come to my house today." The Lord comes to their houses and fulfils their desires. He employs many, many tactics to do this.

In our tradition, there are songs of 'Urahana' (expostulation). Urahana means when the Gopis go to Yashodaji and give a complaint. "Look, your Lalan is committing thefts everywhere." They come to criticize Shri Thakur ji. They come to complain about Him.

The Gopis say, "For us, His complaint is not a complaint. It is an excuse to remember the Him again and again. We do not wish to complain or criticize. We simply make it an occasion to remember Him over and over." "Arey, Yashoda! Look at your Lalan." Shri Shukdevji writes, '**वत्सान् मुञ्चन् क्वचिद समये क्रोशसंजातहास: ।**' **('Vatsān muñcan kvacid samaye krośasañjātahāsaḥ')** Look at the Lalan of yours. He comes to our house stealthily, and while

the cows are yet to be milked, He releases the calves. He releases them at the wrong time. The calf drinks all the milk of the cow—then what shall we milk and what shall we sell? Explain this to your Lala.

For all these leelas, Shri Mahaprabhuji provides such beautiful spiritual meanings in the Shri Subodhiniji. Mahaprabhuji says, Vatsa does not mean a calf. Vatsa means the devotees of Shri Thakurji, and "at the wrong time" means even before the accounts of their sins and virtues are settled, the Lord liberates them. Yashodaji says, "But you all stay careful." "Oh, He is so mischievous. We hang the butter high on swings (chhinka) and in various places, yet He climbs one over the other, and a third over the second. Moreover, He brings a lotus stalk from the lake. He climbs onto others and inserts the stalk into the pot of milk; He takes a deep breath and all the milk comes out". This 'straw' is something we have started using now, but it was discovered by Shri Thakurji Himself. He performs such mischievous acts.

"Oh, once while my husband and I were sleeping, He tied both our braids together in a knot. He took down the pot and said to me, 'Look Gopi, I am taking away your butter. And, when I got up to run, both of us fell down. He creates such turmoils."

Once there was a new bride, who had just arrived at her in-laws' place. Her mother-in-law was going to fetch water. Before leaving, she instructs her, "Look daughter, everything else is fine. But while I am gone, if a small, beautiful dark child (Shyam-sundar) comes here, He is so beautiful, with such curly hair and such a lovely face. His aura is like a blue sapphire. " She gave such a beautiful description that the bride thought, "When will I get to see Him?" "But be careful. Do not be enchanted at all. He will speak very sweetly. But if you get caught in His talk, He will carry away all the milk, yogurt, and butter in the house." "Oh! Is He such a big thief?" "Yes, the thieves of the world steal by avoiding your eyes; this is a thief who steals while meeting your eyes. The moment our eyes lock with His, we are gone. Take care. Do not look into His eyes. If you look, you will become subservient to whatever He says and will start doing it."

And it is the nature of a daughter-in-law that she does exactly what the mother-in-law forbids. The mother-in-law left to fetch water. In that interval, the Lord arrived. He knocked on the door. She opened and He said, 'I am Krishna'. The Gopi thought, "I must not look at Him. I won't look, I won't look." But the mother-in-law had given such a beautiful description that her eyes

went toward the Lord and she became enslaved to Shri Thakurji. "Look, my mother-in-law has told me. I know You, even though I am new here. She has left a rope with me and told me, if Krishna comes, then tie him to this piller with the help of this rope. Shri Thakur ji said, "Go ahead and tie me. did I refuse? See, I am standing here." Shri Thakur ji stood by the pillar. The Gopi held the end of the rope in her hand. She circled around Him while Shri Thakurji kept His arms wide; once she completed the circle, He pulled His arms in, and the entire rope simply fell to the ground.

He said, "Tie it properly. Didn't they teach you even this in your father's home? You have come to our village as a bride and you don't even know how to tie a rope." "No, no, now I will tie it properly." Again, Shri Thakurji held His arms out, and she spun around and around, but as soon as He withdrew His hands, the rope fell down again. After the third time, the Lord said, "Haven't you been taught even this much? Come, let me teach you. Give me the rope." Frightened, she handed the rope to Shri Thakur ji. "Stay right there," He commanded. She stood still.

Shri Thakur ji said, "Hold the end." She held it. Shri Thakorji, while moving around her from her feet, tied a firm knot all the way up to her neck and said, "Now stay tied up." Shri Thakur ji then took the pot and began to run away. The Gopi cried, "Lord! At least release me!" Then Shri Thakur ji said, "This is the Pushti-Leela (Divine Play of Grace). I know how to tie/bind someone, but I do not know how to let them go. Once I catch and bind someone, I never let go of their hand."

Once Chandravali said, "You steal butter at everyone else's house, but if You can do it at my home, then only I will call You clever." Shri Thakur ji said, "I surely will bestow grace upon you as well." Then, He devised a plan. Shri Thakurji took the form of a small girl (Sakhi) and drew a long veil (ghunghat) in front of his face and went to Chandravali's house. The Lord knew it was the time for her to go fetch water. He knocked on the door. She opened the door and saw a small Gopi standing there, her whole body covered and a long veil drawn.

Chandravali ji asked, "Arey! Who are you?" Thakur ji from the veil said, "Don't you recognize me? I am your younger sister, Bhadravali." Chandravali said, "But I came here after my marriage and I don't have any sister back at my maternal home. I was born after you left." She looked her from top to down. Her whole body was covered, but the hands were visible—and

they were dark. Chandravali said, "Everyone in our family is fair. Mother is fair, Father is fair, I am fair—how did you turn out so dark?"

The Lord began to say, "Arey, it is Mother's fault. When you were about to be born, she ate a lot of butter and mishri but when I was about to be born, it was the season for jamun (black plums). She bathed in the dark waters of the Yamunaji and ate dark jamuns, so I became dark." Chandravali was innocent, she believed and said, "Very well, very well, come, sister, come into my house." As she brought Him inside, the innocent Chandravali was deceived. Chandravali said, "Sister! You have come just as it is time for me to fetch water. Will you do a little work? Can you clean my house a bit?" Shri Thakurji said, "You just go. I will make the whole house clean."

When Chandravali reached the well, she stood with the others and talked to them, saying, "Look how fortunate I am. My beautiful little sister has come to my house. She has come after all these years. I am seeing her for the first time." Then all her friends said, "You are so old, how can your sister be so small? It can be that dark Kanhiya (Krishna) who deceived you." And then she got the point. She dropped her pot and ran. Running back, as she opened the door, she saw Shri Thakurji taking butter from the pot and eating it. He was feeding the monkeys and feeding His friends. As soon as they saw the Sakhi, the friends jumped out the window and the monkeys fled. The Lord tried to run but was caught. Chandravali said, "Today I have caught You red-handed, I will show this to your mother. She doesn't believe us when we say Lalan (Krishna) steals. Today I will show her the evidence that You are the thief." Holding His hand and pulling Him along, she took Lalan to the Nandalaya... she will go and show Mother Yashoda.

The whole crowd followed behind, shouting "Ho Ho Ho Ho," and all the friends followed along as well. This Gopi's son was also following behind, as he was part of Shri Thakurji's group. As they were going toward Nandalaya, they passed through the market. Since the father-in-law of this Gopi was sitting at the shop, the Gopi drew her veil (ghunghat). Shri Thakorji thought, "Now is the chance". He said, "Arey Sakhi! I am so beautiful and delicate. You have been holding my hand for so long. Do one thing: let go of this hand and hold the other one. My hand has started hurting from being held so long. Let go of this hand and take the other." The Gopi also thought, "Lalan is so delicate! I have been pulling His hand for so long; He must be in pain". She said, "Fine, give me the other hand". The moment she let go of His hand, He made her grab the hand of her own son who was coming up behind her.

He took misri from His pocket and stuffed it into His friend's mouth. The sugar-candy would not melt quickly, and the boy could not speak. He kept making "ungh ungh" sounds, but not a word could come out of his mouth. They arrived at Nandalaya. Shri Thakur ji quietly jumped over the wall and went to sleep in the bedchamber (shaiya mandir). The Gopi came into the courtyard and started shouting, "Ari Yashoda! Come outside. Look, today I have caught the thief and brought Him here". Yashoda ji came out and saw that the Gopi was holding the hand of her own son. "I have caught the thief today and brought Him. You don't believe me, but today you will find out who the thief is! This Kanhiya of yours is the thief".

Yashodaji said, "My Lalan is asleep in the bedchamber. Arey Lalan! Come out". When Lalan came out, rubbing His eyes, He said, "Arey Maiya, let me sleep at least". Then he acted surprised, "How did they get here? Who is this? Look, arey, Chintu, how are you here?" The Gopi was surprised, "This is my Chintu. It's a wonder how Lalan got here?".

Lalan began to say, "Maiya, it's nothing else. She has been possessed by a ghost. I will whisper a mantra in her ear, and after that, she will never do this again". He went close to her. Making the Gopi sit down, He whispered to her, "This time I made you catch your son's hand. If you do this again, I will make you catch your husband's hand". He then told Yashoda ji that he had found such a mantra that the ghost would never bother her again.

Arey! The Gopi in whose house a theft occurs considers it her great fortune. **'अरे सखी बड़भाग्य भरी नंदलाल तेरे घर आवत है' ('Are sakhi badbhagya bhari Nandlaal tere ghar aavat hai')** O dear, you are so fortunate that Nanda-Lal comes to your house. When a theft occurs at someone's house, all the Gopis come and praise her, giving her congratulations. "Congratulations, congratulations! The Lord has visited your home. We have cherished this desire for so many years, but He has not come to us. It is your good fortune that Shri Thakurji came to your house and asserted His right over you".

Arey, you are very lucky. The Lord visited your home. Say, "Makhan ke chureya ki jay". This is the play of "stealing the heart" (chitta-chori). It is a play to increase His own glory. He is the Lord of the three worlds, who lacks nothing. Yet, to fulfil the manorathas of His devotees, He reaches out to them.

Once the Lord was playing at Brahmand-ghat. Dau ji (Balaram) and His friends were also there.

While playing, they were making balls of mud. After making a mud ball, Shri Thakurji put it in His mouth. Dau ji saw this. "Lalan, did you eat mud?" "Aha (No)". "Look, don't tell a lie. I will tell it to Maiya". "Okay, tell her". Dau ji went running and said, "Maiya, Maiya, Lalan ate mud". "Really! I'll see Him right now". Yashoda ji came running. She said, "Lalan! Look, what is Dauj i saying? Did you eat mud?". The Lord replied:

नाहं भक्षितवान् अम्ब सर्वे मिथ्याभिशंसिनः ।
यदि सत्यगिरस्तर्हि समक्षं पश्य मे मुखम् ॥

Nāhaṃ bhakṣitavān amba sarve mithyābhiśaṃsinaḥ |
Yadi satyagiras-tarhi samakṣaṃ paśya me mukham ||

(I have not eaten it, Mother; they are all false accusers. If they are telling the truth, then look into my mouth yourself.)

"Mother! I did not eat mud. Everyone else is lying. They are all lying". "Oh! So, you are the only truth-teller like Harishchandra and everyone else is wrong? Everyone is lying and you are telling the truth?" "Yes, Mother."

Now, here great scholars and saints are struck with wonder. Can the Supreme Lord ever speak a lie? 'सत्य व्रतं सत्यपरं त्रिसत्यं...' **('Satyavrataṃ satyaparaṃ trisatyaṃ...')** One whose birth the devatas praise by saying "You are the one who has taken the vow of truth," how can that Supreme Lord lie? Therefore, the Acharyas have explained this with different sentiments. God does not lie. It is said He put the earth in His mouth. They say, yes, He put it in His mouth, but He did not eat it. How can it be that He put it in His mouth but did not eat it?

One meaning is according to the Upanishads. As illustrated in the Upanishads that 'द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया समानं वृक्षं परिष-स्वजाते ।' **('Dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā samānaṃ vṛkṣaṃ pariṣasvajāte')** Just as two birds are perched on a single branch. One eats the sour and sweet fruits, experiencing joy and sorrow, while the other observes as a witness. The one who watches is the Supreme Soul (Paramatma). The one who eats is the individual soul (Jivatma). That is to say, the Supreme Lord is not the enjoyer (Bhokta), He is the witness (Drashta). Thus, according to the Upanishads, the meaning is that God does not eat. He is the witness; He is not the enjoyer at all.

The second meaning is that God did not eat it; He fed it. How is this possible? He didn't eat it, but He fed it! He did put it in His mouth. The Acharyas explained that when Putana came to take the lives of the children of Vraj, all the souls of those children she had taken were inside her. When God sucked out Putana's life-force, all those children of Vraj entered inside the Supreme Lord. Then the children of Vraj said, "We took birth in Vraj, but the greatness of Vraj lies in its dust (Vrajaraj). Despite being born in Vraj, we remained deprived of its dust. Lord! Have mercy and let us taste the dust of Vraj."

Because, what is the dust of Vraj like? It is said, "Liberation (Mukti) asks Gopal, **'मुक्ति कहे गोपाल सों, मेरी मुक्ति बताय, व्रजरज उड़ मस्तक लगे, मुक्ति मुक्त व्हे जाय" ('Mukti kahe Gopal son meri mukti bataya, Vrajaraja uda mastaka lage, mukti mukta vhe jaya')** i.e. When Liberation asks the Lord, "I go around liberating everyone, but who will liberate me? How will it happen?" Then the Lord says, "If the dust of Vraj flies and touches the forehead, then liberation becomes liberated. O Liberation, if the dust of Vraj touches your head, your liberation is also possible."

That is why when the children of Vraj requested Him, Shri Thakurji did not eat the mud, but He fed it to the children. He gave them the taste of the dust of Vraj. This is the uniqueness and greatness of the dust of Vraj. Whether it is Shri Yamunaji, Vrindavan, or Girirajji—who holds the greatness in these three places? It is the dust of Vraj. In the Yamunashtakam, Shri Mahaprabhuji, while singing the praises of Shri Yamunaji, says:

नमामि यमुनामहं सकल सिद्धि हेतुं मुदा ।
मुरारि पद पंकज स्फुरदमन्द रेणुत्कटाम् ॥

Namāmi yamunāmahaṃ sakala siddhi hetuṃ mudā |
Murāri pada pańkaja sphuradamanda reṇutkaṭām ||

(I joyfully bow to Shri Yamuna ji, the direct cause of all siddhi (attainments) that arises through Pushti; she is intensely pervaded by the manifest dust of the lotus feet of Murari)

What is Yamunaji like? Where the dust is even more significant than the water. Such is Shri Yamunaji. Where there is more dust? Whose dust is it? It is the dust of the lotus feet of Murari (Lord Krishna). That is the specialty of Yamunaji. Similarly, if you look at Girirajji, it is said: "Let us roll in the dust of Vraj, let us bathe in the Govind Kund, let us stay at the foothills (Taleti) of

Shri Govardhan." Even at the foothills of Shri Girirajji, there is the dust of Shri Thakurji's lotus feet. In Vrindavan too, there is the dust of His lotus feet. The greatness of this dust is sung especially in Vraj. There are two types of dust that have greatness in Vraj.

(1) The dust of Shri Thakurji's lotus feet and (2) the dust of the Gopis' lotus feet. Even when Uddhavji went to Vraj, he left Mathura singing the praises of the Lord, but when he arrived in Vraj, he was coloured by the devotion of the Gopis, and when he returned... He forgot the feet of God and spoke...

वन्दे नन्दव्रजस्त्रीणां पादरेणुमभीक्ष्णशः ।
यासां हरिकथोद् गीतं पुनाति भुवनत्रयम् ॥

Vande nanda-vraja-strīṇāṃ pāda-reṇum-abhīkṣṇaśaḥ |
Yāsāṃ hari-kathod-gītaṃ punāti bhuvana-trayam ||

(I repeatedly offer my salutations to the dust of the feet of the women of Nanda's Vraj (the Gopis). The singing of the stories of Lord Hari by these Gopis purifies the three worlds.)

While offering salutations to the dust of the Gopis' feet, he departed from Gokul. Thus, there is the dust of the Lord's feet, the dust of the Gopis' feet, and the third dust in Vraj is the dust from the hooves of the cows (khur-raj). When the cows come walking into Vraj, the dust from their hooves flies up. That is why in our scriptures of auspicious timings (Muhurta Shastra), and whenever there is a marriage in the Vallabh-Kul, what auspicious time is written? Godhuli-bela (the hour of cow-dust). It is simply written that the marriage will take place during Godhuli-bela. What is the best possible auspicious time of the day? The time when the cows return from the forest and the dust from their hooves flies up is considered supremely sacred.

Such is the greatness of the Vraj – raj (the dustof Vraj); therefore, He did not eat the dust but fed it to the children of Vraj. Mother Yashoda began to say, "You have eaten the dust. Open your mouth." As soon as Shri Thakurji opened His mouth, she began to see the vision of the universe in His mouth. Yashoda ji saw the three worlds. Within the Lord's mouth, she saw the universe, the earth within the universe, Bharatvarsh (India) within the earth, Vraj-mandal within Bharatvarsh, the Brahmand Ghat within Vraj-mandal, and even herself standing there. She was struck with wonder. "Oh, is this some divine illusion (Maya), or is my child not just a

child, but the Supreme Soul Himself?" "And if He is the Supreme Soul, then how many offenses have I committed? It happened many times that I did not give Him food. Many times, I scolded Him. Many times, I beat Him. How many sins have I committed! Oh, He should be seated on a throne and worshipped." The Lord thought, "This has become a mess. I have come to Vraj to enjoy the bliss of Seva and Mother desires to perform Puja (ritual worship). I find no happiness in Puja. My happiness lies in Seva." Where rituals are primary, it is Puja; where love is primary, it is Seva.

In Pushtimarg, love is predominant. Puja can be of sixteen steps (Shodashopachara) or five steps (Panchopachara) and many other types are shown in the scriptures. But in Pushtimarg, Seva is primary. When we go to other temples of the Maryada-marga, we can see that the worship is performed in various ritualistic ways. Even at our homes, if we perform Pujan, the rituals are followed from the invocation to the farewell. Shodashopachara Puja is performed there. In that, one can invoke Ganapati in a single betelnut and can bid Ganapati farewell after the work is done. It is so, because in Puja, devatas are worshipped. But in the seva, we consider that there is the form of Bhagavan himself. This means in Puja, there is invocation and farewell because a deity (Devta) is there. In Seva, there is no "deity"; in Seva, there is the "Svarup" (the living form). That is why we do not believe in God in the form of a deity. This is why we do not place a lamp (diya) directly in front of God. There, it is the sentiment of a child (Baal-bhav). Seva is dominated by sentiment (Bhav). Where there is Puja, there is incense, lamps, and offerings. In Seva there is the manifestation son of Nanda (Krishna). A vaishanava considers "He is my child and I am Yashoda." "If I place a lamp near a small kid, I feel afraid". What if he touches it and gets burned? My "Lalan" (dear child) must not have to face any exertion. This is the predominance of love.

Therefore, the way to do Seva in Pushtimarg is 'यथा देहे तथा देवे' **('yathā dehe tathā deve')** —"What one experiences in one's own body, the same should be experienced for Shri Thakurji." This is why, if it is winter, we offer a fargul (cloak) or a gadal (quilt). We offer things that are suitable according to the seasons and conditions. When the summer season arrives, fountains are run and khas (vetiver) curtains are used. Depending on the season, the Seva, adornment (Shringar), and clothing. The sentiment that His happiness (Tat-shukh) is the most important is the primary sentiment in Seva.

Two sentiments are very important in Seva: (1) The sentiment of Manifestation (Pragatta). God is not going to come from some sky to shower grace upon me. If He showers grace on me, then this Lalan presiding over my head is the one who will shower grace. This is the manifested presence. This is the first sentiment. And (2) the sentiment of His happiness (Tat-shukh). "What can I do so that my Lord feels happy?" These two sentiments are very important in Seva. Seva should be performed keeping these two sentiments in mind.

We have the sequence of Ashtayama (the eight periods of the day), from Mangala (awakening) to Shayan (rest). When you go for darshan at Shrinathji, or when you perform Seva at home, from the time you wake Him until the time you put Him to rest—what is that? It is exactly the way Shri Thakurji would wake up and finally go to sleep at night in Vraj...

This is the entire daily routine of Shri Thakur ji. Our service routine (Seva-kram), from waking in the morning to the Ashtayama (eight periods of the day), follows this. In Pushtimarg, service is performed with the sentiment of His pleasure (Tat-sukha). Thus, keeping the sentiment of the Ashtayama in mind, the service of the Lord is predominant.

When Mother Yashoda felt the desire to perform ritual worship (Puja), the Lord brought a veil of Vaishnav illusion (Maya). The divine sentiment returned. The feeling of Him being the Supreme Soul vanished, and the sentiment of Him as a child (Baal-bhav) was awakened. She held Shri Thakurji close to her chest. In this way, the desire for Seva (loving service) was awakened once again.

Next comes the description of the Damodar-leela. A thought occurred to Yashoda ji. "Oh, Shri Thakurji goes to everyone's house to eat butter. There is so much butter lying here at home. Why does He not eat here, and why does He like it there? Perhaps it is because all those Gopis prepare the materials (Samagri) themselves. They learn to prepare it while remembering the Lord. I have it done by others. Perhaps it is not prepared by my own hands, which is why He does not eat it. Today, I shall prepare the materials myself".

The Lord loves what is prepared by my hands very much. Therefore, Yashoda ji made a decision. She took the churning pot and the jar. She placed the yogurt inside. After bathing, Yashoda ji prepared herself and put on her ornaments. Shri Shukdevji, while describing this, said:

एकदा गृहदासीषु यशोदा नंदगेहिनी ।
कर्मान्तरनियुक्तासु निर्ममन्थ स्वयं दधिः ॥

Ekadā gṛha-dāsīṣu yaśodā nanda-gehinī |
Karmāntara-niyuktāsu nirmamantha svayaṃ dadhiḥ ||

Thinking of doing the service many times, Yashoda ji engaged herself in Seva. Shri Hariray Mahaprabhuji describes this in the Nitya-leela. Once, Yashoda ji began to churn the yogurt. **'यानि यानि गीतानि तद् बाल चरितानि च' ('Yāni yāni gītāni tad-bāla-caritāni ca')** i.e. she churns while singing and remembering the Lord's childhood leelas. The sound of her waist-bells (kinkini) echoes and The "chham chham" sound of her bangles could be heard. Yashoda ji is churning yogurt for Shri Thakur ji. In her mind, she remembers His childhood antics. Shri Hariray Mahaprabhu sings: **'प्रातः समे उठी व्रजबाला, गावत गीत रसाला' ('Praatah same uthi vrajabaalaa, gaavata mangala geeta rasaalaa'** i.e. Rising at dawn, the maiden of Vraj sings sweet auspicious songs).

Yashoda ji is churning the yogurt. **'मंथन करे मोहन जस गावे, सुमिर सुमिर हरिगुण सचु पावे' ('Manthana kare Mohana jasa gaave, Sumira sumira hariguna sachupaave')**. As she churns, she immerses herself in His childhood leelas. While churning, Yashoda ji remembers: "How beautiful are the plays my Lalan performs!". She is doing the seva herself with her hands; and is remembering Him in her mind. What beautiful leelas the Lord performs! She remembers how once Lalan came running and hugged her from behind. As He hugged her, Yashoda ji's long braid came into Lalan's hands. Suddenly a though occurred to him: "Mother! Why is your braid so big and mine so small?" He began to cry. "Mother, do something. When will my braid grow?" Lalan said, 'When will my braid grow, my mother? When will it ever grow? "Oh Mother, when will mine be like yours?" Yashoda ji began to laugh. "Oh Lalan! If you drink a bowl full of milk every day, it will become like mine. Drink a bowl full of milk every day and it will become just like mine".

Lalan said, "Bring a bowl full of milk right now. I will drink it right now". She brought a bowl full of milk. After drinking two sips, Lalan thought: "let me see that the braid is growing or not. How will I know?". He said, "Keep a mirror in front of me." A mirror was placed in front of him. He took one sip and looked up, lifting his braid. He took another sip and looked up at his braid.

The entire bowl was finished, but the braid remained exactly as it was. Lalan began to cry. "Oh Mother! The braid is not growing at all." Mother started saying, "Lalan, if you drink a bowl full of milk every day, it will become like mine". In this way, Yashoda ji continues to churn the yogurt and also continues to immerse herself in the childhood leelas. 'प्रातः समे उठी व्रजबाला, गावत मंगल गीत रसाला । मथन करे मोहन जस गावे, सुमिर सुमिर हरिगुण सचु पावे ॥' **('Praatah same uthi vrajabaalaa, gaavata mangala geeta rasaalaa | Manthana kare Mohana jasa gaave, Sumira sumira hariguna sachupaave ||')**

Yashoda ji continues to churn while remembering the childhood leelas. "What various plays my Lalan performs!" Yashoda ji remembers — It happened once that Lalan came to Mother Yashoda and said, "Mother, I want a toy." Yashoda replied, "Alright Lalan, what kind of toy do you want? Shall I get you a rattle, a spinning top, an elephant, or a horse?" Taking her by the hand, He led her out into the courtyard. Pointing toward the sky, Lalan said, "I want that moon-toy." He wanted the Moon to play with. Yashoda began to laugh. "Oh Lalan! The moon is so far away in the sky. How can I bring it to you?" Lalan insisted, "No Mother, I will not drink milk, I will not sleep, and I will not eat. Bring me the Moon to play with right now." He became very stubborn. While churning butter, Yashoda remembers these childhood acts. "What wonderful plays my Lalan performs!"

He was so stubborn that he wouldn't listen to Yashoda. Just then, Rohini ji arrived. "Oh, what happened? Why is Lalan crying?" Yashoda replied, "Look at his stubbornness. He says he wants the moon to play with. How can I bring it?" Rohini ji said, "Do not worry, I will bring it." She took a large golden plate, filled it with water, and went into the courtyard.

She called Lalan, "Come here, Lalan. I will give you the moon to play with." She placed the plate in the courtyard. The reflection of the moon appeared in the water. She told Lalan, "Here, play with the moon." When he tried to catch it in the water, the moon would move away. Every time he tried to grab it, it moved. Eventually, Lalan got tired of splashing the water and went to sleep.

The sound of churning butter (dhan-dhan-dhan) echoes in the courtyard of Nand-bhavan. Mother Yashoda remembers his childhood acts and thinks, "What wonderful plays my Lalan performs!"

Once, Shri Thakorji (Lalan) was playing in the courtyard of Nand-bhavan. A wedding procession was passing by. The groom was walking in front, and the bride was following behind in a palanquin. Lalan called out, "Mother! Come here, come here!" Mother Yashoda came running. "What is it, Lalan?" He asked, "Mother, where are they going?" She replied, "Oh! They have gotten married. The groom is in front and his bride is behind him." Lalan said, "Mother! I want to get married too. I want a bride." Yashoda laughed, got him sit on her lap, and asked, "What kind of bride would you like?" Lalan replied, "Mother, I want a bride who will feed Father every day, fan me, and serve you." Finally, he added, "I want a bride who will carry me around in her lap." While churning butter, Yashoda continues to reminisce about these plays.

Just then, Lalan actually arrived. He was hungry and began pulling at Yashoda's sari. Yashoda stopped churning butter, realizing he was hungry. She took him in her lap and began to nurse him. While nursing, she saw the milk kept on the stove across from her. The milk thought, "The Lord is drinking Mother Yashoda's milk. Now, He will not accept me. A body that is of no use in the service of the Lord is better off burnt." Thinking this, the milk began to boil over and fall into the fire. Yashoda felt the milk was wasting. (It is said that a woman can tolerate anything, but she cannot bear to see milk boiling over.) She set Lalan down and ran to the stove. Shri Thakurji thought, "I, the Righteousness (Dharma), was in your lap, and you are running to save the worldly means (milk)? You have the Divine Form in your lap, yet you run after the material objects?"

Lalan became angry. He went to the storeroom and broke all the pots of milk and curd. He fed it to the monkeys and created a mess. When Yashoda came out and looked, she cried, "Oh! My Lalan has become so mischievous. Everyone used to tell me, but I didn't believe it. Today I saw it with my own eyes. I won't let him go today." She took a stick in her hand. Lalan ran in front, and Mother Yashoda ran behind him. It is said that she was looking at the Lord's back, and thus the desire to hit him arose. There is Righteousness (Dharma) in the Lord's face, but there is Unrighteousness (Adharma) in His back. Therefore, whenever you perform service (Seva), always do it while facing Him. Whether you offer the mala or the bhoga; do not offer it from behind. Come before the Lord and then offer it. This is the proper etiquette (Vivek) followed here.

Yashoda ji ran to catch Him, but the Lord could not be caught by any means. She became exhausted and began to cry. Now she became "Ni-sadhan" (without means). Indeed, being without means is the very way to attain the Lord. The Lord knowingly allowed Himself to be caught. She led Him to the wooden mortar (ukhal). "Today I am binding you with this and you will not be given any food today as you have become too mischievous." She prepared to bind Him. Whenever she tried to tie Him, no matter how many ropes she brought, the rope would always fall short by two finger-widths. This is because as long as there is ego (ahamta) and attachment (mamta), the Lord cannot be bound. And the "two fingers" represent the qualities of Tamas (ignorance) and Rajas (passion); many different meanings were shown for these two fingers. The Lord would not be bound. Now, Yashoda ji was left without any means. Shri Thakur ji observed that now the Gopis are bringing more rope. And the means(sadhan) which is brought by Gopis, he must get bound with it.

Shri Mahaprabhuji has also given us that same rope, which is given by Gopis. What has he given? '**सेवा रीत प्रीत व्रजजन की जनहित जग प्रकटाई**' **('Seva reeet preet vraja jana ki janahit jaga prakataayi')** (he brought forth the the path of service and the love of the people of Vraj for the benefit of all people. Having appeared, he showed the way of this Marg (Pushti Marga)"). And the sadhan (means) brought by Gopis filled the gap of two-fingered with with "Reet" (method/tradition) and "Preet" (love). Thus, the two finger-widths that were missing were completed. Thus, bound by the rope of seva, Shri Thakurji resides in our homes. He was bound because the Gopis provided the means. However, the Lord's bondage is always for the purpose of liberation of someone.

Yashoda ji returned to her work. At the same time, Lalan saw a cart passing by outside the Nanda - Bhavan. The oxen were pulling the cart away. Lalan thought, "I am the ox and this is the cart. Now, I will also drive the cart. Dragging the mortar behind Him, the Lord began to roam in the courtyard of Nand-bhavan. There were two trees there. The Lord passed between the two trees, the Lord moved through, but the mortar got stuck. The Lord applied a little force. With a loud "crack," there was a great noise. The two trees fell. From them, the two sons of Kubera, Nalkuber and Manigriva, appeared.

They had been cursed by a sage. Once they were bathing in a lake with celestial nymphs (apsaras). When the sage arrived, they did not show him proper respect. The sage became

angry. "You have dull intellects like those of trees. Go, become trees and fall down as inert objects." This is why we maintain respect for the Lord and the Guru. When in the Haveli, near the Guru, or before the Lord, how should one sit? How should one speak? How should one behave? All these etiquettes exist among us. These behaviors are taught to us because one must maintain a sense of decorum (Maryada).

After being cursed, they asked for forgiveness. The sage said, "you will become trees, but God Himself will liberate you. You will become trees of Nand-bhavan" and when the Lord liberated them. They venerated before him with a beautiful verse:

वाणी गुणानुकथने श्रवणौ कथायां ।
हस्तौ च कर्मसु मनस्तव पादयोर्नः ॥

Vāṇī guṇānukathane śravaṇau kathāyāṃ |
Hastau ca karmasu manastava pādayornaḥ ||

(May our speech be engaged in reciting Your virtues, our ears in hearing Your stories, our hands in Your work, and our minds at Your feet.)

This speech should constantly sing Your praises. Our mind should constantly remember You. Our eyes should constantly seek Your vision. It is for this purpose that these senses were given to us.

When the trees fell and the noise occurred, everyone came running. "Oh! Such calamities are happening in Gokul." Upananda gave an advice: "Nandbaba! Let us leave this place, pack all our belongings, and go to Vrindavan and establish Gokul there". Thinking thus, they loaded all the belongings into carts. Nandbaba, Upananda, Sunanda... all the residents of Vraj took their own belongings and set off toward Vrindavan. They went to Vrindavan and settled Gokul.

Thus, descriptions of many types of divine plays are given here. Now, The story of the slaying of Vatsasura is given. The demon came in the form of a calf. His form was excellent, but his nature was demonic. This is the nature of the wicked (Khal-dharma). The Lord recognized him through his eyes, sensing he was a demon. The Lord liberated him.

The story of the slaying of Bakasura follows. The demon came in the form of a crane. He stood

in the Yamuna River on one leg with the other tucked up, appearing as if he were a sage performing penance. However, his disposition was demonic. Even within the devotion that is in the form of the Yamuna ji, if there is an opposite to devotion, it is hypocrisy (dambh). The Lord killed the crane and liberated Bakasura.

Shri Mahaprabhuji considers chapters twelve, thirteen, and fourteen to be interpolations — these are the chapters where Lord Brahma becomes deluded regarding the Lord. Regarding this story of Brahma's delusion, Shri Mahaprabhuji says that this is not a leela from "Saraswat Kalpa". The Lord performed this leela, but in a different Kalpa. Therefore, he considered them interpolated, yet he wrote the Shri Subodhiniji, commentary on them. This is because, in this Kalpa, the Lord had promised Brahma that he would never be deluded by His divine leelas; however, delusion occurred here. Many proofs from the scriptures are discussed regarding this, and Shri Mahaprabhuji has provided these scriptural evidences very beautifully.

Now, while playing with Shri Thakur ji, His cowherd friends think everyday that Shri Thakur ji daily have the samagri that is prepared in the Nandalaya, can there be any such day when we bring Samagri prepared from our home and He have it? Every Gopi also harboured the same desire: "When will the day come when we prepare samagri at our own home and Shri Thakurji enjoys it?"

Shri Thakur ji came to know the manoratha of everyone and said to all His friends, "Go, go home today. Tell the Gopis at your houses to prepare beautiful and delicious food. Tomorrow, we will go to Shyamdhak for cow-herding and do the "Chhaak Leela". In simple words, "Chhaak Leela" means a picnic. Everyone should bring a packed lunch from their homes, and the Lord would eat the food from everyone's house. All the friends were overjoyed. They went home and shared the happy news. "Mother, Shri Thakurji has commanded it! Tomorrow the Lord will eat the samagri from our house". The Gopis were delighted. Each Gopi began preparing the very best dish she knew how to make. They spent the whole night preparing beautiful dishes, with only one desire in their hearts: "O Lord! Please eat this samagri we have made with love".

The next day, they packed the lunch (Chhaak) in baskets. Giving them to the children, the mothers said, "Son! When you feed Him, remember me as well".

All the friends set out with Shri Thakurji to graze the calves. Everyone had brought their own packed lunch, and the Lord arrived at Shyamdhak.

All the friends formed a circle and sat there, Shri Thakurji sat in the center and said, "Now everyone open your baskets and feed me your samagri". One opened a basket and said, "My mother makes wonderful Pedas. Here Lalan, have these Pedas". Shri Thakurji ate them and said: They taste very nice. Another said, "My mother makes very tasty Jalebis. Here, eat these Jalebis". Thakurji kept eating and His joy kept growing. As He ate, He praised the food. Snatching morsels from one another's hands, the Lord performed the beautiful "Chhaak Leela".

Meanwhile, standing at a distance, a Brahmin's son named Madhumangal thought to himself, "There is nothing at my house. I haven't brought anything. Today the Lord is eating food from everyone's home. I also want Him to eat something from my house". He went running back home.

Calling out "Mother, Mother, Mother!", he arrived home. She asked, "What is it, son?" He said, "Mother, today Shri Thakurji is having food from everyone's house. It is my manoratha that He eats food from our house as well".

The mother's throat choked with emotion. "Son, we are poor Brahmins. There is nothing in our house". She turned all the containers upside down to show him. "Look, son..."

"There is nothing!". "Mother, there must be something! Think back. You must have hidden something. It must be lying in some corner. The Lord is showering such grace today, and we might miss out. I have had this manoratha in my heart for a long time to offer something from our home to the Lord with my own hands." The mother said, "There is nothing in our house." He replied, "Mother, there must be something." Then she remembered, "Oh son! There is some sour buttermilk left from the day before yesterday." "Yes Mother, whatever it is, give it to me. If even a tiny particle from our home reaches the Lord, our lives will be blessed." "But son! It is very sour. If you insist, I will give it to you." She took a large earthen pot, filled it with the two-day-old sour buttermilk, and added a little extra on top. "Son, if the Lord doesn't like it, don't force Him. It is very sour buttermilk."

Madhumangal was overjoyed. He took the pot and ran. Running, he reached the foothills of Girirajji at Shyamdhak. He saw the Lord eating someone's jalebis, someone's pedas, and someone's barfi. Standing at a distance, he thought: "If I give this sour buttermilk to the Lord, even He will make fun of me. 'Look, what kind of sour buttermilk has he brought?' No, no, I cannot give this to the Lord. But if He sees it in my hands, He will ask for it. If He asks, He will tease me. What should I do?" Thinking this, he decided, "Let me drink it all myself so the Lord won't have to eat it."

Just as he put the pot to his mouth, the Lord's eyes fell on him. "Madhumangal! Stop right there!" Saying this, the Lord ran toward him. "Oh, what if the Lord tastes it? He will mock me." [thought Madhumangal]. "Let me drink it quickly," and he tilted the pot into his mouth. His mouth was small, and the pot was large. The buttermilk spilled from the corners of his lips. As it spilled, the Lord arrived running and placed His cupped hands under the spill. The Lord began to consume the half-eaten buttermilk of Madhumangal. While eating, He said, "Madhumangal! I have never tasted such sweet buttermilk in Vraj until today. 'मीठो मदनगोपाल आज दधि, मीठो मदनगोपाल' **('Meetho madangopal, aaj dadhi meetho Madangopaal')** (O Madan-Gopal, today the curd is very sweet.)

The Lord began to praise it immensely: "Oh! Such sweet buttermilk. 'बहुत दिन बसे कुमुदबन, ऐसो स्वाद कबहू न चाख्यो' **('Bahuta dina base kumudabana aiso swaad kabahu na chaakhyo'** i.e. I have lived in Kumudvan for many days, but I have never tasted such a flavor.)' Such a taste had never come before. 'आने पात बनाये दोनो दीये सबन को बाँट' **('aane paat banaaye dono diye saban ko baant'** i.e. They brought leaves, made bowls, and distributed it to everyone). In the meantime, all the friends arrived. "Hey Lalan! Will you drink such sweet buttermilk all alone? Give some to us too." He replied, "Go and pluck some leaves." If you have ever been to Shyamdhak in Vraj, you would know the leaves there grow like natural bowls. Even the leaves have a bowl shape because even the trees want to serve the Lord. They brought the leaves. The Lord began to give a little buttermilk to everyone from His own cupped hands. Everyone drank and praised it, saying it was very sweet. After everyone had finished, some friends who were left behind came later. They said, "You all drank it and didn't give any to us? Lord, do something. Let us taste it. Such sweet buttermilk—why should we be left out?"

The Lord said, "It is finished now, where do I bring it from?" "Do something! Make us drink it." Then the Lord remembered. 'जिन नहीं पायो सुनो रे भैया, मेरी हथेरी चाट आज दधि मीठो मदनगोपाल' **('jin nahi paayo suno re bhaiya, meri hatheri chaat, aaj dadhi meetho Madangopal'** i.e. Those who didn't get any, listen brothers, lick my palms. Today the curd is sweet, Madan-Gopal). Lord Brahma witnessed this scene. He thought "Can this be the Supreme Brahman? One who eats and feeds the leftovers of cowherd boys! This cannot be Brahman. This cannot be God. I shall test Him."

Then Brahma took the calves to Brahmaloka and put them into a mystic sleep (Yoga-nidra). When the Lord went to search for the calves, Brahma took the friends to Brahmaloka as well and put them to sleep. "I want to see how He finds them." The Lord closed His eyes and realized that Brahma had been deluded. The Lord then manifested calves and cowherd boys from His own self. This divine play (Leela) continued in Vraj for one whole year.

Brahma thought that by now all the people of Vraj must be half-dead from crying. "Let me go and see what their condition is." When he arrived in Vraj, he saw the same calves and the same children. He thought, "Oh! Did they wake up?" But when he looked in Brahmaloka, they were still there... he came back to look. The Lord [Krishna] took the form of Brahma and went to Brahmaloka. He told the gatekeepers, "A duplicate of mine is roaming around lately; do not let him enter." Thus, the gatekeepers stopped the real Brahma.

Brahma's delusion was destroyed. He realized who this truly was.

अहो भाग्यं अहो भाग्यं नन्दगोपव्रजौकसाम् ।
यन्मित्रं परमानन्दं पूर्णं ब्रह्म सनातनम् ॥

Aho bhāgyaṃ, aho bhāgyaṃ Nandagopa-vrajaukasām |
Yan mitraṃ paramānandaṃ pūrṇaṃ brahma sanātanam ||

"Blessed are these residents of Vraj, for the Supreme Personality of Godhead has become their friend and is showering His grace upon them," Brahma prayed.

The day of Gopashtami arrived. The Lord set out for cowherding. While herding the cows, He bestowed the gift of the "nine rasas" (divine sentiments) upon His friends.

Then comes the story of the slaying of Dhenukasura. Dhenukasura symbolizes Dehadhyasa (identification with the body). The Lord went for cowherding and reached the Talvan (Palmyra forest). There are many palm trees there, but a demon named Dhenukasura lived among them. "Dhenuk" means a donkey. He lived there in that form. His nature was such that even though many fruits grew on the trees, he would not eat them himself, nor would he let anyone else eat them. There are many people who say, "I won't eat, and I won't let you eat either." One should understand without being told that this is the "Dhenukasura mentality." A Vaishnav's nature is exactly the opposite. "Even if I don't eat, you must take the Prasad (sanctified food) and go." This is the Vaishnav spirit. If a Vaishnav feels that the Prasad is about to be emptied they move ahead with an empty plate, remaining hungry themselves but ensuring that visiting Vaishnavs are fed. This is the Vaishnav way.

In our tradition, we call it Mahaprasad rather than just Prasad. That which Shri Thakur ji (Krishna) partakes in is Prasad, and after the Vaishnavs take it, what remains is Mahaprasad. This Vaishnav spirit is entirely different from the demonic (Asuri) spirit. The demonic spirit says, "I won't eat, and I won't let you eat." But the Vaishnav spirit says, "Even if none is left for me, the visiting Vaishnav must leave with a full stomach." Feeling satisfied by watching someone else eat and seeing a smile on their face—that is what it means to be a Vaishnav. One who gains joy by letting others benefit is a Vaishnav. For instance, if there is a large crowd for Darshan (divine viewing) and elderly people are standing behind unable to see, we should quietly step aside and stand at the back. Letting others get Darshan because of us—this is the Vaishnav spirit. This is considered Darshan in the truest sense. Because of you, someone else received Darshan, and Shri Thakurji looks at you through their eyes. In the Vaishnav spirit, the real gain is in helping others gain.

Similarly, at a Baithakji, if there is a lot of pushing and shoving near the Zariji (holy water pot), it might cause distress to Shri Mahaprabhuji. The day when we stand back and help other Vaishnavs, on that day, Shri Mahaprabhuji Himself accepts your seva. Thinking "Only I should do it, only I should offer it" is not the Vaishnav spirit. Vaishnav etiquette lies in lending a helping hand so that others may benefit.

The Lord had Balaram ji liberate Dhenuk-asura. Then comes the story of Kaliya Daman. Kaliya lived in the Yamuna and had poisoned all its water. The Lord entered the Yamuna. Do you

remember the famous childhood poem? 'જળકમળ છાંડી જાને બાળ, સ્વામી અમારો જાગશે. જાગશે તને મારશે, મને બાળહત્યા લાગશે. હે જળકમળ છાંડી જાને બાળ.' **('Jalakamal chhandi ja ne baal, swami amaro jaagashe. jagashe tane maarashe, mane baal-hatya laagshe. He jalkamal chhandi jaa ne baal')** i.e. The wives of the serpent [Kaliya] began to plead, "Oh! You should leave. You are such a beautiful, tender child, and our husband is very wicked. He will kill you. Please go." The serpent-wives asked, "How many sons does your mother have? Does she not love you?" He said, "Yes, there are two. I am the younger one and very dear to my mother. But I do not like that your husband pollutes the Yamuna. Wake your husband." With a strike of His feet, He woke him. Kaliya the serpent awoke, rising with thousands of hoods.

A terrifying battle ensued. 'तांडव गति मुंडन पे नाचत गिरिधारी, पं. पं .पं. पग पटकत, फं फं फं फननि परत, बिं बिं बिं बिनती करत नाग वधु हारी' **('Tāṇḍava gati muṇḍana pe nācat GiridhārīPaṃ paṃ paṃ paga paṭakat, phaṃ phaṃ phaṃ phanani paratBiṃ biṃ biṃ binti karat nāga-vadhu hārī')** With rhythmic "thai thai" steps, the Supreme Lord struck each of the serpent's hoods with His feet, forcing the poison out of its mouth. The worldly objects held by our senses are like this poison; one can only be freed from this venom by taking refuge at the feet of the Lord. Watching a subdued Kaliya, the wives of the serpent began to pray: "O Lord, You are truly merciful! You have come only to shower Your grace. You placed Your feet upon this wicked being; what greater grace could there be?". He was liberated and sent away to Ramank Dwip. He had previously lived there but out of fear of Garuda, he came in Shri Yamuna ji. The Lord said, "Now that I have placed my feet upon you, the marks of my feet are on your head. You no longer need to fear anyone". This is why we apply the tilak; it is a symbol of His lotus feet, and one who wears it on their forehead has no fear.

Then there is the story of how Lord saved the cows and cowherds from a forest fire. Then comes the story of the slaying of Pralambasura. Once again, the Lord saved them from a forest fire. When the fire broke out, the Lord told the cowherds, "All of you, close your eyes". They closed their eyes, and the Lord drank the forest fire. In life, when the forest fire of suffering rages, one should close their eyes and sit near the Lord. He will drink up all your forest-fire-like sorrows; only the Lord can truly liberate one from suffering.

Next is the description of the rainy and autumn seasons, followed by the story of the Venu-geet. 'वेणु गीत पुन युगल गीत की रसवरखा बरसाई, प्रगट भए मारग रीत दिखाई।' **('Venu geet pun yugal geet**

ki rasbarakhaa barasaai, pragata bhaye maaraga reet dikhaayi.') Shri Mahaprabhuji has provided a wonderful description of the Venu-geet in the Shri Subodhini-ji. The story of Venu-geet is this: when Shri Thakorji goes to the forest with the cowherd boys to graze the cows, He places the flute (Venu) to His lips. When He plays the flute, the sound spreads throughout the entire Vraj-mandal. The impact of that sound is such that the Gopis sitting in Gokul can see the sights of Vrindavan. This is because when the Lord leaves, He grants them two powers: Dur-darshan (distant vision) and Dur-shravan (distant hearing). Whatever the Lord does there is seen and heard by the Gopis here.

Shri Mahaprabhuji says that the story of Venu-geet and the sound of the flute are not merely "sound". The Lord pours His own nectar into the vessel of that sound to reach His devotees. Venu-geet is not just the sound of a flute; it is the process of donating divine nectar through the medium of that sound. The terms Venurav, Venukunj, Venu-geet, and Venu-naad are all found in the Venu-geet. This is an "Anavasar Leela"—the divine play that occurs between the time Shri Thakur ji leaves for the forest in the morning and returns at the time of evening Aarti.

You might observe this in the Haveli. The time between the 'Rajbhog' and the 'Utthapan' (evening awakening) is approximately thirteen 'ghadis'. One 'ghadi' is twenty-four minutes. In thirteen verses, the Gopis have sung of the Lord's divine play during these thirteen 'ghadis'.

Shri Mahaprabhuji says, '**कालाधिको कृष्ण:**' **('kālādhiko kṛṣṇaḥ')** — Krishna is beyond time; while time consists of twelve parts, the Lord is greater than time. Therefore, the Leela of thirteen ghadis is sung in thirteen verses of the Venu-geet. There is a marvelous description in the Venu-geet, and Shri Mahaprabhuji has provided beautiful, nectar-filled meanings for it.

गृहे गृहे गोप वधु कदम्बा
सर्वे मिलित्वा समवाप्य योगं ।
पुण्यानि नामानि पठन्ति नित्यम्
गोविन्द दामोदर माधवेति ॥

Gṛhe gṛhe gopa-vadhu kadambāḥ
sarve militvā samavāpya yogaṃ |
Puṇyāni nāmāni paṭhanti nityam
Govinda Dāmodara Mādhaveti ||

When afternoon arrives, all the Gopis finish their household chores, leave their homes, and gather at one place. There, they immerse themselves in the various divine plays that Shri Thakur ji is performing in Vraj... This very song is the 'Venu-geet'. Shri Thakur ji is entering Vrindavan along with the cows and the cowherd boys. Singing of this, Shri Shukadevji says:

बर्हापीडं नटवरवपुः कर्णयोः कर्णिकारं
बिभ्रद् वासः कनककपिशं वैजयन्तीं च मालाम् ।
रन्ध्रान् वेणोरधरसुधया पुरयन् गोपवृन्दै
र्वृन्दारण्यं स्वपदरमणं प्राविशद् गीतकीर्तिः ॥

Barhāpīḍaṃ naṭavara-vapuḥ karṇayoḥ karṇikāraṃ
bibhrad vāsaḥ kanaka-kapiśaṃ vaijayantīṃ ca mālām |
Randhrān veṇor adhara-sudhayā purayan gopa-vṛndaiḥ
vṛndāraṇyaṃ sva-pada-ramaṇam prāviśad gīta-kīrtiḥ ||

Let us understand this according to Shri Subodhini-ji. Shri Mahaprabhuji says: On Shri Thakurji's head, the Barha (peacock feather) is fluttering gently. When a peacock becomes intoxicated with joy (Ras-matta), it dances with its feathers spread wide. The Lord Himself is **'रसो वै सः' ('Raso vai saḥ')** (the essence of bliss). He arrives to donate His own melody (Svaras), which is why He wears the peacock feather. He has wore it tilted, not straight. In the path of Grace (Pushtimarga), one must adorn Shri Thakur ji with the crown (Mukut) and the Chandrika (lunate ornament) in a tilted manner. This is because the Lord Himself is 'Rasmaya' (filled with divine nectar). The Lord is both the vessel of nectar and the nectar itself. When one wants to pour nectar from a vessel for someone else, the vessel must be tilted. Therefore, in Pushtimarga, the crown is tilted because the Lord is donating the divine nectar through it. **'बर्हापीडं नटवरवपुः' ('Barhāpīḍaṃ naṭavara-vapuḥ')** – He is the supreme dancer and the supreme groom. **'कर्णयोः कर्णिकारं' ('Karṇayoḥ karṇikāraṃ')** – He has two ears but has wore the flower in only one. **'कनक कपिशं' ('Kanaka-kapiśaṃ')** – He wears yellow silken garments that shine like gold. **'वैजयन्तीं च मालां' ('vaijayantīṃ ca mālām')** – the Vaijayanti garland is of two types: made of jewels and made of flowers. By using the word 'cha' (and), it implies Shri Thakurji has also worn the forest garland (Vanmala). This possesses the power of attraction (Vikshepika-shakti).

Shri Thakur ji placed the flute to His lips and produced a sound. That sound pervaded the

entire Vraj. The influence of the flute in Vraj was such that those who were inanimate became conscious, and those who were conscious began to act as if they were inanimate. The Gopis observe this influence. Now, in thirteen verses, the Gopis gather to sing the Venu-geet and immerse themselves in the Lord's divine play:

अक्षणवतां फलमिदं न परं विदामः
सख्यः पशूननु विवेशयतोर्वयस्यैः ।
वक्त्रं व्रजेश सुतयोरनुवेणुजुष्टं
यैर्वा निपीतमनुरक्त - कटाक्षमोक्षम् ॥

Akṣaṇvatāṃ phalam idaṃ na paraṃ vidāmaḥ
sakhyaḥPaśūn anu viveśayator vayasyaiḥ |
Vaktraṃ Brajeśa sutayor anu-veṇujuṣṭaṃ
yairvā nipīta-anurakta-kaṭākṣa-mokṣam ||

The Gopis began to say, "O friends! The true fruit of having eyes is the vision of this Shyam-sundar. Today we feel it is good that the Lord gave us eyes, for such a beautiful form is being beheld".

Another Gopi said, "The vision is fine, but look at this flute placed upon His lips. This flute is drinking the nectar (Sudha) that belongs to our share. What virtuous deed has this flute performed that it is so dear to the Lord? The Lord places it upon the soft pillows of His lips. Then He fills its holes as if He is massaging its feet? And when He moves His eyelashes up and down, it feels as if the Lord is fanning the flute. What mantra has it mastered that the Lord is engaged in its service twenty-four hours a day? When He wakes, the flute is there; when He rests, the flute is in His bed. Why does He never leave it?" Describing this, the Gopis sang:

गोप्यः किमाचरदयं कुशलं स्म वेणुः
दामोदराधरसुधामपि गोपिकानाम् ।
भुङ्क्ते स्वयं यदवशिष्टरसं ह्रदिन्यो
ह्रष्यत्वचोऽश्रु मुमुचुस्तरवो यथाऽऽर्याः ॥

Gopyaḥ kim ācarad ayaṃ kuśalaṃ sma veṇuḥ
Dāmodara-dhara-sudhāmapi gopikānām |
Bhuṅkte svayaṃ yadava-śiṣṭa-rasaṃ hadinyo
hṛṣyat tvacho 'śru mumu-cus taravo yathā 'ryāḥ ||

Shri Mahaprabhuji says, "The flute does not drink the nectar itself. It has no tongue. It is inanimate. How can it drink? It merely becomes the medium. By becoming the medium, it allows everyone to drink the nectar. It makes creepers, leaves, trees, and rivers drink the nectar." Why is the flute so dear to the Lord? When the Gopis ask this question, the flute replies, "I do not know why I am so dear to the Lord. I do not remember performing any religious or meritorious deeds. But perhaps there is one reason why I have become His favorite." The Gopis ask, "What is that reason?" Then the flute says, "The reason is that I play exactly as much as the Lord plays me. I do not fill it with my own melodies. I do not fill it with my own words. There is complete surrender. That is why I am dear to the Lord."

Other Gopis gathered and began to discuss: "O Gopi! Look at these deer. They are ignorant animals. What would they know of love? Yet, they gaze at the Lord so fixedly, as if they are offering love to Shri Thakurji!" Describing this, the Gopis began to sing...

धन्या स्तु मूढमतयोपि हरिण्य एता
या नन्दनन्दनमुपात्त विचित्रवेषम् ।
आकर्ण्य वेणुरणितं सहकृष्णसारा:
पूजां दधुर्विरचितां प्रणयावलोकै: ॥

Dhan'yā stu mūḍhamatayo 'pi hariṇya etā
yā Nandanandana-mupātta vicitra-veṣam |
Ākarṇya veṇu-raṇitaṃ saha-Kṛṣṇa-sārāḥ
pūjāṃ dadhur viracitāṃ praṇayā ||

The Gopis call the deer blessed. Who is blessed in the Path of Grace (Pushtimarg)? First, Yashoda ji is called as blessed: '**धन्य यशोदा भाग्य तिहारे, जन ऐसो सुत जायो**' **('Dhanya Yashodaa bhaagya tihaare, jin aiso suta jaayo')** ("Blessed is your fortune, Yashoda, for such a son was born to you.") The Lord came to your home as a child; you are blessed. Second, Shri Yamunaji was called blessed: '**धन्य श्रीयमुने निधि देनहारी**' **('Dhanya Shri Yamune nidhi denahaari')** (she grants the dust of His feet). Third, the devotees (Bhagvadiyas) are called blessed: '**धन्य धन्य भाग दास निजजन के, जो यह दर्शन पावे हो ।**' **('Dhanya dhanya bhaag daas nijajan ke, jo yah darshan paave ho')** One who sees Shri Gusainji and Shri Thakurji as one—that soul is blessed. And fourth, the

deer are called blessed. Why? Though they are of "dull intellect" (mudha mati), they are still blessed. Why?

One reason was given: 'सहकृष्णसारा:' **('Saha-Kṛṣṇa-sārā')**. Look, "We Gopis are standing here alone singing the Lord's praises, but the deer are blessed because they have gone into the seva of Shri Thakurji along with their husbands, the blackbucks." To do His seva alone is a fortune; but when the whole family does His seva, it is called supreme fortune (Param Saubhagya). 'पूजां दधुर्विरचितां प्रणयावलोकै:' **('Pūjāṃ dadhur viracitāṃ praṇayāṃvalokaiḥ')** — It is as if they are worshipping Shri Thakorji with their very eyes.

Another Gopi sang, "Oh! Look at these cows. Hearing Thakurji's flute-song, they have raised their ears and are drinking the nectar of Shri Thakurji." The cows' ears are no longer just ears; they have made them into leaf-cups (Duna) to drink the nectar. Describing this, the Gopis sing:

गावश्च कृष्णमुखनिर्गतवेणुगीत
पीयूषमुत्तभितकर्णपुटै: पिबन्त्य: ।
शावा: स्नुतस्तनपय: कवला: स्म तस्थु-
र्गोविन्दमात्मनि दृशाश्रुकला: स्पृशन्त्य: ॥

Gāvaś ca Kṛṣṇa-mukha-nirgata veṇu-gīta
pīyuṣa-matta-bhitakarṇa-puṭaiḥ pibantyaḥ |
Śavāḥ snuta-stana-payaḥ kavālāḥ sma tasthu-
Govindam ātmni dṛśā-śru-kalāḥ spṛśantyaḥ ||

Raising their ears, they drink the nectar. 'पुटै:' **('puṭaiḥ')** — they haven't made small bowls, but Dunas (large leaf-cups). What is a Dona/Duna? How did they shape their ears? What is the nature of a bowl? It can be used for different purposes. One day you use it to drink milk, and the next day you use it for buttermilk; but the ears have not been made into bowls so that now they drink divine nectar (Bhagavad-rasa) and upon returning home, they drink the nectar of worldly life. The are made like a leaf – cup or Dona. A Dona (leaf-cup) is different. It cannot be used repeatedly. So, from them, we cannot drink two different nectars. Once we have tasted the divine nectar, we will not drink any other nectar from ears. Now that we have drunk the one divine nectar, we do not wish to drink any other. Saying this, the Gopis continue their description: "The birds sitting on this branch are not birds but sages. Oh! Look at these rivers."

नद्यस्तदा तदुपधार्य मुकुन्दगीतम्
आवर्तलक्षितमनोभवभग्नवेगाः ।
आलिङ्गनस्थगितमूर्मिभुजैर्मुरारे
गृह्णन्ति पादयुगलं कमलोपहाराः ॥

Nadyastadā tad-upadhārya Mukundagītam
āvartalakṣita-manobhava-bhagna-vegāḥ |
Ālińgana-stha-gita-mūrmi-bhujair Murāre
gṛhṇanti pāda-yugalaṃ kamala-upahārāḥ ||

When Shri Thakurji passes by the banks of the Yamuna, these rivers extend their waves—as if they were arms—to try and catch His feet. If the Lord is walking far away, His feet cannot be reached by hand. "Well, if we cannot touch His feet, let us at least send our offerings." Often when we cannot go ourselves, what do we tell the Vaishnavs? We say, "Since you are going, please present our offering." So, these rivers and Shri Yamunaji felt that though their hands could not reach, Shri Thakur ji is coming! And how is the Lord's gait? Like a swan (Hansa). A graceful walk. He lifts one foot and places it down, then lifts the second, then the third. Thus, Yamunaji thinks of sending a gift to Shri Thakurji's feet. She creates whirlpools within herself, and as the Lord lifts His foot, the whirlpool tosses up a lotus. Wherever His foot lands, a lotus is already there. His lotus-foot lands on it, and as He lifts the other foot, she creates another whirlpool to offer a lotus again. Wherever the Lord's feet fall, Yamunaji delivers her offering of lotuses.

Look at this—the inanimate have become conscious and the conscious have become inanimate. This mountain is not just a mountain. This is Haridasvarya, Girirajji himself. 'हन्तायमद्रिरबला हरिदासवर्यो' **('Hantāyam adri-rabalā Haridāsa-varyo')** — Girirajji is God Himself. That story will come later. But Girirajji is a Bhagvadiya (a divine devotee); the Gopis have stated this in the Shri Bhagavat-ji earlier. All the characteristics of a Bhagvadiya are present in Girirajji. He is in the form of a mountain, but his swaroopa is of Haridasvarya, of a divine devotee.

What is the first characteristic of a Bhagvadiya (a dine devotee)? 'यद् रामकृष्णचरण-स्पर्शप्रमोदः' **('Yad Rāmakṛṣṇa-caraṇa-sparśa-pramodaḥ')** — upon the touch of His feet, the devotees get all the ecstasy of the world. When Shri Thakur ji goes out to graze the cows and places His feet upon Girirajji, all the creepers, leaves, and trees upon him are not just plants, they are the

body hairs of Giriraj ji that have stood up at the mere touch of the Lord. When the Lord arrives, and His touch occurs, he feels ecstasy (romancha)

Then comes the second part of seva: offering Bhog (food). What do we do? 'मानं तनोति सहगोगणयोस्तयोर्यत् पानीयसूयवसकन्दरकन्दमूलैः' **('Mānaṃ tanoti sahago-gaṇayostyoryat pānīya-sūya-vasakandara-kanda-mūlaiḥ')** i.e. "he caused springs to flow from within himself. It is as if he is filling Shri Thakur ji's water pot (Zariji). He manifests roots and fruits from within to offer as Bhoga to Shri Thakur ji. All the qualities of a Bhagvadiya reside in Giriraj ji.

In this way, singing together, the Gopis spend their entire day. Here we conclude the story of Venu-geet.

Next comes the episode of the Cheer-haran Leela. The Gopis performed the Katyayani - vrata. For what purpose? So that they may attain the Lord as their husband.

कात्यायनी महाभागे महायोगिन् अधीश्वरि ।
नन्दगोपसुतं देवी, पति मे कुरु ते नमः ॥

Kātyāyanī mahābhāge mahāyoginy adhiśvari |
Nandagopa-sutaṃ devi, pati me kuru te namaḥ ||

Chanting this mantra, they have arrived to perform the bath which is a part of their vrata. They have placed their cloths on the bank of the Yamuna, and have entered inside the Yamuna ji. Shri Thakur ji (Lord Krishna), takes their clothes and climbs up a tree. 'हमारो अम्बर देहो मोरारी' **('Hamaro ambar deho Moraari')** i.e. give our cloths back O Krishna! It is said that these clothes also represent subtle desires (vasanas). Shri Thakur ji took away those subtle desires in the form of clothes; and now, Gopis have attained the right to the Raas (the divine dance).

The Acharyas have given one meaning: that until now, they were mentioned by the word "Gopi." Shri Shukdevji has called them "Gopikas"; but now, because they have entered the Yamuna, Shri Shukdevji calls them "Vrajanganas." Why? Because in Pushtimarga, there is no mere "Acceptance" (Svikar), but "Adoption/Integration" (Angikar). For example, if someone gives a penda (sweet) into your hand, you have taken it in your hand—that is Acceptance (Svikar). But it is not necessary that because it came into your hand, you will put it in your

mouth, you might give it to someone else or you might throw it away or you might put it down somewhere. After Acceptance, there are many possibilities. But Angikar means putting the penda in the mouth; and once put in the mouth, the penda becomes a part of the body. In the same way, the things that the Lord integrates (angikar), He makes them His own divine form (Bhagavad-rupa). That is why we have the seva of the Vastra ji (cloth). Because Shri Thakur ji has worn them, they are no longer just clothes. They have become divine. If you go to a shop to buy Jhari-Banta (vessel), you would bargain. You would examine it closely; but once it is offered to the Lord, what do you say? "Please bring the Jhari ji." Now, there comes the bhav of Shri Yamuna ji. "Please bring Banta ji." Whatever object or person comes into contact with the Lord once, it becomes divine. This is what we call 'Angikar'. That is why when the Gopis entered the Yamuna, Yamuna ji integrated them in Herself. Shri Yamunaji herself resided within all those Gopis. Thus, one name of Yamuna ji is "Vraja." And now the Gopis became "Vrajangana." They became parts of Shri Yamunaji's body, and so they attained the right to the Raas. Before this, Shri Yamunaji would not have bestowed her grace. Because Shri Yamunaji, as stated in the 41st verse, '**हेत करी देत श्री यमुने वास कुंजे**' **('Heta kari deta Shri Yamune vaas kunje'** i.e. gives residence in kunj with love) and '**रूप देत आप जैसो**' **('Roop deta aapa jaiso'** i.e. gives a form like her own) i.e. she made them like the Yamuna. Now those people became eligible for the Raas.

Shri Thakur ji promised them to fulfil their manorathas on the night of the full moon of the Sharad Ritu (Autumn Season). He bestowed his grace on the wives of rishis and sages. Shri Thakurji accepted their samagri and offerings. Next came the story of the Indra-yagya (sacrifice for Indra). The story of the Annakut festival came.

Nanda Baba remembered that the year was coming to an end and we have not performed the sacrifice for Indra. He sent news throughout all of Vraja: "Everyone, gather immediately in the courtyard of Nandalaya. Nanda Baba wants to share something very important."

Nanda, Upananda, and Sunanda—everyone gathered. The entire courtyard was filled, and Nanda Baba got up to speak, "Residents of Vraja, every year we perform the sacrifice for Indra. The year is coming to an end. The sacrifice has not been done yet. Everyone, go to your respective homes and just as you make various types of samagri every year, prepare the samagris; tomorrow morning we will perform the sacrifice for Indra."

Everyone departed for their homes and Nanda Baba is standing alone. The Lord came near to him. 'सात बरस को साँवरो, बोलत है तुतराय' **('Saat baras ko saanvaro bolat hai tutaraay'** i.e. The seven-year-old dark one speaks with a lisp), the Lord came and started saying to Nanda Baba, "Baba, who is Indra?" "O Lalan! You do not know Indra? Indra is the King of the Gods. He is the god of rain. He brings the rains due to which the grass and other vegetation grow. We are cowherds (Go-palakas). The cows graze on the grass. They give milk and our livelihood continues. Therefore, for us, Indra is God." And the compassionate Supreme Lord, explaining the principle of Karma to Nanda Baba, said:

कर्मणा जायते जन्तुः कर्मणैव विलीयते ।
सुखं दुःखं भयं क्षेमं कर्मणेवाभिपद्यते ॥

Karmaṇā jāyate jantuḥ karmaṇaiva viliyate |
Sukhaṃ duḥkhaṃ bhayaṃ kṣemaṃ karmaṇevābhipadyate ||

"Father! Everything is a result of Karma. A person receives exactly what they do. This Indra is not the doer of anything. If you want to worship someone, then do worship this manifest deity Giriraj ji who resides right here in Vraja. Perform His worship, do His seva. Arrange for Govardhan Puja." Nanda baba asks, "Is this Govardhan Puja some new sacrifice?" Kanha says, "Yes. I will explain to you why Govardhan Puja should be performed. This Indra does nothing for anyone. Everything happens through Karma, Father." Here, at this point, a question arises for us: if everything happens through Karma, then what does Grace (Kripa) do? It is said that when He showers his Grace, He sets aside even the principles of Karma. He accepts the soul, does the Angikara.

There are three bondages that are attached to every living being: Time (Kaal), Action (Karma), and Nature (Svabhav). All are bound by these three bondages, say the scriptures. The bondage of Time is for everyone, the bondage of Karma is for everyone, and so is the bondage of Nature. These three bondages affect everyone, but when Shri Thakur ji transcends all three to accept the soul, that is called Grace.

The Lord explains, "Do worship of this Govardhan." They say, "How should it be done? We do not know." Shri Thakurji says, "I will show you. Instruct all the residents of Vraj to bring whatever yogurt and milk is in their homes. Take all the samagri that have been prepared. We will need them for the Govardhan Puja tomorrow." The time for morning was set to leave the

homes for the puja. All the Vrajavasis took pots of yogurt and milk along with various types of samagris. Everyone gathered in the courtyard of Nandalaya. The Lord took Nanda Baba, Upananda, and Sunanda with Him, and left for the puja singing, 'बडेनन को आगे दे गिरिधर श्री गोवर्धन पूजन आवत, मानसीगंगा जलन वाय के पाछे दूध ढोरी को नावत ।' **('Badenana ko aage de Giridhara Shri Govardhan poojan aavat, Maanasi Ganga jal navaaya ke paachhe doodh dhori ko naavat'** i.e. Giving the elders the lead, Giridhar comes to worship Govardhan, first the lord bathed him with the water from Mansi Ganga and then He got him bathed with the milk). The Lord began to say, "First of all, bathe the 'Mukhara-vind' (divine face) of Giriraj ji with the water of Mansi Ganga." Pot after pot was poured to bathe Giriraj ji. The Angavastra (sacred cloth) was offered. Before that, He said, "Hey! Bath him with milk." The milk of a white cow was sent for, and He said, "Now, whoever has milk in their pots, start offering it to Giriraj ji." The ceremonial bath (Abhishek) of Giriraj ji began with the milk of the white cow.

Then he summoned to bring the samagris saying, "Place whatever samagri you have brought before Him." On the other hand,, the Angavastra was offered to Giriraj-bawa. Then they adorn him with Dhoti-Uparna, did the Tilak. Then He said, "Now, everyone present your samagri." All the samagri were placed before Giriraj bawa. Great heaps of food (Annakut) were formed, they seemed like the mountains of food (samagri) and Giriraj ji was covered behind it.

Five peaks were created. Samagris of the Dudh-ghar (recipes made of milk, sugar and dry-fruits only. The preparations do not include water in it), Anasakhadi (recipes made up of maida, ghee, sugar and sometimes salt. During the preparation of these samagries salt is not added while coocking), and Sakhadi (recipes that are prepared using cereals, salt, water and other spices) and others are offered. One after another, fortresses of food were formed. Giriraj-bawa began to be covered. It was as if the entire range of the seven-kos circumambulation (parikrama marg of length 21 kms.) was lined with offerings. The Vrajavasis offered many kinds of samagri.

Then, Shri Thakur ji performed the Dhup-Deep (incense and lamp). He is worshipping Giriraj ji. The Vrajavasis had indeed presented the offerings. Shri Thakur ji said, "Now, after offering the food (Bhog), the rule in this sequence of worship is to perform the circumambulation (parikrama) of Giriraj ji." The Lord began to say, "Come, let us perform the parikrama of Girirajji together. Shri Giriraj-bawa is a manifest deity. If you send offerings to Indra, they reach to him

through fire, but Shri Giriraj ji will eat right in front of you." Vrajavasis said, "Really! A manifest deity? Right in front of us? Then it will be a great joy!" All the Vrajavasis became delighted, and with the Lalan leading them, they set out to circumambulate Giriraj ji. A single sound came from everyone's mouth. With love and devotion, they prostrated (Dandvat) to Giriraj ji and while singing His glories: 'गिरिराजधरण श्रीजी तुम्हारी शरण, श्रीजी तुम्हारी शरण वल्लभ तुम्हारी शरण, गिरिराजधरण श्रीजी तुम्हारी शरण' i.e. Giriraj-dharan Shriji, I take refuge in You. Shriji, I take refuge in You; Vallabh, I take refuge in You. Giriraj-dharan Shriji, I take refuge in You). They prostrated to the 'Dandvati Shila.' The parikrama moved forward. Govardhan village arrived. In Govardhan village is the Mansi Ganga. They performed bathing (snan), drinking (paan), and ceremonial sipping (achaman) in Mansi Ganga. Passing through Chakleshwar Mahadev, Narad Kund, and Uddhav Kund, the parikrama proceeded further, and the Vrajavasis began to sing with love: "Giriraj-dharan, Shriji, I take refuge in You".

The Parikrama arrived at Chandra Sarovar. This is the spot where the moon rose during the Raas Leela. After bathing and performing achaman at Chandra Sarovar, the Parikrama moved forward. The residents of Vraj (Vrajwasis), singing with deep devotion, reached Danghati. This is the place where Shri Thakur ji had asked for a "tax" (daan). "Daanbihari Lal ki Jai!" They offered their respects and the journey continued. The Vrajwasis sang lovingly, 'गिरिराजधरण श्रीजी तुम्हारी शरण' **('Giriraaj dharna Shri ji tumhari sharana')** (O Lord of Giriraj, I take refuge in you).

Then came the village of Anyor. We bow to the Baithak ji of Shri Mahaprabhuji. It was here in Anyor that the 'Pratham Milan' (the first meeting of Shri Nath ji and Shri Mahaprabhu ji) took place. The Parikrama then reached to Govind Kund. This is where the ceremonial bath (abhishek) of Shri Thakurji was performed. The pond is said to be filled with milk. From there, the Parikrama moved toward Punchari ka Lotha and the Vrajwasis continued, 'गिरिराजधरण श्रीजी तुम्हारी शरण, श्रीजी तुम्हारी शरण वल्लभ तुम्हारी शरण' **('Giriraaj dharana Shri ji tumahari sharana, Shri ji tumhari Sharana, vallabh tumhari Sharan')**

From Punchari ka Lotha, they arrived at Apsara Kund, where they bathed and performed achaman. The Parikrama proceeded to Surabhi Kund. After the rituals there, they meditated on the sentiment of the Chhappan Bhog. Gradually, the Vrajwasis accompanied the Lord toward the Mukharvind.

As they reached the Mukharvind, it was time to open the curtain (Tero). When the Vrajwasis opened it, they saw that the Samagries were untouched and the mountain looked exactly as it was. They started saying, "O Lalan (Krishna), you said that Shri Giriraj ji would eat in front of us!" Shri Thakurji replied, "I shall request him." As soon as the Lord prayed, "O Giriraj -bawa, please accept our Annakut with love", thousands of arms manifested from the mountain. Giriraj bawa appeared and started lifting each basket one by one and placing the food into His mouth. The Lord said: 'देखोरी हरि भोजन खात, सहस्त्र भुजाधर उत जेवत है, इत गोपन सो करत है बात। देखोरी हरि भोजन खात' **('Dekhori hari bhojana khaata, sahastra bhujaadhara ut jevata hai, it gopan so karat hai baat. Dekho ri hari bhojana khaaata'** i.e. Look, the Lord is eating! With a thousand arms He dines there, while here He talks to the Gopis. Behold, the Lord is eating!)

With thousands of his arms, Giriraj bawa began consuming the pots, baskets, and other samagri of the devotees. The Vrajwasis could not believe their eyes. "He is eating right in front of us!" One Vrajwasi came to Krishna and said, "O Lala! One thing surprises me." "What is that?" Krishna asked. "The faces of both you and Giriraj ji look exactly the same!" Shri Thakurji replied, "He is my own form." Declaring "Shailosmi" (I am the mountain), the Supreme Soul manifested and ate with a thousand arms. The Vrajwasis watched in awe. They got feared that He wouldn't leave any Prasad (blessed food) for them, so they began running away with their baskets. But Giriraj-bawa would extend His long arms, catch the baskets, and put them in His mouth. He was determined to accept all the samagri. In this way, Girirajbawa showered His grace. When Indra (the King of Gods) received the news and became furious. "The Vrajwasis have stopped the Indra-yag (sacrifice for Indra) and started a new Govardhan-yag (sacrifice for Govardhan ji)!"

In his rage, Indra commanded the Samvartak clouds—those used during the final destruction of the world—to go and drown the entire Vraj. The clouds gathered, turning the sky pitch black as if night had fallen. Rain began to fall in massive drops, like heavy stones. Water was everywhere. Terrified, the Vrajwasis ran to Shri Thakurji for protection. "Prabhu, save us!" The Lord said, "The Girirajbawa for whom we performed the Yajna will protect us. Come, let us take shelter under Him." Taking all the Vrajwasis with Him, Shri Thakurji went to Mount Govardhan.

They entered the caves. There, Shri Thakurji lifted Mount Govardhan on the little finger of His left hand. "Shri Govardhannath ki Jai!" "Shri Gokulnath ki Jai!" The form of Shri Gokulnathji is indeed the same as the form of Shri Girirajdharan.

The Lord gave a clarion call to all the residents of Vraj, "Come, take refuge in Me."

The Lord assumed His four-armed form. With one arm, He held up Mount Giriraj. In the second arm, He took the conch; whatever rainwater fell, the Lord absorbed it through the conch. With His other two arms, He held the flute to His lips and played divine melodies.

The Vrajwasis became so absorbed that they lost all consciousness of their physical bodies. No one realized how seven days passed by. In this way, the Lord shattered the pride of Indra.

Performing prostrations (Dandavat), Indra came to Vraj. It is said that the very first Dandavati Parikrama (circumambulation performed by prostrating at every step) was performed by Indra. He sought forgiveness for his offense. He brought along Surabhi (the divine cow) and performed the ritual bath (Abhishek) of the Supreme Lord with milk. He then bestowed a name upon the Lord—"Govind Bhagwan ki Jai!" "Govind Bhagwan ki Jai!" Indra begged for mercy, and the Lord, showing His compassion, forgave him. It felt as if Mount Govardhan itself was dancing; Giriraj bawa was dancing upon the finger of Shri Thakurji. When the seven days had passed, the Vrajwasis were struck with wonder. "Oh, wow! What immense strength Shri Thakurji possesses! Could He truly be the Supreme God?" they wondered.

As they began to praise Him, Shri Thakurji humbly said, "This is not my strength. It stayed up because you all supported it with your walking sticks. And it was because you Gopis fed me butter (Makhan) that I gained the strength to lift Giriraj bawa." He said: **'कुछ मारखन हो बल बढ़यो कुछ गोपन की ली सहाय, अरे राधेजू की कृपा ते मैंने गोवर्धन लयो उठाय' ('Kachhu maakhan ko bala badhyo, kachhu Gopan ki li sahaayaAre Raadhe joo ki kripaa te maine Govardhana liyo uthaaya'** i.e. Some strength came from the butter, some from the help of the cowherds; but O, it was by the grace of Shri Radhaji that I was able to lift Govardhan.)

"Because Radhaji was standing right there in front of me, I didn't even realize how seven days flew by." Thus, by lifting Giriraj bawa, He Himself became Govardhannath. Thus, He broke the ego of Indra.

Let us rest here the katha for the fifth day.

|| Shrimad Bhagawata ||

DAY - 6

Shri Nathji Bawa—Shri Krishna—held Shri Giriraj-ji on the little finger of His left hand. That is to say, the Lord Himself is enhancing the greatness of the devotee. In the Path of Devotion (Bhakti-marg), it is essential to understand the difference between the "Form" (Swarup) and the "Shape/Appearance" (Aakar). Devotion begins with the appearance, but the ultimate attainment is the Form. Shri Giriraj ji has the appearance of a mountain, but in form, He is the Lord Himself and the greatest of devotees (Haridas-varya).

Shri Yamunaji has the appearance of a river, but in form, she is the 'नमत कृष्ण तुर्यप्रियाम्' **('namata kṛṣṇa turya-priyām')** — the Fourth Beloved 'प्रिया' **('priyaa')**. Shri Mahaprabhuji has a human appearance, but in Form, 'एन मेन व्रजराज उछंगे श्रीमद् वल्लभ रूप सुरंगे' **('En men vrajaraj uchhange, Shrimad Vallabha roop surange')** In whose lap rests the King of Vraja, the beautiful form of Shri Vallabha) — He is that very form of the son of Nanda. Therefore, the devotee's journey starts from the appearance, but we worship the Form.

The greatness of Shri Giriraj ji is described specifically in the 'Garga Samhita.' In the Path of Pushtimarga, we have accepted this special greatness of Shri Giriraj ji. When you go to Vraja, it is not necessary to be busy only in circumambulation (parikrama) and in offering milk. We worship Him as a deity, as the song says, 'અમારો દેવ ગોવર્ધનરાનો' **('amaaro deva Govardhana - Raano')** After becoming a Vaishnav and taking the Brahmsambandh, we have Shri Giriraj ji as our kuldevata (family deity) and Shri Yamunaji as kuldevi (family goddess).

Even when the Gopis created the form of Goddess Katyayani to attain the Lord as their husband, what did they make it from? It is said, from the Raj (dust, soil) of Shri Yamuna ji. The raj of Shri Yamunaji is indeed the form of Yamuna, isn't it? In the Varta – Sahitya (literature of our Pusthimarga), you see that whenever Shri Gusain ji bestowed the service of Shri Yamunaji upon someone, he did not hand over a vessel of water., instead he bestowed the dust from the banks of Shri Yamunaji. So, that raj is also the form of Shri Yamuna. Therefore, after becoming a Vaishnav and taking refuge in Him, if we have a family deity, it is Shri Giriraj ji. **'અમારો દેવ ગોવર્ધનરાણો' ('amaaro deva Govardhana - Raano')** —He is the deity of Vraja, and we worship Him as a deity.

Similarly, there is the provision for service/Seva in Pushtimarg. If that same Shri Giriraj ji resides in one's home, he should be served just like Shri Thakur ji. There, you do not perform his worship as you do it in Vraj. Instead, you perform seva as if you are doing the seva of Shri Thakur ji. His Mangala (morning awakening) is performed. His Shringar (adornment) is done, and Rajbhog (main meal) is offered to Him. That is to say, when He resides at home, He resides in the form of the Supreme Being, Shri Krishna. There is no difference between the two; they are identical, yet He is also the deity of Vraja. Shri Thakur ji Himself has shown the method for His worship. But we must not feel Shri Giriraj ji merely as a deity. What is the greatest form of Shri Giriraj ji, (1) of a deity, (2) of the Lord Himself, or (3) the form that the Gopis showed us in the Venu-geeta — that form is of the Haridas-varya (the greatest servant of Hari).

If there is a gratest devotee of Shri Thakur ji, it is Giriraj ji. The Gopis have said this. These are the words of the Gopis: **'हन्तायमद्रिरबला हरिदासवर्यो' ('hantāyam adrīr abalā hari-dāsa-varyo')** — there are many dasa (devtoee) of Hari, but among all, if anyone is the best, it is Shri Giriraj ji. Therefore, Vaishnavas should keep the excellent company of Shri Giriraj ji with a divine sentiment of him being a bhagavadeeya.

We frequently read in the Shikshapatra, the Shodash Granth, and the Varta literature that one should keep the company of a Tadrushi - Jan (Those who belong to Him) or a Bhagavadiya-jan (a divine devotee). If you do not see such devotees on this earth, then Shri Giriraj ji is always there. It is not necessarily true that He is pleased only if you offer milk to him. If you find a peaceful corner in His foothills and sing the glories of the Lord, Shri Giriraj ji gets pleased. We have found the company of a divine devotee, and such a devotee who is capable of granting us

the gift of Krishna-devotion. It is sure that if Shri Giriraj-bawa bestows grace, then worldly tasks are accomplished very naturally and effortlessly; He exists as a deity, after all. His worship and the ritual of offering milk are certainly prescribed, but do not consider His company only in that form— consider His company as a divine devotee too! Sit in His foothills and sing the Lord's glories. Recite the holy texts. Shri Giriraj ji will be very pleased. However, do maintain one bit of discretion: whether you are on the banks of the Yamuna ji or in the foothills of Shri Giriraj ji, both these places are considered highly transcendental in our tradition, our tradition has accepted both these elements as deeply divine.

These two elements—whether it is Shri Yamunaji or Shri Giriraj ji—are perpetually chanting the name of the Lord. They are performing eternal devotion to God. So, definitely maintain one bit of discretion: when you are on the banks of Shri Yamuna ji or in the foothills of Shri Giriraj ji, if possible, never speak of worldly matters there. Even when you perform the circumambulation (parikrama) of Shri Giriraj ji, resolve that "I am currently in the parikrama; as long as I am in the foothills of Shri Giriraj ji, I will take no name other than the divine name of God." Because when you speak of worldly things there, you cause a disturbance in the devotion of Shri Giriraj ji and Shri Yamunaji. Never disturb their devotion. It causes them great shram(distress).

Whenever you indulge in worldly talks near them, or when worldly talk falls upon their ears, it causes them great distress. You may care for their comfort in other ways, such as not stepping on them or ensuring they face no physical trouble. You maintain this practical and physical discretion, but also maintain the discretion of your thoughts and speech. Shri Giriraj-bawa is a supreme devotee; He is Haridas-varya.

In our tradition, He has been accepted in five forms. It is said that whenever you perform the parikrama of Shri Giriraj ji, He definitely grants a vision (darshan) in one of these five forms. One form of Shri Giriraj ji is considered to be that of a Lion. Somewhere He gives darshan as a lion. The second form of Shri Giriraj ji is considered to be a white serpent (Bhujang). The third form of Giriraj ji is considered to be that of a Cowherd (Gwal). The fourth form of Shri Giriraj ji is considered to be a jewel-studded Giriraj ji. The fifth form of Shri Giriraj ji is also considered to be that of a Cowherd. Thus, Giriraj ji definitely grants darshan in one of these five forms—this is the sentiment held in our tradition.

Whenever you perform the parikrama, rather than engaging in worldly discussions, perform the circumambulation with the eagerness to witness the eternal divine plays (leelas) happening in the foothills of Shri Giriraj ji. These two places—(1) the banks of Shri Yamunaji and (2) the foothills of Shri Giriraj ji—are where the Lord's residence is eternal. The Lord is never separate from there.

Shri Gusainji himself gives a name of Shri Mahaprabhuji in the Sarvottam Stotra as: 'श्री गोवर्धनस्थिति उत्साह' **('śrī govardhana-sthiti utsāha'** i.e. One whose joy is residing at Govardhan). Residing in the foothills of Shri Giriraj ji is extremely dear to Shri Mahaprabhuji. That is why the Baithakji of Shri Mahaprabhuji resides upon a beautiful stone right in front of the Mukhara-vind. Whenever you perform the parikrama, you should first prostrate to Shri Mahaprabhuji, take His permission, and only then go for the parikrama. Because by taking the permission of Shri Vallabh, and by offering His reference (kani), Shri Thakur ji openly accepts our devotion. That is why when we offer food bhog, we give the reference of Shri Mahaprabhuji, don't we? Even though we may have prepared it ourselves, and we have offered it, we only have the right to offer it before him, but the right to make the Lord actually consume it belongs to Shri Mahaprabhuji only.

Shri Thakur ji does not consume directly from our hands. He actually accepts what we have offered only when we give the reference (kani). It is only through Shri Mahaprabhuji that Shri Thakur ji accepts our materials and offerings actually. This path of Pushti devotion is not a direct path of devotion. It is a path of reaching Krishna through someone's grace. You performed seva, but by whose command? By whose reference? You offered the food, but whose reference did you give? Therefore, whenever we perform service or offer food, we give the reference of Shri Mahaprabhuji, Shri Gusainji, and the devotees of Vraja.

Infinite sagas have been sung of Shri Giriraj ji Bawa. These belong to the literature sung by divine devotees, Shri Bhagavatji, or in the Garga Samhita. When Garga ji wrote the Garga Samhita, he composed an entire section named Giriraj-khand. The saga of Giriraj ji is sung there.

The very first manifestation of Shri Giriraj happened in Gauloka-dham (divine abode of Thakur ji). Once, Swamini ji expressed a desire to Shri Thakurji, saying, "O Lord! There is a desire in my heart that You create such a beautiful place in Gauloka-dham where there are

beautiful caves and waterfalls, and where we may wander in solitude." At that very moment, a mass of light emerged from the heart of Shri Thakur ji. It went up a hundred yojanas. Shri Thakur ji placed His hand over it, and Shri Giriraj ji first manifested in Gauloka-dham with the name Shat-shring (the hundred-peaked one). Such a saga appears in the Garga Samhita. In Gauloka-dham, the name of Shri Giriraj ji is Shat-shring; Shri Giriraj ji has a hundred peaks, but when the Lord thought of the souls separated from His divine play (leela) and wished to bring them back in the Leela, the Lord's companions arrived on the earth before the Lord Himself. Thus, Vrindavan came to the earth. Shri Yamunaji came to the earth, and Shri Giriraj ji came to the earth. That is why it is believed in our tradition that even when the great dissolution (Pralay) occurs, the land of Vraja does not dissolve. Because the Vraja-mandal is not a part of this earth; it is a part of Gauloka-dham, but to bestow grace upon the devotees, the Lord brought the Vraja-mandal from Gauloka-dham to the earth when He descended. Such transcendental greatness is attributed to Vraja-mandal. Therefore, even during the dissolution, Vrindavan, Shri Giriraj ji, and Shri Yamunaji do not dissolve.

There is also a mention in the Varaha Purana and others that when Lord Varaha went to establish the earth, He had a vision of the Vraja-mandal. There are many such sagas.

Shri Giriraj ji manifested in the Shalmali Dweepa (one of the seven continents described in Hindu Mythology). Let me tell you the saga of Giriraj ji in brief. He was born as the son of Dronachal. Three brothers were born. One is in Chitrakoot, which is the Kantanath mountain—he is the brother of Shri Giriraj ji. The second is the place where Shri Gusainji was manifested, which is the Charandri mountain, where the footprints of Lord Vaman are located. And the third is this Shri Giriraj ji—Govardhan.

Sage Pulastya once came to this Dweepa while circumambulating the earth. He stayed at Drona's place. His eyes fell upon Govardhan. He thought, "I will take this mountain to Kashi and sit in its caves to meditate on Mahadev ji." He made a request. Shri Giriraj-Bawa was ready to go but set a condition before Him: "Once you place me down, I will not rise from there again." The sage was bound by his word. Through yogic power, he took Giriraj ji in his hand and walked toward Kashi.

In the middle came the Vraja-mandal. Shri Giriraj ji thought, "I have come to reside in Vraja, to perform devotion to the Lord. What will I do by going to Kashi?" So, He used a tactic. Shri Giriraj ji increased His weight. He increased His weight so much that the sage could not lift Him and

placed Him down. When he went to pick up Shri Giriraj ji again, Giriraj ji said, "I am bound by my word. Once you place me down anywhere, I will not rise from there."

The sage became angry. "You wanted to come to Vraja and you have deceived me. Therefore, I curse you. You shall diminish by the size of a sesame seed (til) every day." Thus, Shri Giriraj-bawa was cursed, and in our tradition, the story goes that Shri Giriraj ji reduces by a sesame seed's width every day.

If you had gone for darshan of Shri Giriraj ji 10-20 years ago and when you see Him today, you would feel the difference. In this manner, Shri Giriraj-bawa arrived in Vraja-mandal. Various types of stories have been sung about it.

Shri Thakur ji held Shri Giriraj ji in His divine hand. He kept Him lifted for seven days. Shri Mahaprabhuji interprets this by saying that the people of Vraja had seven types of "other-dependences" (anyashraya). By keeping them in His refuge for seven days, Shri Thakur ji removed all types of other-dependences. Because one who wishes to perform devotion must maintain exclusive refuge (ananyashraya) in God.

Just make the Lord trust that "No one except You is our doer." The day you provide this much trust, Shri Thakur ji will accomplish all your tasks. But as long as it feels that "this one is still there, that one is there, someone else is also there..." Many people go to a different place every day of the week. Monday here, Tuesday there, Wednesday here, Thursday there... in this way, if you keep changing the deity frequently, your turn (opportunity) will pass away.

In our tradition, it is said: '**यह नित नेम जसोदाजु मेरे, तिहारे ही लाड लडावन को' ('yah nit nem jasodaju mere, tihare hi laad ladaavana ko')** It is the daily routine of Yashodaju: only to cherish and fondle You." At least belong to the one you worship. We respect everyone, we give honor to everyone. We consider every living being worthy of respect and the deities are all above them, so all deities are worthy of salutation and respect. But when it comes to performing devotion, we must practice exclusivity (ananyata). Ananyata is not a "condition" for devotion, it is the very "nature" of devotion. It is called the nature of love. It is the nature of love to belong to the one you love. Only then can love be enjoyed. So, whatever types of other-dependences the people of Vraja had, the Lord removed them in seven days. The Supreme Soul became the lifter of Govardhan. He established refuge for all.

In the Geeta ji, the Lord says the same thing:

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्व पापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja |
ahaṁ tvā sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ ||

"Abandon all your dharmas (here the dharma points every that point, that ritual, rule or regulation that takes you away from God) and come to My refuge. I will take you far from all sins." In this way, God makes one fearless. '**शरण आए सो हि तारे जे जन, शरण आए सो हि तारे**' **('Sharan aaye so hi taare, je jana sharana aaye so hi taare'** i.e. Whoever comes to refuge, He gives him salvation)." The Lord has resolved to give the salvation to the one who takes refuge.

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।
तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥

ananyāś cintayanto māṁ ye janāḥ paryupāsate |
teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānāṁ yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham ||

Those, who give me the full devotion I personally take care of their situations, conditions, welfare as well as their deeds i.e. I protect what they have, so says the Lord Himself. He takes care of those who believe only Him and therefore, it is advised that don't broaden your devotion rather deepen it. In recent times, we are all busy in broadening our devotion i.e. increasing the physical span of it. If you look at many people's temples at home, they have collected so many photos that if you shake the temple a little, two or four would fall down. Whoever comes keeps giving photos, whoever comes keeps giving idols. They leave no deity of which they have not kept a photograph. Just imagine a crowded bus in Mumbai—that is how many people's temples are. See, do respect all those deities and pictures.

There are two-parts. One is to see that God resides in all creatures but the best part is to find Him everywhere as omnipresent! Whenever I say to worship God, I don't tell you to disrespect anyone. Maintain respect for everyone, but if you pour water at the root, all the leaves naturally become green.

आकाशात् पतितं तोयं यथा गच्छति सागरम् ।
सर्व देव नमस्कार: केशवं प्रति गच्छति ॥

ākāśāt patitaṁ toyaṁ yathā gacchati sāgaram |
sarva-deva-namaskāraḥ keśavaṁ prati gacchati ||

All gods and goddesses become very pleased with the one who worships the Lord. If you try to please 33 crore (330 million) deities, an entire lifetime will be too short; but if you please only Shri Thakurji, the blessings of those 33 crore deities will come to you automatically.

If it is said in the words of Dayarambhai, 'ભોજન અંગે લેપ્યું કોઈને ન પોષે.' **(bhojan ange lepyun koine na poshe** i.e. Food when put on a limb does not nourish the body.) Just as when you put food in the mouth, all the limbs get nourished. But what if someone says, "I put the dal-rice in the mouth, but what about this hand or leg?" Do you massage the dal-rice onto your hands and legs? No. You put it in the mouth, and all limbs are nourished. Similarly, everyone is pleased with the one who pleases the Lord. So, say the Geeta ji and the Shri Bhagavata ji.

When the Lord entered Devaki ji's womb, all the deities came and offered prayers. Everyone offered venerations. Therefore, exclusivity is the hallmark of devotion. Do not increase the "width" (variety) too much—thinking, "I'll do this as well, I'll do that too, I'll do that other thing as well."

In the path of Pushtimarg, it often happens that when a small Lalan (child Krishna) resides at home, one thinks, "Look, everyone else has Shri Nathji, and I only have Lalan. Let me bring Shri Nathji." So, they bring Shri Nathji. Then, they see somewhere else, "Oh, at their house Shri Giriraj ji resides. Now let me bring Shri Giriraj ji too!" At another place, there is the seva of the Loti ji (Shri Yamunaji). They think, "Let me bring Shri Yamunaji also." In this way, they collect all the swaroopas, and then say, "Now, I am finding the temple too small for all. I can't keep up with the seva properly." Who told you to bring everyone? Within Shri Nathji, all swaroopas reside. Look at Shri Nathji with love. In His face resides Shri Mahaprabhuji. In His caves is Shri Giriraj ji. At His lotus feet is Shri Yamunaji. This "division-intelligence" (bheda-buddhi) by which we see them as separate is our own ignorance.

Strengthen your loyalty so much so that on the day of Shri Mahaprabhuji's festival, your Lalan's face appears to you like Shri Mahaprabhuji's. On the day of Yamunaji's festival, you should see Shri Yamunaji within your Shri Nathji. Once the loyalty gets firm, everything becomes natural. That same single form (Swaroopa) begins to give the joy of everyone.

Many people, if they can't increase the number, want to increase the physical size of Shri Thakur ji. "A very large form resides there," and after going there, they say, "This one is bigger than that." There is no need to make God bigger. There is a need to make your faith bigger. Do not let worldliness enter into matters related to the Lord—this idea of "this is big" and "that is more." If you fall into all this, you will miss God and fall into worldly matters. Even if a tiny Lalan resides in your home, even if you only offer him misri-bhog, fondle him with such love that he begins to give you the manifest joy of Shri Nathji himself. This is the true loyalty.

If I simply tell you to close your eyes and remember Shri Thakur ji, what would you remember? Tell me. You close your eyes. What do you see? Many people have to search for God even after closing their eyes—"Who should I remember?" Do you remember the face of swaroopa who resides in your home? It's a very easy, very basic question! We will look at the matters of devotion later but first you answer me this! Always remember one thing, to establish Pushti-Bhakti firmly, you need to develop the infatuation in the Swaroopa that you have at your home. Until you develop an infatuation, your devotion wouldn't flourish. until then, devotion (Bhakti) will not flourish.

It is a simple, straightforward question, like a first step. If you close your eyes, can you see the lotus-face of your Lalan? Do you remember His lotus-face? Now, think. If you do not remember the face of the one you worship and do seva, how will your devotion bear any fruit? Adherence to His form (Swarup-nishtha) and attachment to His form (Swarup-ashakti) are extremely essential for devotion. Therefore, tomorrow when you sit for Seva, look at the lotus-face of Lalan very intently and fill your eyes with it. Fill them such that you never forget His face again. I would even go as far as to say that even if you go to Nathdwara and have the Darshan of Shrinathji, you should see the face of your own Lalan in Shrinathji. When such adherence in His form awakens, the devotion grows.

In this way, Shri Thakurji removed all seven types of Anyashrayas and gave Ananyata. Let us bow to the Govardhan Leela here. Let us now move into the Raas-panchyadhyayi Leela.

It is the Leela of Maharaas. All the religious leaders, scholars, great men, and saints who have existed until today have unanimously called this Raas-leela the "Supreme Leela." Raas-leela is called the Leela of highest bliss. Though they were Masters of the path of knowledge (Gyan-margi) or intelligent logicians and thinkers, they all called Raas-leela the Supreme Leela. This is because, in this Leela, God gives the gift of Himself to Gopis. In all the other instances, God fulfilled the desires of His devotees through His powers (Samarthya). In Raas-leela, it is not just through power; here, God fulfilled the desires of His devotees through His own being (Swaroopa). A Raas is that in which God gives Himself to His Devotees.

To put it in simple words, the process of turning small joy (Alpanand) into complete bliss (Purnanand) is Raas. The process of making the soul taste the bliss of the Supreme Soul is Raas. The process of making the "small" "the complete".

The scriptures have mentioned three types of bliss: (1) Vishayanand (sensual pleasure), (2) Brahmanand (divine bliss), and (3) Bhajananand (bliss of worship).

The scriptures say there are three types of joy in the world. One is Vishayanand, which every living being knows. This is the pleasure of the senses and objects. There is no need to explain this. A soul, doing this naturally through many births, knows this joy very well. It runs only for this. Above this is Brahmanand—the joy of liberation (Mukti) or salvation (Moksha). To be freed from the cycle of birth and death and merge back into where the soul came from is Moksha or Mukti.

And our acharyas say in the commentaries of Shri Yamunashtak and others that God is very generous in giving liberation; but He is stingy in giving devotion (Bhakti). The reason is, if God gives liberation, He says, "You are free, and I am free from you too." But if I give devotion, I have to become subservient to you. Then I have to act according to your will. Therefore, the Lord does not give devotion to anyone easily. Brahmanand is the joy of liberation.

And the third is Swarupananda - Bhajanananda. To explain in simple language: Moksha means becoming a Peda (a sweet), and Swarupanand means eating the Peda. So, is there joy in becoming the sweet or in eating the sweet? The supreme bliss lies in tasting the sweet. This is Swarupananda.

In the Shrimad Bhagavata, the 10th Canto is the "Heart." These five chapters (of Raas) are the "Five Prana". According to Shri Bhagavata ji, chapters 29 to 33 are called Raas-panchyadhyayi. In these five chapters, the story of the Raas-leela is given. One name of the Lord is Devdaman Shrinath. We say that Shrinathji is Devdaman. Because, when Shrinathji appeared on Shri Giriraj ji, He appeared in three forms: (1) Devdaman, (2) Indradaman, and (3) Nagdaman. So, one name of Shrinathji is Devdaman Shrinathji. This name is also given in the Garg-Samhita. Why Devdaman? Because, if you look at all the Leelas of the 10th Canto, God has subdued various deities.

What does the word Daman mean? Why did He do that? It is said that when these deities attained their divine positions, they began to consider themselves as the Supreme. They began to feel that "we are all-powerful" and "the universe is running because of us." When such ego entered the deities, God subdued them and made them remember their actual positions. You can see this in every Leela. We have seen it before; He subdued Brahmaji, subdued Indra and others. Other stories about the subdual of deities like Varuna will come later in the narrative. Similarly, the story of this Raas-panchyadhyayi is the story of subduing Kamadev (the God of Love/Lust).

When Kamdev became a world-conqueror, he defeated everyone and told Narad ji, "I am a world-conqueror." Then Narad ji said, "It's fine that you defeated everyone, but show me by defeating God; only then will you be called a world-conqueror."

Kamdev went to God and said, "I want to wage war with you." God said, "I will fight, but wars are of two types. What kind of war do you want to fight? Which two types?" God said, "The first type of war is a fort-war. There will be a huge fort. I will close its gates, sit inside in meditation, and you shoot your arrows while our war happens. No one else would be there. The war can happen when I am sitting in meditation in solitude."

"The second type of war I can do is: when I am surrounded by infinite Gopis (cowherd girls) on a fine autumn night, in the forest like Vrindavan and you shoot your arrows.

Kamdev said, "The possibility of winning is only in a battlefield war. I want to fight the battle in the field where you are surrounded by infinite Gopis in the night time, and the forest setting!"

Our scriptures say that in these five chapters, the five arrows of Kamadeva are described which are neutralized by God. They are Kaman (lust), Shoshan (depletion), Sambandh (attachment), Sammohan (delusion), etc. And God neutralized each arrow one by one. That is why, when the Lord finally appeared in the Raas, Shri Shukdevji writes:

तासामाविरभूच्छौरिः स्मयमानमुखाम्बुजः ।
पीताम्बरधरः स्रग्वी साक्षान्मन्मथमन्मथः ॥

Tāsām avirabhūc chauriḥ smayamāna-mukhāmbujaḥ |
Pītāmbara-dharaḥ sragvī sākṣān manmatha-manmathaḥ ||

(Then among them appeared Lord Krishna, His lotus-face smiling, wearing yellow silk garments and a garland, the One who churns the mind of even the god of Love.)

Manmath is a name for Kamdev, and the Supreme Soul, who subdues even Manmath, appeared in the assembly of the Gopis. This indicates that in these five chapters, God defeated Kamdev. Thus, Raas-panchyadhyayi is the Leela of subduing Kamdev. It is the saga of the Gopis. Names of Gopis are not given in the Shrimad Bhagavata. Because, a Gopi isn't just any woman. **'गोभिः इन्द्रियैः कृष्णरसं पिबति इति गोपी ।' ('gobhiḥ indriyaiḥ kṛṣṇa-rasaṁ pibati iti gopī')** - "The one whose all senses drink only the essence of Krishna is a Gopi." **'गोपी प्रेम की ध्वजा, जिन गोपाल कियो वश उर धरि श्यामभुजा ।' ('Gopi prem ki dhvajaa, jin Gopala kiyo vasha ura dhari Shyaambhujaa')** The Gopi is the flag of love, who has brought Gopal under control by holding the dark-armed Lord in her heart. (Gopis are called the banner of love.)

In Narad ji's Bhakti-Sutras, it is said: **'यथा व्रजगोपिकानाम् ।' ('yathā vraja gopikānām'** i.e. Like that of the Gopis of Vraja). How should devotion be done? The way the Gopis did it. Our Pushti-Bhakti is that same devotion. It is not difficult at all to understand the Pushti-Marg (Path of Grace). Just gain the right perspective. Start looking at every event through the eyes of the Gopis. Start living by becoming a Gopi in this life, and you have learned the Pushti-Marg. **'सेवा रीत प्रीत व्रजजन की, जनहित जग प्रगटाई, प्रगट भये मारग रीत दिखाई ।' ('Seva - reet preet vraja-jana ki, janahita jaga pragatayi, pragata bhaye, maraga reet dikhaayi')** Shri Mahaprabhu ji took birth and showed the way through which the people of Vraja did when Thakur ji was there. So, Pushti-Marg is the path in which the tradition and the love both are done in the way which Gopis did.

Shri Mahaprabhu ji therefore said the same thing. When asked, "Who is our guru?" he replied, **'गोपिकानाम् गुरु ये प्रोक्ता' ('gopikānāṁ guravaḥ ye proktāḥ')** — the gopis themselves are the gurus for the followers of this path. To walk on the very path they walked — that alone is called Pushti-Marg.

This is the saga of the Gopis. In the Tenth Skandha, three female characters appear, representing supreme love, intermediate love, and inferior love.

Inferior love is exemplified by Kubja. The story of Kubja is given in the Tenth Skandha. It is called inferior because the motivation is personal pleasure—that I may feel happiness. There is no concern for whether the Lord experiences joy or not. Devotion performed solely with the desire for one's own pleasure is considered ordinary or limited bhakti.

The second is intermediate love. This is the love of the eight principal queens. The motivation behind their love is, 'We experience joy, and Thakur ji also experiences it'— the desire for mutual happiness on both sides is called intermediate love.

But, Supreme love is that of the gopis. Whatever may happen to us, let it happen—may my Shri Thakur ji be pleased. Where there is only the bhava of His happiness alone, that is supreme love, and that love is the love of the gopis.

Now let us enter the leela of the Panchadhyayi. While composing a karika in Shri Subodhini ji, Shri Mahaprabhu ji explains why the Lord performed the Rasa Leela. Giving its reason, Shri Mahaprabhu ji, writes the karika —

ब्रह्मानंदात् समुद्धृत्य भजनानन्दयोजने ।
लीलाया युज्जते सम्यक् सानुर्वे विनिरूप्यति ॥

Brahmānandāt samuddhṛtya bhajanānanda-yojane |
Līlāyāṁ yujyate samyak sānurāge vinirūpyate ||

Explaining why this leela was performed, it is said: the residents of Vraja had already experienced bliss up to the level of moksha, liberation. Now, beyond that lies swaroopananda, the bliss of the Lord's own essential nature, and it was this that the Lord wished to bestow. Therefore, the Lord performed the Rasa with the devotees of Vraja.

Let us now enter this narrative of supreme love, this supreme leela. It is a leela that has raised doubts even in the minds of great thinkers, and yet those very great thinkers have also proclaimed it to be the highest and most transcendental leela.

Even King Pareekshit himself felt doubt and asked: Why did the Lord perform the Rasa with women in this manner? At that time, offering clarification, Shri Shukdeva replied: 'रेमे रमेशो व्रजसुन्दरीभिर्यथार्भकः स्वप्रतिबिम्बविभ्रमः ॥' **('reme rameśo vraja-sundarībhir yathārbhakaḥ sva-pratibimba-vibhramaḥ')** "O King! Why do you entertain doubt? This leela is utterly innocent, just as a child, seeing his own reflection in a mirror, plays joyfully with it."

For where have these devotees of Vraja manifested from? They are an expansion of the Lord's own blissful essence (anandamsha). As declared by Him that, 'एकोऽहं बहुस्याम प्रजायेय' **('eko'ham bahu syām prajāyeya')** — "I am One; may I become many." The manifestation of the devotees of Vraj has not arisen from any other source. The Lord Himself has transformed into the form of these devotees. There is, in truth, no one here apart from the Lord. Using the devotees as the medium, the Supreme Self experiences His own bliss.

Just imagine someone gives you the finest clothes and the most beautiful jewelry—but then locks you in a room. You may be wearing the best garments and ornaments, but if there is no mirror in that room, would you truly feel joy? Do clothes and jewelry alone give happiness, or is the joy experienced when you see yourself in the mirror, witnessing yourself as a silent observer? If there is no mirror in the room, do you really feel the pleasure of wearing those clothes or ornaments? The reason is this: in this world, there is one person whom no one has ever seen directly—and that person is oneself. No one has ever seen their own face directly. Without a mirror, without a reflective medium, can we see our own face? But when we experience ourselves through a medium, that experience gives joy. In the same way, the Supreme Being takes the support of the reflections of the gopis in order to relish His own Self-bliss. Through this medium, the Supreme experiences His innate, essential bliss. This entire process is the experience of that divine joy.

Even in the Yugal Geeta, the Lord pours forth three kinds of nectar, as Shri Mahaprabhu ji explains in Shri Subodhini ji. They are devabhogya, bhagavad-bhogya, and sarvabhogya.

Of these, the experience of sarvabhogya nectar is enjoyed by the Supreme Lord Himself. All the devotees of Vraj function only as media. These devotees of Vraj have manifested as the Lord's own multiple forms. When one hand touches the other, where is the question of any impurity or distortion? Distortion arises only when there is a second, separate other—but here there is no other at all.

Therefore, this is purely a leela of bliss. It is an innocent play—just like a small child looking into a mirror and playing with his own reflection.

Let us now enter the narrative of the Panchadhyayi. The divine night of the autumn season, Sharad – Purnima arrived. The Lord beheld it! It was the time when He is going to fulfil the promise that He had given to Gopis at the time of Chira-harana. He came into the forest and stood beneath a vast kadamba tree. There, the Lord assumed His Tribhangi Form (bent in three places: at the feet, at the waist, and at the neck). For this reason, one of His names is Tribhangilal. He placed the flute upon His lips. Shukadeva ji, while describing this scene in the Shrimad Bhagavat, began to speak...

भगवानपि ता रात्रिः शरदोत्फुल्लमल्लिकाः ।
वीक्ष्य रन्तुं मनश्चक्रे योगमायामुपाश्रितः ॥

bhagavān api tā rātrīḥ śarad-utphulla-mallikāḥ |
vīkṣya rantuṁ manaś cakre yoga-māyām upāśritaḥ ||

Shukadeva ji began the narration itself with the word "Bhagavan." Look, this is not a story of any man and woman; it is the saga of God. Here, the Supreme Lord is about to grant the individual soul the experience of His own complete bliss. For the soul possesses limited bliss, the world is devoid of bliss, and God alone is absolute, complete bliss.

As it is said: 'पूर्णानन्दो हरिस्तस्मात् कृष्ण एव गतिर्मम ।' **('pūrṇānando haristasmāt kṛṣṇa eva gatir mama'** i.e. Hari alone is complete bliss; therefore, Krishna alone is my ultimate refuge and goal) That act by which the Supreme Lord allows the experience of His own innate bliss is called Rasa. 'रसानां समूहो रास' **('rasānāṁ samūho rāsaḥ')** — that singular leela in which the totality of the Lord's divine rasas is experienced is known as Rasa.

So, seeing the particular Sharad-Purnima night, the Lord came into the forest. Standing beneath the kadamba tree, He placed His right foot upon His left, bent His form at three places, and, bringing the flute to His lips, Shri Thakur ji began play His flute. That divine sound of His flute echoed and resonated throughout the whole of Vraja. The gopis, engaged in their various tasks, felt as though the Lord was calling each of them by name, pouring their very names into the notes of His flute. Startled and awakened within, the gopis paused in wonder.

Shri Shukadeva ji writes...

तदोडुराजः ककुभः करैर्मुखं।
प्राच्या विलिम्पन्नरूणेन शन्तमैः॥

Tad uḍu-rājaḥ kakubhaḥ karair mukhaṁ |
Prācyā vilimpann aruṇena śaṁtalaiḥ ||

See how wondrous was the sound He played **'निशम्य गीतं तदनंगवर्धनम् ।' ('niśamya gītaṁ tad anaṅga-vardhanam')** The Lord produced a melody that intensified love itself. Throughout the entire Vraja-Mandala, the resonance of the flute began to echo. The sound of the flute entered directly into the ears and hearts of only those for whom He played the flute.

The gopis were startled. They were engaged in different activities: some were serving their husbands, some were feeding their children, some were boiling the milk, and some were cleaning their homes. Each one revealed her inner nature through her outer action—as the disposition, so the activity.

Here, Shri Mahaprabhu ji beautifully explains: which gopi is tamasic, which is rajasic, and which is sattvic—their conduct itself reveals their temperament. Shri Mahaprabhu ji discusses these many types of gopis in Shri Subodhini ji.

Wherever in Vraja this flute-sound reached, it stirred hearts, as if proclaiming: **'हे श्याम तेरी बंसी घायल कर जाती है; मुस्कान तेरी मीठी घायल कर जाती है।' ('He Shyama teri bansi, ghayal kar jaati hai; muskaan teri meethi ghayal kar jaati hai.'** i.e. O Shyam, your flute drives one mad; your smile, so sweet, leaves one wounded in the heart) As soon as the sound reached their ears, the gopis ran from their homes toward Him. "Ah! That night has arrived—the very night the Supreme Lord had promised. Today is the moment to make life truly fulfilled, blessed and meaningful!"

Carrying the longing of a limited, fragmentary soul to become complete bliss, they rushed forward, leaving their homes behind.

Some gopis tried to go out but could not. Their family members had fastened the doors with chains. **'હું તો ઘેલી ફરું ઘરમાંય, કોણે દીધી સાંકલડી ? મારા વ્હાલાના વનમાંય વાગે રૂડી વાંસલડી.' ('Hun to gheli gharamaany, kone didhi sakaladi? Maaraa Vaala ji naa vana maan-ya vaage rudi vaansaladi...'** i.e. I wander restlessly even within my own home—who has locked these doors? In the forest of my Beloved, that sweet flute is sounding) they lamented. The gopis were running—heart and soul—toward Krishna.

Once a great devotee was narrating the story that: at midnight, Shri Thakur ji played His flute, and the gopis left their homes and reached the forest. When the story was finished, the villagers asked: "Maharaj! Practically speaking, is this even possible? That at midnight someone plays a flute in the forest, and people abandon their homes to reach him?"

The great devotee replied, "This is a story of midnight. Come to the ashram in the forest at midnight, and I will answer you." The people reached the ashram in the forest at midnight. They asked again: "Is it practically possible that someone plays the flute in the forest at midnight, and people leave their homes to reach him?" The devotee said, "it is the event that happened at the banks of Yamuna ji. So, if you come there with me, I shall answer you." The people agreed eagerly: "Yes, yes, let's go immediately!"

They reached the bank of Shri Yamuna ji. Again, the question was posed: "At midnight, someone plays the flute, and people abandon their homes to reach the forest—can this really happen practically?"

The great devotee said, "That they left their homes and went to the forest after hearing the flute — is a later part of the story. But the fact that you were so absorbed in the story that you left your homes at midnight to come to the forest—then really, what is surprising if someone who truly hears the flute leaves home and reaches the forest?"

The gopis, running with hearts full of longing, reached Shri Krishna. The Lord, however, was entirely absorbed in playing the flute, placing it to His lips and filling the air with its divine melody. Many gopis came before Him and stood there, awestruck, witnessing His leela.

When the Lord opened His eyes, He saw many gopis and spoke:

स्वागतं वो महाभागाः प्रियं किं करवाणि वः ।
व्रजस्यानामयं कच्चिद् ब्रूतागमनकारणम् ॥

svāgataṁ vo mahā-bhāgāḥ priyaṁ kiṁ karavāṇi vaḥ |
vrajasya anāmayaṁ kaccid brūta āgamana-kāraṇam ||

"O most fortunate gopis, welcome! What can I do to please you? Why have you come at this hour?" With a look of wonder and mild reproach, it seemed as though the Lord Himself was asking: "Why have you come here? Ah! Go back home. It is not proper for women to come into the forest at night. Your family must be waiting for you—your fathers, brothers, husbands—they are anticipating your return. Go, go back home!"

Here, the Supreme Lord instructed the gopis on dharma in ten verses. Serving her husband is the duty of a woman, whether he is ill, poor, aged, or in any condition whatsoever, caring for him is her responsibility. Therefore, He told them to return home. The gopis listened calmly and attentively. In those ten verses, the Lord imparted the teachings of dharma.

Now the gopis speak: "O Lord! You called us, and now You are questioning us?" It is like inviting someone to a meal—saying, "Today you must dine at my house. Do come exactly at eight o'clock." And when that person arrives right at eight, the host asks:, "Why did you come this way today?" - what would be his plight?

The gopis say, "Ah! You called us, and You filled the notes of Your flute with such sweetness that it felt as though You were calling each of us by name." You had promised us this night, and yet You ask why we have come?"

Thus, in eleven verses, the gopis gave their reply.

मैवं विभोर्हति भवान् गदितुं नृशंसम् ।
सत्यं कुरुष्व निगमं तव पादमूलम् ॥

Maivaṁ vibhor arhati bhavān gadituṁ nṛśaṁsam |
Satyaṁ kuruṣva nigamaṁ tava pāda-mūlam ||

"O Lord! We have abandoned everything and come seeking refuge in You. O Lord! You speak to us of the duties of women—what You say about those duties is all true. But, O Lord, do not forget one thing. The moment we heard Your flute, our worldly consciousness fell away right there. No woman has come here at all. What has come here is the individual soul, longing to unite with the Supreme Soul. The instant we heard Your flute, body-consciousness was destroyed, reduced to ashes. We did not come here with bodily awareness; and had bodily awareness remained, we could not have come at all. That body-consciousness ended at that very moment. We have come here with awareness of the Self. The individual soul has come here to experience the bliss of the Supreme. Limited bliss has come to taste complete, infinite bliss.

"You tell us to return home? And O Lord! Every dharma exists for You. If the dharma does not please the Lord, then Shrimad Bhagavata itself declares it to be '**श्रम एव हि केवलम्।**' **('śrama eva hi kevalam')** — mere labor, nothing more. All practices that do not culminate in devotion are nothing but empty effort. O Lord, all these dharmas are meant to lead us to You. Today, when we have actually attained You, if we were to abandon You in order to preserve dharma, then who in this world could be a greater fool than us?"

"It is like someone who plants a rose sapling and, in order to protect it, builds a fence of thorns—but then becomes so absorbed in guarding the fence that he forgets to water the plant itself. Such a person would indeed be called foolish, O Lord. The fence exists for the flower. And today, having come into Your presence, if we turn back merely to preserve dharma, that would cause our own harm. O Lord! No matter how excellent the seed may be, once it is roasted, it never grows. Even if it is given the best soil, the best manure, the best water, and the best light, roasted grain does not germinate. In the same way, O Lord, our hearts have long been roasted in the fire of Your love. If we return to be planted in the soil of worldly life, no shoots of worldly attachment will sprout in us. On the contrary, worldly people would suffer even more—because it is the nature of the world to desire that you should always remain useful for its own purposes."

This world is such that it will neither let you improve completely nor let you fall completely. If you turn toward devotion, it will say, "Oh, is this the age to be in devotion? You still have so many responsibilities left," and it will pull you back into worldly life. If you immerse yourself in

worldly pursuits, it will say, "What is this—you always think of your work? At least go to the temple sometimes." It will neither allow total decline nor complete transformation. Therefore, one who truly wishes to follow bhakti should not insist on listening to everyone. If you try to listen to everyone, you will lose your own true good. If you try to be useful to everyone, you will no longer remain useful to God. But if you become useful to God, then everyone will come and bow at your feet.

If the Lord gets pleased by one – **'जा पर कृपा राम की होई, ता पर कृपा करे सब कोई ।' ('Jaa par krupa raam ki hoi, taa par krupa kare sab koi')** – the one on whom God bestows His grace, gets the grace and blessings of all. The gopis continued, "You tell us to return to our relatives and families. But remember one thing, O Lord: we have left the bodies, not our feelings. Father, kinsman, friend, brother, husband—these relationships do not reside in the body; they reside within the person, in the mind and heart. We have left behind only the bodies. We have set aside the bondage that lay in relationships, but we have come carrying love itself. O Lord, now You alone are our father, our kinsman, our friend, and our husband."

Because when we attach all these emotions there, we fall into the endless cycle of birth and death. But when we attach these same feelings to You, we are freed from that cycle. Therefore, O Lord, there is one more thing: when You tell us to go to our husbands, that husband belongs only to this body, and only for this lifetime. He is the husband of the body.

But O Lord, You are the husband of our soul—the One who has been ours across countless births. Do not send us back to one who belongs only to this single birth. You are the husband of our soul.

'ऐसे वर को क्या वरूं, जो जनमे मर जावे, वर वरिये गोपाल सो, मारो चूडलो अखंड रह जाय ।' ('Aise var ko kya varun, jo janame mar jaaye, var variye Gopal so, maro chudlo akhand rah jaaye') "Why should I choose such a groom—one who is born only to die? I choose Gopal alone as my groom, so that my bridal bond may remain eternal."

O Lord, You are the husband of the soul. To worship You alone is the true dharma of our soul. The Vedas themselves declare: yo yad-aṁśaḥ sa taṁ bhajet —one who is an expansion must worship the Source to whom that expansion belongs. This is the natural disposition of an

ansha (expansion) toward its anshi (source). To live and manage the world is an activity of the mind; but to worship You is the nature of the soul. A person may escape activities, but one can never flee from one's own nature. Until one becomes firmly established in that true nature, one cannot experience supreme bliss. Therefore, O Lord, do not cast us back into mere activity. Let us remain established in our true nature—for the innate dharma of the ansha is to worship the anshi.

Just as when you lift a stone from the ground and leave it, it returns to the earth—why? Because it is a fragment of the earth itself. The stone is the ansha, and the earth is its anshi. What we call gravitational force in science is, in essence, the attraction of the smaller toward the greater. In the same way, the natural attraction of the soul is always toward the Supreme Soul. Whether one believes it or not, whether one accepts it or not—whenever you act in accordance with the dharma of the soul, you experience that same contentment and fulfillment.

Instead of eating, if you feed a hungry person, notice how much deeper joy you feel. Why? Because you have acted in accordance with the dharma of the soul. Bliss (Ananda) is greater than mere pleasure, because pleasure is an activity of the mind, whereas bliss is the nature of the soul. The soul, by its very essence, is blissful. Therefore, to worship God naturally is not an activity of the soul—it is the soul's need. When we say, "I had some spare time, so I did some seva," that is not truly a seva, nor is it bhakti. Bhakti is the very nature of the soul. It is the soul's inner demand—its deep requirement. Just as a small child feels hunger and keeps crying, again and again—yet the child has no language, no understanding of why it is crying. The mother, however, immediately understands: the child is hungry. When the child is fed, its suffering disappears. In the same way, everyone in this world is crying—like small children. The soul is yearning for the Supreme Soul. That is its hunger. But we misunderstand this hunger, thinking, "This sorrow is because of this reason, or because of that reason." The crying seems to arise from many causes and many activities, but in truth, the crying belongs to the soul itself, because the soul longs for the Supreme.

That is why, even after attaining everything, one still feels in life that something is missing, that there is still an inner emptiness. Why does the experience of completeness not arise? Because until the soul turns toward the Supreme Soul, the sense of fulfillment cannot be felt.

The gopis gave their replies. The Lord was left without an answer. The gopis then requested the Rasa, and the Supreme Lord began to perform the Rasa with the gopis. As the Rasa continued... a well-known episode unfolds.

A sense of pride in their good fortune arose in the minds of the gopis. "See," they thought, "the Supreme Lord, who makes the entire world dance, is now dancing at our will. If we say, 'Raise this hand,' He raises that hand. If we say, 'Lift this foot,' He lifts that foot. He dances exactly as we make Him dance—and see how utterly enchanted the Supreme Lord has become by our form!"

When the Gopis had run from their homes, King Pareekshit had raised a question: Even though these Gopis rushed toward the Lord with the sentiment of a beloved, why did the Lord still grant them liberation? In response, Shri Shukdeva ji replied...

कामं क्रोधं भयं स्नेहं ऐक्यं सौहृदमेव च ।
नित्यं हरौ विदधतो यान्ति तन्मयतां हि ते ॥

kāmaṁ krodhaṁ bhayaṁ snehaṁ aikyaṁ sauhṛdam eva ca |
nityaṁ harau vidadhato yānti tanmayatāṁ hi te ||

Shri Shukdeva ji said, "O King! Do not look at with what sentiment the gopi is going towards Him, look at toward whom she is going. This is the Parasmani, the philosopher's stone. If iron is made to touch it, iron turns into gold. In the same way, whoever becomes connected to God—through any emotion —receives His grace.

Shishupala was connected through anger. He hurled a hundred abuses at the Lord, and the Lord reflected, 'Shishupal! You have remembered Me a hundred times. Come, let Me grant you liberation.'"

Kamsa was seized by fear—"Krishna will come, Krishna will come." He began to see Krishna everywhere: in the gatekeepers, in the soldiers, in his wife—Krishna appeared before him in all forms. Such a fear overwhelmed him. Then the Lord said, "Kamsa! You have attained sarvatma-bhava—you see Me everywhere. Come, let Me grant you liberation." Now, reflect on this: if the Lord bestows grace even upon those who are connected to Him through anger or fear, then how could He not show grace to those who unite with Him through love, affection, and oneness? Approach Him in any emotion whatsoever.

भक्तद्रोहे भक्त्याभावे भक्तेश्चातिक्रमे कृते ।
अशक्ये वा सुशक्ये वा सर्वथा शरणं हरिः ॥

bhakta-drohe bhakty-abhāve bhakteś cātikrame kṛte |
aśakye vā suśakye vā sarvathā śaraṇaṁ hariḥ ||

"Whether one has offended a devotee, whether one lacks devotion, whether one has violated the path of devotion, whether the situation seems impossible or very easy—in every condition and in all circumstances, Hari (the Lord) alone is the refuge."

Thus, Shri Mahaprabhu ji gives this instruction: even if there is a lack of bhakti, go to the refuge of God. Even if you feel no emotion for God at all, still stand before Shri Thakur ji for just two minutes. Even if you have no faith whatsoever, still remain in His presence. Why? Because even if His glance falls upon you, your misfortunes get destroyed. Therefore, come to His refuge even in absence, even in emptiness.

Very often people keep waiting, thinking, "When I will start feeling this bhava or that bhava, then I will take Brahma-sambandha. When I will start feeling the devotion, I will bring Shri Thakur ji." But if that feeling never comes, your entire lifetime will be wasted. So, do not wait for feeling to arise, start feeling it. While doing, when Shri Thakur ji gets pleased, He Himself will automatically grant you the gift of bhava. Therefore, do not wait for getting a bhava first — just start acting. As you act, the Lord will bestow bhava. Because if we keep waiting, thinking, "When my mind starts attaching itself to God, then I will do it; when deep feeling awakens in my heart, then I will do it," each moment keeps slipping away, moments that will never return. Hence, bhakti is not done according to mood; it is done according to command. It is done by scriptural injunction and by the command of the Guru. Even if the mind is not inclined, even if feeling does not awaken—still, it must be done.

You go to your job. Many times you don't feel like working at all—yet you still sit on your chair, and at the end of the month, do you receive your salary or not? When you're not in the mood to work, do you tell your boss, "No, no, today I really didn't feel like it, so don't give me today's pay"? Do you ever say that? No. You sit anyway—even unwillingly. But there are certain places where sitting is never wasted. Even if we sit before the Lord and the Guru without feeling, even in inner lack, Shri Thakur ji still, by His grace, surely gives the fruit. This is said in the Shrimad Bhagavat as well. Even in this Shri Bhagavat Katha, if someone has come merely to maintain

social courtesy—thinking, "Let us at least show our face to the person who organized the discourse; they had come to give us the invitation, so they should not feel bad"—even such a person, who has come only with this worldly intention, will still receive the grace of the Shri Bhagavata ji. Such is the power of the Shri Bhagavata ji.

This is a wish-fulfilling tree Kalpavriksha. One does not need to verbally ask while sitting beneath a Kalpavriksha—even a mere thought gets fulfilled. That is its very nature.

That is why Shri Shukadevaji says: "Hey! The gopis ran in whatever emotion—but they ran toward Shri Krishna, didn't they? The one who runs may not know, but the One who accepts surely knows what grace is to be bestowed upon them." The person climbing the temple steps does not know—but the Lord before whom he stands knows what grace is to be showered upon him. The real problem is this: doing darshan takes only five minutes, but deciding to go for darshan takes years. While one keeps thinking, "I should go for darshan", fifty or fifty-five years pass by. Otherwise, how long does doing darshan really take? Just five minutes! Yet, in the hesitation of deciding to go, one's entire lifetime slips away.

What is the distance between the intellect and the feet? Five feet—at most five and a half or six feet. Yet, for the understanding to descend from here (the intellect) to here (the feet, i.e., practice), sixty or sixty-five years pass by. In the process of turning a thought into actual conduct, an entire lifetime slips away. Otherwise, how great a distance really needs to be crossed? It is only when the Lord's grace descends that this transformation truly happens.

The Gopis began to say, "O Lord, we have taken refuge in You." But while performing the Rasa, when the Gopis felt that the Lord had become enamored of them—when they began to think that He was dancing according to their will—at that moment, Shri Shukadeva ji says...

तासां तत्सौभगमिदं वीक्ष्य मानं च केशवः ।
प्रशमाय प्रसादाय तत्रैवान्तरधीयत ॥

tāsāṁ tat-saubhaga-madaṁ vīkṣya mānaṁ ca keśavaḥ |
praśamāya prasādāya tatraivāntaradhīyata ||

The Lord perceived the pride of good fortune arising in the hearts of the Gopis. Just think—if even those who are dancing in the Rasa with God Himself can become proud, then what can be said of ordinary beings like us? The real problem with ego is that we cannot see it within

ourselves, and when someone else points it out, we do not like it. Other faults are at least visible. When anger arises, we become aware of it. When greed arises, we know it. When jealousy arises, we recognize it. But ego is the most troublesome of all, because the one who has it cannot see it, and if someone else shows it to him, he does not like it. Instead of giving up the ego, we give up the relationship with the person who pointed it out—"How dare he speak to me like that?"

This is the real difficulty with the diseases of the mind. If someone points out a physical illness, we actually feel good. For example, if you have a fever and someone calls to ask, "How is your fever now? How many degrees? Did you see a doctor? Did you take the medicine?"—it brings a sense of warmth to the heart that someone cared enough to ask. But does it feel good if someone asks about illnesses of the mind? If someone says, "Hasn't jealousy increased in you lately?" or "Hasn't greed grown a lot within you recently?"—does that feel pleasant? No. When someone points these out, we do not like it, and we ourselves cannot see them either. So how are they to be removed?

The answer given is this: look at your face in the mirror in the form of the Shri Bhagavata ji. When we look into this mirror, all our inner ailments begin to become visible. Satsang makes us aware of the negative qualities that exist within us.

When pride arose in the hearts of the gopis, the Lord perceived it and understood that this was the saubhagya-mada—the ego of good fortune. Therefore, in order to subdue their ego and to bestow grace upon them— 'विषयाक्रान्त देहानां नावेशः सर्वथा हरेः ।' **'praśamāya prasādāya tatra ivāntaradhīyate'** — Shri Thakur ji resolved to act. He wished to grant them raasa, to grant them bliss. The pot had indeed been formed; it had received its shape, but it had not yet attained worthiness. If water is poured into a pot made of raw clay, it all leaks away. Only when the pot is baked in fire does it gain not only the shape but also the capacity to hold.

The Lord reflected: the form has been attained, but worthiness has not yet been perfected. Until this pot is baked in the fire of separation (viraha), true worthiness will not arise. With this resolve, the Lord withdrew and became invisible.

First, it was to subdue ego. For one upon whom God wishes to bestow grace, He never allows pride to remain within. Using one circumstance or another as a means, God Himself breaks that person's ego. Second, the one upon whom Shri Thakur ji desires to show mercy is never

allowed to be ruined or destroyed. Reflecting thus, the Lord withdrew and disappeared from sight.

The gopis began to look around anxiously. "Hey! Just a moment ago the Lord was playing the Rasa with us. Where has He gone? Did you see Him? Did you see Him?" they asked one another again and again. "Just now His hand was in my hand—where has the Lord gone?" The gopis started searching in all four directions. "Where has that Supreme Lord gone, who was dancing in the raasa with us just moments ago?" It is said that the Lord did not go anywhere else at all. He hid Himself within the hearts of the gopis. For a person filled with ego keeps looking everywhere outside, but never looks within.

An arrogant person never turns inward. Such a person sees everything only outside, whereas the Lord hid Himself in the hearts of the gopis. A person claims to see God everywhere—but one never looks for Him within his own.

There is a story told in the Puranas. Once, the Lord went to Brahma ji and said, "I am tired of my devotees. Wherever I go, there are crowds—long queues everywhere. I want to live in solitude, in a place where no one disturbs or troubles me." It is said that a temple was built for Him on the top of a mountain, and it was declared, "No one will come here."

But soon the Lord returned to Brahma ji and said, "Oh! Even this place people have discovered. They have built ropeways and staircases, and now thousands are coming in crowds." Then He said, "Show me a place where no one comes."

There was an island in the middle of a river, and a temple was built there. A temple was also built deep inside a forest. Brahma ji tried everywhere, but each time, after a few days, the Lord would return and say, "Even this place people have discovered."

Then, it is said, Brahma built a temple in the heart of every human being. He send Shri Thakur ji there. After some time, the Lord came again and said to Brahma, "You have shown me a wonderful place. No one comes here to search for me." A person searches for God everywhere, but does not turn inward to see Shri Thakur ji residing within his own heart.

As Shri Mahaprabhu ji instructs: '**विषयाक्रान्त देहानां नावेशः सर्वथा हरेः ।**' **('viṣayākrānta-dehānāṁ nāveśaḥ sarvathā hareḥ')** Just as no one can live in a burning house, in the same way, when the heart is burning with worldly attachments, even God cannot dwell there.

The gopis began searching in all directions. They were looking for the Supreme Lord in the forest. At one place, they saw the marks of the Lord's lotus feet, and flowers that had fallen from a braided garland were lying there. They thought, "Oh! The Lord has taken a gopi with Him. Come, let us search." And the gopis continued looking through the forest.

From one grove, the sound of crying was heard. The gopis ran there and found that even the gopi whom the Lord had taken along had been abandoned. "Oh! He left you too?" "Yes," she replied, "pride arose in me as well, and Shri Thakur ji abandoned me too." Again, the gopis began searching in all directions. The Lord had come all this way to bestow His grace. The morsel had come right up to our mouths, yet it was snatched away from our hands. Pride has arisen within us. We are at fault. We are offenders.

They began repenting, "Where have You gone, O Lord? O ashoka tree, you are the remover of sorrow, have you seen my Lord? O tulasi, you are auspicious, the beloved of the Lord have you seen my Lord?" Searching in all directions through the forest, the gopis cry out in lamentation. The gopis have become maddened with love. Chanting "Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Krishna" again and again, they begin to think of themselves as Krishna Himself. They start imitating the deeds and leelas of Krishna. One becomes Putana and, the other becomes Krishna to grant her liberation; another becomes Shkatasura, and someone else, taking the role of the Lord, liberates him. 'श्याम श्याम रटत हो, श्यामा श्याम भई और श्यामा पूछत सखीन सो, श्यामा, कहाँ गई ?' **('Shyam, Shyam Ratat ho, Shayamaa Shyam bhayi aur Shyaamaa poochhata sakhin so, Shyama, kahan gayi?')** Repeating "Shyam, shyam, shyam," the gopis began to feel themselves to be Shyam. "I am unable to find my Shyam, someone take me to Him—someone, make me meet my Shyam."

On that night of Sharad Purnima, the gopis are searching for the Lord in all directions through the forest. "Where has our Beloved gone? Where has our Supreme Lord gone? Just as the soul is separated from the body, the Lord has separated Himself from us. How shall we live without the Lord? Pride arose within us, ego arose within us, and Shri Thakur ji left us and went away."

While searching, the gopis finally reached the banks of Shri Yamuna ji. No means remained by which they could attain the Lord. Then, Shri Mahaprabhu ji says that the glorification of the Lord's virtues is the only means.

अष्टाविंशे हरेद्गानं स्वभावाद् अपराधतः ।
कृतावज्ञा गोपिका हि स्तोत्रं चक्रुरितिर्यते ॥

aṣṭaviṁśe hared gānaṁ svabhāvād aparādhataḥ |
kṛtāvajñā gopikā hi stotraṁ cakrur itīryate ||

These gopis sang the gopigeet in praise of the Lord. Shri Mahaprabhu ji says there are nineteen types of gopis. They gathered on the banks of Shri Yamuna ji. He explained that the gopigeet is sung for two reasons: 'स्वभावाद्' **('svabhāvād')** – by nature, a separated lover (virahi) praises the qualities of the one from whom they are separated, and **'अपराधतः' ('aparādhataḥ')** – one who has committed offenses seeks forgiveness and therefore offers praise. Thus, gopis assembled on the banks of the Yamuna ji. Let us, too, attune ourselves to the melodies in the voices of the gopis.

जयति तेऽधिकं जन्मना व्रजः श्रयत इन्दिरा शश्वदत्र हि ।
दयित दृश्यतां दिक्षु तावकास्त्वयि धृतासवस्त्वां विचिन्वते ॥

Jayati te'dhikaṁ janmanā vrajaḥ śrayata indirā śaśvad atra hi |
Dayita dṛśyatāṁ dikṣu tāvakās tvayi dhṛtāsavas tvāṁ vicinvate ||

In nineteen verses, nineteen types of gopis have sung this gopigeet. Gopis have sung four kinds of songs: Venu-geet (flute song), Gopi-geet (song of the gopis), Yugal-geet (song of couple), and Bhramara-geet (song of the bees).

रसबीजं वेणुगीतं गोपिकागीतवृक्षकम् ।
सुफलं युग्मगीतं हि भ्रमरं भ्रमरं वतम् ॥

rasa-bījaṁ veṇu-gītaṁ gopikā-gīta-vṛkṣakam |
su-phalaṁ yugma-gītaṁ hi bhramaraṁ bhramaraṁ batam ||

As stated in the scriptures: "Venu-geet is the seed, Gopi-geet is the tree, Yugal-geet is the fruit, and Bhramara-geet is the bee sitting upon it."

The gopis began to sing, saying 'जयति' **('Jayati')** Shree Mahaprabhu ji explains this in Shri Subodhini ji: **'मंगलार्थ अत्र जय शब्दः' ('maṅgalārtha atra jaya śabdaḥ')** — understand it as jayati,

because jayati is a verb. No sentence begins with a verb, which means the gopis have offered an auspicious invocation here. Whenever any scripture begins, it is preceded by a Mangalacharana. Why? So that the one who is about to sing or study faces no obstacles, and whatever is to be attained through it is received without hindrance. **'जयति ते अधिकं' ('Jayati te'dhikaṁ')** — from the time the Lord manifested in Vraj, it has attained glory surpassing even Vaikuntha. Now, great sages, rishis, and demigods do not desire to reside in Vaikuntha, but they long for Vraj, the abode of the Lord's leelas.

Once, Brahma wondered: which is heavier (greater), Vaikuntha or Vraj? He took a balance scale. He placed Vaikuntha on one pan and Vraj on the other. The lighter pan rose up, while the heavier pan remained below and therefore heaven went up and Vraj came here on this earth.

"O Lord! We do not wish to see Vaikuntha. We desire only Vrajavas." Shri Thakur ji replied, "But at least once, go and see Vaikuntha and then decide whether you want to go there." The gopis said, "The very first difficulty we would face in Vaikuntha is that beside You, our Radha would not be there, but Your Lakshmi ji would be seated. For us, it is always Radhe -Krishna, Radhe – Krishna, Radhe – Krishna. If Radha is taken away, it is only 'adhe (half) – Krishna, adhe – Krishna, adhe – krishna." "For us, without Radha, even Shyam is only half. Therefore, we do not desire Lakshmi - Narayana we desire only Radha-Krishna." But the Lord said, "At least once, go and see Vaikuntha." The Vrajavasis went to see the pleasures of Vaikuntha, but when they did not find it to their liking, they returned, filled with the bliss of Brahmananda. "Ah! The bliss and sweetness of our own Vraj—it surpasses everything; Vaikuntha cannot compare." "O Lord! The happiness we experience here in Vraj is not found in Vaikuntha."

"Because if we come to Vaikuntha, we would have to remain under Your command there, whereas in Vraj, You remain under our command. Here, You get awaken only when we wake You up; You eat only when we offer You food; You sleep only when we put You to rest. There, You are Narayana. O Lord! Our Krishna is the one whose feet are covered with the dust of Vraj, who holds the flute in His hands, and who has the cows by His side. The one surrounded by these three—He alone is our Krishna" They asked, "first You tell us that among these three, is even one present there?"

The Lord thought for a moment and then said, "No. There, I wear a shoes studded with jewels, so there is no dust of Vraj. There is no flute either... but yes, there is the Conch Shell. The gopis replied, "A conch shell is not a musical instrument; it is a weapon."

"It is a weapon of yours. When you stand among those who are near and sound the conch, even the nearest are pushed away; but when you let the flute speak, even those who are far are drawn close to you. We do not seek the sound of the conch. We seek only the music of your flute. There are no cows there, only Garuda as your seat. Let Garuda be yours. For us, "વ્રજ વહાલું રે વૈકુંઠ નહિ આવું.' **('vraja vhalu re vaikuntha nahi te aavun'** i.e. Vraja alone is dear. We do not wish for Vaikuntha)." 'जयति तेऽधिकं जन्मना व्रजः श्रयत इन्दिरा शश्वदत्र हि ॥' **('Jayati te'dhikaṁ janmanā vrajaḥ śrayata indirā śaśvadatra hi')** "And see—for us, Vraja alone is everything, and its greatness surpasses even Vaikuntha. This is not something we alone are saying. Lakshmi ji herself, who sits beside you, abandoned Vaikuntha the moment you manifested in Vraja, and from that very time she has made Vraja her unbroken dwelling. 'तत् आरभ्य नंदस्य व्रज सर्व समृद्धिमान् ।' **('tat ārabhya nandasya vraja sarva-samṛddhimān'** i.e. 'From that moment onward, Nanda's Vraja became filled with every abundance.') 'दयित' **('dayita')** — O Compassionate One! 'दृश्यताम्' **('dṛśyatām')** —reveal yourself to us, 'दिक्षु तावकाः' **('dikṣu tāvakāḥ')** — we are yours and that is why we speak so. For you are ours, and we are yours." "We have offered everything to you. You alone are our self; you alone are our very breath. 'त्वयि धृतासवस्त्वां विचिन्वते' **('tvayi dhṛtāsavas tvāṁ vicinvate')** — we, who sustain our prana due You, are searching for you in every direction. We have heard that you dwell in every particle, yet our eyes have grown accustomed only to seeing you. 'अखियाँ हरिदर्शन की प्यासी, देख्यों चात कमलनयन को, निशदिन रहत उदासी' **('ankhiyan hari-darshana ki pyasi, dekhyon chaat kamalanayana ko, nishdin rahat udaasi')** These eyes thirst for the vision of Hari; having once seen the lotus-eyed One, they remain restless, day and night.)Without seeing you, these eyes find no peace. That understanding of the intellect—that you are present in every atom—is not our understanding. We do not wish to see Krishna in every particle; for us, the whole world exists only within Krishna."

It is like,

यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मयि पश्यति ।
तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति ॥

yo māṁ paśyati sarvatra sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati |
tasyāhaṁ na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati ||

"In the Geeta ji, the Lord says to the followers of the path of knowledge: to see God in all, and all in God. But how is it possible for those who walk the path of love? It unfolds in two states—samyoga, union, and viprayoga, separation. In union, when Krishna stands before them, the gopis see the whole world within Krishna. Their attention moves nowhere else but to Him alone. 'My entire universe rests in Krishna'. This is samyoga. And in separation—Wherever we look, everything is filled with Shyam: Shyam is the Yamuna, Shyam is Govardhana, Shyam are the dark clouds that cover the sky. Wherever we look, all is Shyam.

Wherever we turn our gaze, we see only Krishna. In this state of longing, the gopis sing further that,

शरदुदाशये साधुजातसत्सरसिजोदरश्रीमुषा दृशा।
सुरतनाथ तेऽशुल्कदासिका वरद निघ्नतो नेह किं वधः॥

śarad-udāśaye sādhu-jāta-sat-sarasijodara-śrī-muṣā dṛśā |
surata-nātha te'śulka-dāsikā varada nighnato neha kiṁ vadhaḥ ||

The gopis began to say, "O Lord, in the season of autumn all the ponds become clear. The settled mud sinks away, and thus all waters turn pure." Shri Mahaprabhu ji says, "These are not ponds—these are the inner hearts of the devotees. It is only into a purified heart that the Lord arrives. In clear autumn waters, freshly blossomed lotuses appear, and the redness of those newly opened lotuses carries a beauty that is beyond the ordinary. That very radiance has been taken away by your lotus-like eyes. And when, through those eyes, you cast your glance toward us, it feels to us as though your gaze is not merely a gaze, but an arrow. You release that arrow toward us, piercing our hearts with the arrow of your sight. O Lord, you pierce our hearts with your glance. The Lord's eyes are beautiful, and the Lord's gaze is beautiful as well."

Otherwise, in the world it is different. Many may have beautiful eyes, yet their gaze is not beautiful. We even say of some, 'There is something lacking in their gaze.' Thus, many may possess fine eyes, yet their glance itself may not be gentle or pure.

For the Lord, both are sweet. '**नयनं मधुरं**' **('nayanaṁ madhuraṁ')** — His eyes are sweet—and '**दृष्टं मधुरं**' **('dṛṣṭaṁ madhuraṁ')** — His gaze is sweet. Both are filled with madhurya. Much has been spoken about the Lord's eyes. Devotees, lovers of God, and the Puranas have offered

countless similes for the eyes of Shri Thakur ji. Thus, Shri Mahaprabhu ji says, '**नयनं मधुरं**' **('nayanaṁ madhuraṁ')** — your eyes are sweet. Some say they are like lotus petals; some say they are like bees; some say they are like the khanjana bird; some say they are like fish. In many such ways, the eyes of the Lord have been lovingly described.

"Some say, 'O Shri Thakur ji your eyes are like a boat.' In the Pushti-marga, it is the gaze of grace—the kripa drushti—the sidelong glance, the kataksha. The Lord does not look straight ahead; He looks gently downward. That is why the eyes of Shri Nath ji appear lowered, and thus resemble a boat. '**मोहन नैना आपके नौका के आकार और जो इन में बस गए, हो गए भव से पार**' **('Mohana naina aapke, naukaa ke aakar, aur jo inme bas gaye, ho gaye bhava se paar')** Mohana, your eyes are shaped like a boat; whoever comes to dwell within them crosses beyond the ocean of this world. One who settles into that boat is carried across the cycle of the world."

The gopis began to say, "We are your servants without any price. We have no value of our own. As Surdas ji says, '**बिना मोल को चेरो, दृढ़ इन चरणन करो भरोसो**' **('bina mol ko chero, drudh in charanana kero bharoso')** 'I am your servent without any price— I rest my reliance only on Your feet.' We are without worth; without you, we have no value at all. Or it may be understood another way—we are servants for a price: for your sake, we are ready to be sold entirely. This is the highest bhava of the gopis. They further say, O Lord, reveal yourself to us. Why do you remain hiding as though intent on killing us? Without you, we cannot live. If you truly meant to kill us, you should have let us die earlier at the hands of the demons." Remembering this, the gopis, singing as they went, speak in the third verse...

विषजलाप्ययाद्व्यालराक्षसाद् वर्षमारुताद्वैद्युतानलात् ।
वृषमयात्मजाद्विश्वतोभयादृषभ ते वयं रक्षिता मुहुः ॥

Viṣa-jalāpyād vyāla-rākṣasād varṣa-mārutād vaidyutānalāt |
Vṛṣa-mayātmajād viśvato-bhayād ṛṣabha te vayaṁ rakṣitā muhuḥ ||

The gopis began to say, "From poisoned waters, from demons, from Kaliya Naga, from fierce winds, from torrential rains—from many dangers you have protected us! If you were only to let us die, why did you not allow us to die then? And today you sit as though resolved to take our lives. O Lord, reveal yourself. Grant us your darshana." Saying this, the gopis moved forward, singing...

न खलु गोपिका नन्दनो भवानखिलदेहिनामन्तरात्मदृक् ।
विखनसार्थितो विश्वगुप्तये सख उदेयिवान्सात्वतां कुले ॥

Na khalu gopikā-nandano bhavān akhila-dehinām antar-ātma-dṛk |
Vikhanasārthito viśva-guptaye sakha udeyivān sātvatāṁ kule ||

The gopis began to say, "O Lord, we know you. You are not merely the son of Yashoda. You are the inner witness of all embodied beings. Such is the understanding of Vaikhanasa Brahmaji. By the prayers of Brahma ji, the seeker who churned the Vedas, you descended upon this earth to protect the world. You manifested within the Satvata lineage. O Lord, if you have appeared for the protection of devotees, why do you now sit as though intent on taking our lives? O Lord, reveal yourself to us." Saying this, the gopis implore the Lord in many ways. At times they say, "Place your lotus-hand upon our heads." The Lord has five means through which He bestows grace: grace through His gaze; grace through His words; grace through His hand; grace through His lotus feet; and grace through His own free will. Through these five ways the Lord showers His mercy. Here, they entreat Him through one such means: "Place your lotus-hand upon our heads. For that hand is the one that frees from fear. And what is our fear? Our fear is of the world—for it will drown us in worldly attachment. O Lord, you alone are the one who makes us fearless. Place your lotus-hand upon our heads."

Thus, requesting in many ways, gopis bow to His lotus feet and sing further:

प्रणतदेहिनां पापकर्शनं तृणचरानुगं श्रीनिकेतनम् ।
फणिफणार्पितं ते पदाम्बुजं कृणु कुचेषु नः कृन्धि हृच्छयम् ॥

Praṇata-dehināṁ pāpa-karṣaṇaṁ tṛṇa-carānugaṁ śrī-niketanam |
Phaṇi-phaṇārpitaṁ te padāmbujaṁ kṛṇu kuceṣu naḥ kṛndhi hṛc-chayam ||

Then gopis long for the lotus-hand of the Lord. They entreat His lotus feet. Now the gopis express their desire for His lotus feet. Those who surrender to them are freed from all sins. These lotus feet follow even the smallest blade of grass. They are the very dwelling of Lakshmi ji. It is as if Shri Thakur ji himself is conversing with the gopis. In Shri Subodhini ji, Shri Mahaprabhu ji explains: "The gopis said, 'Place your lotus feet upon our hearts." Shri Thakur ji replied, "How can I place them? For you are women. How may My feet touch you?"

Then the gopis said, "O Shriniketanm, is not Lakshmi ji a woman? If she may dwell in the lotus feet, why may we not?"

"Ah! She is a clever one; you are foolish," said the Lord. The gopis replied, **'तृणचरानुगं' ('tṛṇa-carānugam')** — "The lotus feet may fall on even the smallest blade of grass—why then may they not be with us?" "O gopis, my feet are delicate; you are harsh," He said. The gopis responded, **'फणिफणार्पितं' ('phaṇi-phaṇārpitam')** — "You can place Your lotus feet upon the hoods of Kaliya Naga—are we harsher than that?" "O Lord, reveal Yourself. Grant us darshan," they said, and in many ways, the gopis continued to implore Shri Thakur ji. Singing as they went, the gopis said, "When You, O Lord, come to the forest with Your open lotus feet, thorns and stones may touch them, but we have placed Your lotus feet within our hearts—and there, O Lord, they rest." And thus, the gopis continued, singing as they spoke...

चलसि यद्व्रजाच्चारयन्पशून् नलिनसुन्दरं नाथ ते पदम्।
शिलतृणांकुरैः सीदतीति नः कलिलतां मनः कान्त गच्छति ॥

Calasi yad vrajāc cārayan paśūn nalina-sundaraṁ nātha te padam |
śila-tṛṇāṅkuraiḥ sīdatīti naḥ kalilatāṁ manaḥ kānta gacchati ||

The gopis began to say, "O Lord, when you go to the forest with Your open lotus feet." **'शिलतृणांकुरैः'** —there are three kinds of terrain: tamasic, rajasic, and sattvic. Where are the stones? Upon Giriraj bawa. Where is the grass? In Vrindavana. And where do the sprouts of darbha grass grow? Along the banks of Shri Yamuna ji. "every day, You roam these three places. Surely, Your lotus feet must bear fatigue. Your feet get hurt there while we have placed them within our hearts and so, our hearts get hurt."

Here, along with the experience of beauty, the gopis felt the tender softness of the Lord. How gentle, how delicate is our Prabhu! Calling to Him in many ways, the gopis offer various reasons and express the moods of their hearts. They say, "When You, with the cows, turn back toward Gokula, it is the close of day. The sun is about to set; some cows walk ahead, some follow behind, and the dust from their hooves rises. The flute rests on Your lips, and as You drive the cows, singing hiyo... hiyo..., we watch You approaching Gokula. Then, when our

eyelids are closed then, they sing: 'त्रुटिर्युगायते त्वामपश्यताम्' - **('trutir yugāyate tvām apaśyatām')**

अटति यद्भवानन्हि काननं त्रुटिर्युगायते त्वामपश्यताम् ।
कुटिलकुन्तलं श्रीमुखं च ते जडउदीक्षतां पक्ष्मकृद्दृशाम् ॥

Aṭati yad bhavān ahni kānanaṁ trutir yugāyate tvām apaśyatām |
Kuṭila-kuntalaṁ śrī-mukhaṁ ca te jaḍa uīkṣatāṁ pakṣma-kṛd-dṛśām ||

Seeing such a beautiful form of Yours, even the briefest moment when our eyelids are closed feels to us like an entire age. Such longing arises powerfully in our hearts. Without seeing You, we feel we cannot live. Nandadas ji says, "In Vraja, there are four kinds of separation." In Vraja, the gopis experience four distinct forms of this deep, soul-stirring longing.

(1) Palakantara Viraha – The moment the eyelids close, separation arises.

(2) Vanantara Viraha – When Shri Thakurji enters the forest with the cows, and all the gopis gather to sing His praises in longing.

(3) Deshantara Viraha – When Akroora ji arrives and takes Shri Thakur ji to Mathura, leaving Vraja behind. Such is the condition of Vraja: 'ब्रज क बिहरी लोग बिचारे, बिन गोपाल ठगे से ठाड़े । अँखियन बहत बनारे' **("Vraj ke virahi log bechare, bin Gopala Thage se Thade, ankhiyana bahat banaare')** "Those separated in Vraja suffer greatly, feeling cheated without their Gopala, their eyes endlessly weep." This state of Vraja is called Deshantara Viraha. And the fourth is

(4) Pratyaksha Viraha – Direct, personal experience of separation in the heart.

The gopis have experienced all four kinds of separation. As they make countless entreaties and pour out their hearts, their voices begin to falter. Words fail them. The emotions, leaving the place of speech, take the form of tears and flow through the doors of their eyes. For there is no way to hide love. 'प्रेम छिपाया ना छिपे, जागत प्रगट होये, मुँह कछु बोले नहि, तो नैन देत हैं रोय' **('Prem Chhhipaaya naa chhipe, jaagat pragat hoye, munh kachhu bole nahi to nain det hai roye')** Love cannot be hidden; though the world may perceive it, the lips speak nothing, yet the eyes weep. When words come to an end, love begins to flow as tears from the eyes.

रोने से और इश्क में बेबाक हो गये ।
धोये गये इतना कि बस पाक हो गये ॥

Rone se aur ishq me bebaak ho gaye |
Dhoye gaye itna ki bas paak ho gaye ||

(By weeping, they became fearless in love. They were so thoroughly washed by their tears that they became completely pure.)

When, remembering the Lord, the tears from their eyes fell upon the heart, their stains of countless lifetimes are washed away.

इति गोप्यः प्रगायन्त्यः प्रलपन्त्यश्च चित्रधा ।
रुरुदुः सुस्वरं राजन् कृष्णदर्शनलालसाः ॥

iti gopyaḥ pragāyantyaḥ pralapantyaśca citradhā |
ruruduḥ susvaraṁ rājan kṛṣṇa-darśana-lālasāḥ ||

With longing for the vision of Krishna, the gopis began to weep aloud. Some wept in emotion, some in deprivation, some in their very nature. A devotee weeps out of love to attain the Lord; an ordinary person weeps recalling what they lack; but when a devotee weeps, the Lord Himself weeps in His own nature. The Lord can see everything, yet He cannot witness the tears in the devotee's eyes. Thus, form and qualification are both fulfilled. The hearts of the gopis have become purified. Weeping aloud, the gopis lament: 'गोवर्धनवासी सांवरे लाल तुम बिन रह्यो न जाय । ब्रजराज लड़े ते लाड़ीले तुम बिन रह्यो न जाय' **('Govardhanavasi saanvare laal, tum bin rahyo n jaay, Vrajaraaj lade te ladile tum bin rahyo na jaay'** i.e. O Dweller of Govardhana, O Dark One, we cannot live without You. O King of Vraja, our Beloved, we cannot live without You.)

There is an event described in our Varta Sahitya about the separation from Shri Nathaji: Chaturbhujdas would come daily to do the darshan of Shri ji Bawa. When Shri ji Bawa went to the Mathura satghara, Chaturbhujdas found the temple gates closed. Chaturbhujdas began to lament: "O Lord, how shall I live without seeing You? These eyes ache for Your darshana. Just as a fish longs for water, so my eyes burn in thirst for Your vision. O Lord, reveal Yourself — return once more." Shrinath ji could not bear the separation. He said to Giridhara ji, "Bring me back to them." This is the same state of separation (viprayoga) experienced by the gopis.

'कागा नैन निकाल दूँ, जो पिवु पास ले जाय, पहेले दरस दिखाय के, फिर लेजो तुम खाय' **('Kaagaa naina nikaal doon, jo piyu paas le jaay, pahle daras dikhaay ke, fir lejo tum khaay'** i.e. O crow, let me pluck my eyes if you take them to my beloved. Let me see my beloved with them and then you may eat them!) Even after death, these eyes will remain open, longing for the vision of the Lord. O crow, if you are to feed upon my body, then eat it—but first pluck out these two eyes and grant them the darshana of Bhagavan. 'कागा जब तुम खाइयो, चुन चुन के खाइयो माँस, दो नैना मत खाइयो, मोहे पिया मिलन की आस' **('Kaagaa jab tum khaiyo, chun chun ke khaaiyo maans, do nainaa mat khaaiyo, mohe piyaa milan ki aas'** i.e. O crow, when you come to eat my body, pick at the flesh as you will; but do not eat these two eyes, for they still carry the hope of meeting my Beloved.) My eyes will always remain open in the hope of darshan of my Lord.

When the Lord saw, 'न हि साधन सम्पत्या हरिस्तुष्यति, कस्यचित् दैन्यमेवैकं हरितोषणसाधनम् ॥' — **('Na hi sādhana-sampatyā haris tuṣyati kasya cit, Dainyam evaikaṁ hari-toṣaṇa-sādhanam')** Shri Mahaprabhu ji comments in Shri Subodhini ji "The Lord is never pleased by any external means.

The only means to please the Lord is the humility of the heart. If humility manifests, the Lord gets pleased. Otherwise, no matter how much you try to give Him, He will not be satisfied. This is because we do not do a favor for Him by serving; rather, He does a favor for us by accepting our service. What could He possibly lack? He simply accepts what is His only! Giving us the opportunity to serve is the Lord's greatest favor. Therefore, whenever you go before the Lord, never count the service you have done or the times you have chanted His name to Shri Thakurji.

Often, we say, Gurujil Even after performing so much service, the Lord did this? Shri Thakurji says, Did I ask you to serve? Even after chanting his name a lot, the Lord did this? The Lord says, Did I ask you to chant? The Lord's greatest favour is that while everyone has a tongue, He is the one who granted our tongue His name. This is His favour. So, whenever you go to the Lord, climb the temple stairs while remembering each favour He has done for you. This way, when you stand before Him, you possess a sense of gratitude. If you didn't thank Him when He gave, with what face can you complain when He takes away? When He gave, if you could do nothing else, you could at least have been grateful! Say, O Lord! Your favours upon me are many; I

thank You. One who always remains in a state of gratitude is a true Vaishnav.

This is because the Lord will never remind you that He gave everything to you. We must constantly remember that it was He who gave. He never tells anyone. Even if He grants Sudama the wealth of Kubera, He does not tell Sudama anything. He tells no one. He simply thinks, If the seeker cannot ask, why should I, the giver, remind them of what I gave? By reminding, the Lord never makes anyone feel small. His hand will never be visible. We must find His hand within every hand. His face will never be seen, but we must see the face of God in the face of the one helping us. We must have the art of seeing God. Devotion should not be done on the condition that He stands before us. After listening to the Shrimad Bhagavata, we should acquire the vision to see the face of God in the face of the helper. This skill must be within us. We set conditions with God, asking why He doesn't come before us? One who does a little and then shows it off is a man; one who does everything and is seen nowhere is God. He is not in the habit of being seen, and we are in the habit of looking. One who helps normally stands before you. A person helps a little and reminds you for a lifetime. God helps for a lifetime and never even lets you know when He helped and left. This is the difference between the soul and God.

When a person does something, he always shows it pompously by saying, it is set by me! But he forgets the One who has set him up. So, the one who actually does is God always. If He gives you the opportunity to do good deeds, simply thank Him. Remember one thing: good deeds are not written in everyone's destiny. Otherwise, people often say, Look, I helped this person so much, and yet they did this. Now I won't help anyone. We all say this, right?

We always come home unhappy after doing something good. This is our nature. The fruit of a good deed should be joy, right? But, why is there sorrow? Because the understanding is not good. You helped someone because good deeds were in your destiny. Because Shri Thakurji's grace was upon you, God allowed good deeds to be done through your hands. But because good deeds were not written in the other person's destiny, they could not be good to you. They are not worthy of anger; they are worthy of pity. Look at them-poor soul, they had the chance but still couldn't do good. But since God wrote it in your destiny, we must not stop. We should change the individuals, but not the work or our disposition. If not this person, then another.

Who said that every person will come before you as a good person? Good deeds are not in everyone's destiny. Therefore, do not leave your house to do good on the condition that the person you help will also be good to you. Because if you stop doing good deeds, that person loses nothing, but you will lose the opportunities that came into your life. Why should we lose them? And that is why in our culture, we bow to the one we give to. We bow after charity. This is because you gave them an object, but by accepting it, they gave you merit (punya). They will leave the object behind after death, but the merit you received will continue to give you happiness even in the next birth. Therefore, the receiver is a greater donor than the giver. You gave an object and they gave you merit. You gave something they will leave behind; they gave something you will take with you. So, who is the greater donor? The one who gives an object or the one who gives merit? The definetly one who gives merit. Therefore, maintain good understanding after doing good. Never think that because you have set out to do good, you will only meet good people in the world. That is our trouble. We set out to do good and always think we will find good people. On the contrary, in this Kaliyuga, doing good is very difficult. Even then, maintaining good understanding after doing good is even more difficult. And even more so, coming home with a smile after doing good is the hardest of all. All of this is difficult. Do not assume that because you did something good, you will return home pleased. If you do not maintain good understanding, you will return unhappier than you were.

Now, a good deed is a very good medicine, but becoming unhappy is its reaction! Why such a reaction to a good medicine! Because two reactions can occur: you either return unhappy or you return with ego. There are two reactions to such good medicine. If the other person isn't good, we return unhappy or sad. Or if we succeeded, we return with ego, saying, look how we help everyone, there is no donor like us. Can such good medicine have such a bad reaction? That is why often a doctor gives another medicine before a heavy one, saying, Take this so the medicine doesn't cause acidity. Therefore, perform good deeds after engaging in satsang (spiritual company); so that there does not happen reaction to the good medicine. This satsang is the medicine to be taken before the heavy medicine. If we go with good understanding, we can get the joy of good deeds.

The only means to please the Lord is the humility of the heart. When the Lord noticed that the hearts of Gopis have become pure and their pride has melted down.

तासामाविरभूच्छौरीः स्मयमानमुखाम्बुजः ।
पीताम्बरधरस्रग्वी साक्षान्मन्मथ मन्मथः ॥

Tāsām āvirabhūc chaurīḥ smayamāna-mukhāmbujaḥ |
Pītāmbara-dharas sragvī sākṣān manmatha-manmathaḥ ||

The Supreme Lord—He who once subdued even Kamadeva, the god of desire—suddenly revealed Himself in the midst of the gopis. The moment they saw Him, the gopis ran towards Him. One spread out her veil before Him, another caught hold of His hand, another clasped His feet. "Lord," they cried, "why did You go away? Who are You really? What is Your nature? In this world there are three kinds of people," said the gopis. "First, those who love only those who love them in return. Second, those who love even those who do not love them. And third, those who love no one at all. Which of these are You?" The Lord replied, "Those who love only those who love them are selfish; they act for their own benefit. I am not selfish, nor am I governed by ordinary social exchange. Those who love even those who do not love them are like parents—no matter how much their children trouble or torment them, a parent's love never diminishes. I am not that either. I am like a Kalpavruksha. After granting a taste of Myself, I withdraw. Just as when a wealthy person loses his wealth, his mind remains fixed on that wealth, so too—after once allowing My sweetness to be tasted—I depart, so that the heart remains forever absorbed in Me. By bestowing the gift of separation from Me, I establish My form within the devotee's heart."

The following text has been extracted from the provided image of page 182, which continues a spiritual discussion in Gujarati regarding the life and divine plays (leelas) of Lord Krishna:

The Supreme Lord has bestowed the gift of the Maha-Raasa. The autumn night has arrived; the circle of the gopis is perfectly formed. Joy pervades all directions. In the radiance of that autumnal light, let us proclaim: "Raasa Vihari laal ki Jay!"

The Lord has become Raaseshvara, the sovereign of the raasa. We bow to Him here. By granting the joy of Maha-Raasa, the Lord has established His own divine form within the gopis. Limited joy has been transformed into complete bliss; the individual souls have attained the bliss of the Supreme. The gopis have reached fulfillment.

Next comes the narrative of the liberation of Sudarshana. When Nanda Baba went to worship Ambika devi. The attendants of Varuṇa carried Nanda Baba away, and the Lord brought about his rescue. Then follows the episode of Shankhachuda's slaying. Dauji (Baladeva) and the Supreme Lord were roaming in sport when the gopis were abducted. The Lord delivered Shankhachuda and took the chudamani from him.

Now comes the narrative of Yugal Geet. Just as the episode of Venu geet belongs to the nitya leela (the leela that happens everyday), in the same way the narrative of Yugal Geet belongs to the annual festival (Varshotsva) leela. Yugal means a pair—either two verses together or the paired form of Shri Thakur ji. Yugal Geet is connected with the leelas of the yearly festival as well as with the leela of the intercalary month (adhik masa). Because the verses come in pairs, they are called yugal.

The leela unfolds across all twelve months. Each month has two fortnights—the bright fortnight (Shukla paksha) and the dark fortnight (Krishna paksha). Thus, there are two aspects – two names and form. In this manner, Yugal Geet is sung in twenty-six verses, arranged in pairs. We shall first sing one verse, and thereafter contemplate its rasa-darshan (the vision of its devotional essence).

वामबाहुकृतवामकपोलो वल्गितभ्रूरधरार्पितवेणुम् ।
कोमलाङ्गुलिभिराश्रितमार्गं गोप्य इरयति यत्र मुकुन्दः ॥

vāma-bāhu-kṛta-vāma-kapolo vallita-bhrūr adharārpita-veṇum |
komalāṅgulibhir āśrita-mārgaṁ gopya īrayati yatra mukundaḥ ||

Tilting His left cheek upon His left shoulder, placing the flute upon His lips, Shri Thakur ji sounded the note of the venu. That resonance spread throughout the entire forest. The inert became conscious, and the conscious seemed to lose all outer awareness. It is this experience that the gopīs partake of here in Gokula.

The Lord released three kinds of nectar: that which is enjoyed by the gods (deva-bhogya), that which is enjoyed by Bhagavan Himself (bhagavad-bhogya), and that which is enjoyed by all beings (sarvabhogya). Thus it is said that the lilas of all twelve months are described in Yugal Geet.

Come—let us behold the emotionally suffused leela of the twelve months.

In our tradition the seva kram (the order of service), there are two orders of service: (1) the nitya kram (the daily order of service), and (2) the varshotsav kram (the yearly order of service).

The nitya kram begins with Mangala and continues up to Shayan, while the varshotsav seva kram begins with Janmashtami and continues all the way until the next Janmashtami. If you open any book that describes the seva kram, it always begins with Janmashtami. From the moment Shri Thakur ji arrived in Vraj, the seva that the gopis began is what we follow today as the varshotsav seva kram.

The description of the interval or special moments within the nitya kram is found in Venu geet. The difference between the gopis of Venu geet and those of Yugal Geet is very subtle but important. The gopis of Venu geet have not yet experienced the raasa. The acharyas explain this by saying that Venu geet is like an engagement, while Yugal Geet is like a marriage. The reason is that the gopis of Venu geet have not yet tasted the experience of raasa, whereas the gopis who sing Yugal Geet have already experienced the raasa.

In Vraj, many kinds of seasons unfold. There are the six seasons, which together form the varshotsav kram. Seen more deeply, within Giriraj ji it is the leela of a single day. In that one day alone, all six seasons allow Shri Thakur ji to experience the varshotsav leela—from Mangala to Shayan. This is what we call the bhavana of Dwadash Nikunj (the twelve groves). It is called Dwadash Nikunj because for each of the six seasons there are two groves in Giriraj ji —one manimay nikunj and one pushpamay nikunj. In this way, all six seasons become sakhis, joining together to serve the Yugal swaroop. When the rainy season arrives in Vraj, lush greenery spreads in all directions. Beautiful creepers, vines, and leaves spring forth everywhere. The trees themselves seem to unite with countless entwined vines grown upon them. Then come the days of Shravan maas, the season of the hindola (swings). Many kinds of swings are prepared—sometimes of fruits, sometimes of flowers, sometimes of dry fruits, sometimes of leaves, sometimes even of glass. In countless beautiful forms, the hindolas are adorned by Gopis. They make the Yugal swarup seated upon them, and gently, lovingly, they set swings into motion.

The days of hindola continue. Ordinarily, every thread is held in the hands of the Supreme Lord; yet the days of hindola are such that the Lord's own thread comes into the hands of the

devotee. With gentle rhythmic pulls, they swing Shri Thakur ji, and many kinds of manoraths are offered to the Yugal swaroop.

When the days of hindola pass, gradually the month of Bhadarva (Hindu month Bhadrapada) arrives. The observances of Janmashtami and related festivals have already been completed. Then come the days of daan. When the days of daan arrive, the people who want to offer the circumbulation to Vraja, they take resolve for Vraj yatra, and the lili parikrama (the pilgrimage offered in Vraja) begins, and here, during the days of daan, Shri Thakur ji stands in the sankadi khor.

Those who have gone to Vraj know that behind Barsana lies the narrow sankadi khor. From there, the gopis walk carrying matkis upon their heads. One mountain belongs to Shri Thakorji, another to Swaminiji, and all stand positioned upon their respective hills. The Lord calls out to the sakhas: 'गोर्वन की शिखर पे मोहन दीनी टेर, अंतरंग सो कहत हे ग्वालन राखो घेर नागरी दानलीला' **('Govardhana ki shikhar pe mohan deeni ter, Antarang do kahat he gvalin rakho gher, nagari daanleela')**

Shri Thakur ji asserts His authority over Vraj: "I am the king of Vraj. You must pay tax to Me." Here, daan does not mean charitable giving to a Brahmin; it means daan in the sense of a levy, a tax. Shri Thakur ji collects this tax from the gopi-jans. Laughing and running, He rushes down from the mountain, lifts a gopi's matki, and escapes. And the gopis cry out, 'मेरी भरी मटुकिया ले गयो री, आपुन हाथ खवावत ग्वालन। रीति कर मोहे दे गयो री। मेरी भरी मटुकिया ले गयो री।' : **('meri bhari re matukiya le gayo ri, apun haath khavaavata gvaalan, reeti kar mohe de gayo ri. Meri bhari re matukiya le gayo ri.')** "O friend! He has taken away my pot filled with curd. He is feeding the other cowherd boys with his own hands. In exchange, he has imposed this 'custom' (tax) upon me. He has taken away my filled curd-pot!"

As the days of daan begin to pass, saanjhi (designs made before Thakur ji) becomes the occasion for meeting with Him. At that time, Thakur ji is adorned in the Swamini-bhekh (in the form of Swamini ji), and here the lili parikrama has already begun. Wherever the parikrama goes, the saanjhi of that particular place is offered before Thakur ji. When a Vaishnav performs this parikrama, they receive the merit of having undertaken the yatra of that very place. On the final day, the Koti ni saanjhi is performed, evoking the bhavana of the entire Vraj mandal. By doing the parikrama, one attains the fruit of the complete Vraj yatra.

During these days, Thakur ji is adorned in the Swamini-bhekh. Becoming a sakhi, Thakur ji goes to meet Swamini ji. When Vrishabhan ji sees this, he says, "Oh! Where has this sakhi come from? Swamini ji replies: "she is a sakhi from Nandgaon—she has come to play saanjhi with me." Saanjhi is one of the traditional plays of Vraj. The sakhis gather together and create various kinds of designs—sometimes with colors, sometimes with grains, sometimes with flowers. In this way, many beautiful forms of saanjhi are made.

When they want to meet at Nandagaon, Swamini ji speaks to Kirti ji, addressing her as mother, and says, "Maiya! Nandbaba has a very beautiful garden. We wish to play saanjhi. May we go to Nandbaba's garden to gather flowers?" Under the pretext of gathering flowers, they come to meet Thakur ji. As they pluck the flowers one by one, Thakur ji suddenly appears, standing there with a stick in His hand, and says, 'अरी, तुम कौन हो री? फूलवा बीनन् आई ?' **('Ari, tum kaun ho ri? Fulva beenan aai?'** i.e. O lady, who are you? Have you come to pluck flowers?)

In this way, many different kinds of saanjhi are prepared. As the days pass, the sharad raatri arrives. During Navratri, verses of vilas are sung, and songs of the murli are sung as well. When Dussehra comes, karkhana padas are sung. The javara that had been sown for Thakur ji are placed upon His head. On Swamini ji's lotus feet there is the mark of barley. Thakur ji says, "Swamini ji, You have won, and in the raas I have lost." The autumn night arrives, and in the moonlight Thakur ji takes His seat. Everything is adorned in white. A mirror is placed before Him, and Thakur ji calls out to the gopis: 'रास-विलास महे कर पल्लव, एक एक भुजा ग्रीवाने ली - रास-विलास गहे कर पल्लव' **('raas-vilaas gahe kar pallava, ek ek bhuja greevaa ne li – raas – vilaas gahe kar pallva')** "In the play of the Raas, they hold each other's tender hand and they put the other hand in the other's neck—in the play of the Raas, they hold each other's tender hands."

One gopi took up the pakhavaj, another picked up the venu, another played the jhaanjh. The devatas began to shower flowers from above. The Maha Raas commenced, and as the days of raas passed by, time moves gently forward.

Slowly, Diwali came closer. Dhanteras arrived, then Roop Chaturdashi, and now the day of Diwali itself had come. On the following day, Thakur ji said that Annakut should be performed. The people of Vraj replied, "Arre, Lalan! Since You say so, we will prepare all the offerings. We will perform Govardhan puja and offer bhog to Shri Giriraj ji. But where will we bring all the

materials from? From which shop will we get everything?" Shri Thakur ji says, "I Myself will open a shop." And so, Shri Thakur ji takes His seat in the hatdi. What is this hatdi? Shri Thakur ji opens a shop. A weighing scale is placed there, baskets of dry fruits are arranged, and Thakur ji carefully weighs and gives one item to each person. It is the time of Diwali. Yashoda ji takes Lalan to the banks of the Yamuna ji. Lighting one lamp after another, she offers deep daan into the Yamuna. After the offering of lamps, Shri Thakur ji comes and sits in the hatdi. The entire Vraj mandal is shining with rows of lamps. The gopis have decorated the courtyards with beautiful rangolis. It is the day of Diwali, and the beauty of the whole of Vraj has been transformed.

The next day, the grand festival of Annakut is celebrated. Then come the days of winter—Labh Panchami and other observances arrive. Gopashtami comes, on this day Shri Thakur ji began grazing the cows. Then Akshay Navami arrives, and before one realizes it, Dev Diwali arrives.

A mandap was constructed using stalks of sugarcane, and the mandap was beautifully decorated. The call of "uttishthata" was proclaimed three times, the throne was raised, and on this very day the devatas awakened. With the awakening of the devatas, auspicious activities begin. Thus, Dev Diwali passed.

Gradually, the winter season began to arrive—and Shrinathji bava would sit wrapped in a thick quilt. Only His mukharvind, His divine face, would be visible; the rest of His sacred form would remain covered. Seeing this, the people of Vraj would feel a deep yearning: "Prabhu, when will we have darshan of Your divine limbs?" The cold continued to increase slowly. Even so, on Sakhdi Baras, Shri Thakur ji partakes of sakhdi even before sunrise. Then, little by little, the winter season begins to recede.

Just then, the day of Vasant Panchami arrived. In the courtyard of Nandalaya, a cuckoo perched on the mango tree began to sing— kuhu... kuhu... The peacock and the cuckoo both began to call, and it became clear to everyone that Vasant Panchami has come. 'और सब राग भए बाराती, दुल्हेराजा बसंत । मदन महोत्सव आज सखीरी, बिदा भयो हेमंत ' **('Aur sab raag bhaye baaraati, dulheraaja basant. Madan mahotsava aaj sakhiri, bidaa bhayo Hemant')** All other melodies fade away—only Vasant, the royal bridegroom, reigns supreme. Today is the festival of Madan, dear sakhi, and winter has taken its leave. 'लाल गोपाल गुलाब हमारी आँखिन में जिन डारो जू ।'

('laal gopal gulaal hamari aankhan mein jin daaro joo' i.e. 'O Lal Gopal, please do not throw gulal into our eyes.')

The feet are gently covered, and slowly, the khel begins. Shri Thakorji is playfully engaged with chova, chandan, and abeel–gulal. The gopis say, "Color us completely with gulal, but please—do not put it into our eyes." Shri Thakorji asks, "Why?" They reply, "Because if gulal goes into our eyes, they will close—and for that time we will not have Your darshan." Shri Thakur ji smiles and says, "Then I will put it into your eyes." "But why?" the gopis ask. Shri Thakur ji replies, "Because throughout the entire year, you take My darshan. But on the days of khel, if your eyes close, then I wish to take your darshan." Thus, forty days pass in divine play. Finally, the day of Dol arrives. A magnificent Dol is prepared, and as the days of Dol pass by.

Now the summer season arrived. Akshay Tritiya came. On Akshay Tritiya, sandalwood is ground and round pellets of chandan are offered to Shri Thakur ji. Before this come occasions such as Ganga Dussehra, during which Shri Thakur ji is seated in a boat. After that come festivals like Snan Yatra. When Snan Yatra passes, Rath Yatra arrives. Up to Rath Yatra, the period is considered the summer season. At this time, kunja (earthen pots to keep water) are offered to Shri Thakur ji. On the day of Ratha Yatra Shri Thakur ji is seated upon the chariot, and kirtans in Malhara raga are sung. The final day is devoted entirely to Malhar. '**रथ बैठे गिरधारी**' **('ratha baithe girdhaari')** — seated upon the chariot, Shri Thakur ji, the lifter of Govardhan, sets out on Nagar Yatra. The gopi-jans pull the chariot. On this day, Shri Thakur ji says, "Every day you come to My home. Today, using Rath Yatra as the occasion, I will come to your homes." And thus, Shri Thakur ji graces each and every home, fulfilling all the heartfelt wishes of the Vraj devotees.

Thus, in this Yugal-geet, the darshan of all twelve months and their various festivals that we experience throughout the year is described in a subtle, symbolic form. Shri Mahaprabhu ji says, "The symbolic narration of the annual cycle of festivals (Varshotsav) is contained within this Yugal-geet." To such Yugal-vihari Lal, we offer our reverent salutations. Say together, "Shri Govardhannath ki jai."

After this comes the katha of the slaying of Arishtasur. Then the story of the deliverance of the demon Keshi, and then the deliverance of Vyomasur is described. Then there is the story of slaying of Kamsa. Narad ji then went and instructed Kamsa: "O foolish Kamsa! The one who

will destroy you is none other than the son of Vasudev ji — the very child of Nandbaba." Hearing this, Kamsa was filled with rage. "I should kill him immediately." Then he restrained himself and thought, "No — that is not what I will do. Instead, call them here."

An arrangement was made for the Dhanur-yajna. The question arose—whom should we send to bring Him? The choice finally fell upon Akrur ji. That night, Akrur ji could not sleep at all. "Ah! I have received the seva of bringing the Lord Himself!" Whoever receives any seva should consider themselves truly fortunate. And one should never attach adjectives to the word 'seva'— this is a big seva, this is a small seva, this is inner seva, this is outer seva. Seva is what it is. The word itself is complete and perfect in its own form. Whatever kind of seva one receives, it should never be considered small, because seva is never small or great by itself. It is the sevak who makes the seva great. Even if it is something as simple as holding a broom— our devotional literature shows that one broke his sacred thread and tied it over the broom in order to complete the seva of Buhari (the seva of cleaning the premises of haveli with a broom), yet did not abandon the seva of Shri Thakur ji.

When we speak of Malaji-seva, we remember Shyamdas Kanabhi, who served Malaji with such devotion that the seva itself became exalted. Every single seva, when performed by true sevaks, has been elevated and made great through their devotion. Therefore, seva is never small or big. It is the sevak who elevates the seva through surrender and love.

Akrur ji could not sleep the entire night. He kept thinking, "What virtuous deed of mine has borne such fruit, that I have received the blessing of Bhagavat-seva?" At dawn he arose, had the chariot prepared, held the reins, and the chariot—gad... gad... gad...—moved towards Nandalaya. He entered Nandalaya and met Nandbaba and Yashoda ji. Though he greeted everyone, Akrur ji's eyes were searching for someone else. Unable to restrain himself, he finally asked, "Where is Lalan?" Baba replied, "It is evening time. After returning from grazing the cows, He has gone to the cowshed. He must be milking the cows." Akrur ji said, "May I go for darshan?" They replied, "Please do."

When Akrur ji reached the cowshed and had darshan of Lalan, he was overwhelmed with emotion. Tears began to flow from his eyes. He saw that Lalan was milking the cow. But He was so hungry that instead of the milk falling into the vessel, the streams were splashing directly onto His face. Drops of milk sparkled upon the Lord's lotus face, as if stars were shining in the

night sky. Milk droplets flowed gently down from His chin. Akrur ji stood there, absorbed— not merely seeing, but dissolving into darshan itself.

When Lalan saw Akrur ji, He ran toward him saying "Kakaji!". He was about to fall at his feet, but before the Lord could even touch them, Akrur ji embraced Him tightly to his chest. He then took Lalan home and entered inside. At night, everyone sat together for the meal. While they were eating, Akrur ji spoke, "I have come to take Lalan with me. Kamsa himself has sent the invitation."

Nandbaba was somehow persuaded. The Lord Himself was ready. But Maiya turned her face away. Lalan began to insist. He pulled at her pallav and pleaded, "Ma! I want to see Mathura. I have long wished to go there. Ma, let me go. Please give me permission." Maiya refused every plea. "Lalan! Till today I have never lived without you. Not even for a single day have I left you alone. How can I let you go?" Lalan persisted stubbornly. Maiya would not agree. At last, Lalan said, "Ma, I swear by myself— if you do not let me go..." The moment Lalan uttered that vow, Maiya broke down and said, "How can I let you go? Somewhere, deep within my heart, a voice tells me that once you leave Vraj, you will never return." The Lord then gave His assurance: "Ma, I promise you. I will come back soon." In this way, He somehow consoled Maiya. And this news spread through all of Vraj like the wind—that tomorrow, Lalan would leave Vraj for Mathura.

At dawn, groups upon groups of gopis gathered at Nandalaya. The entire courtyard of Nandalaya was filled. The gopis lay down in front of the chariot, blocking its path. "Lalan, we will not let You go." The Lord tried to console everyone. He gave assurances again and again: "I will return soon." To one He gave His venu. To another, His blanket. Before someone else, He left butter. And to each He said, "I will come back soon." Akrur ji then pulled the reins of the chariot, and the chariot began its journey toward Mathura.

Upon reaching Mathura, Akrur ji said, "Please come to my home." But Thakur ji replied, "We wish to see the city of Mathura first." By then, the sakhas had also followed behind. Thakur ji said, "Mathura is a city worth seeing." And the moment Thakur ji walked through the markets of Mathura, the residents of Mathura received the news that the Lord had arrived. Some came out onto terraces, some leaned from balconies, some stood on doorsteps showering flowers, welcoming the Lord with joy and reverence.

The sakhas began to say, "Lalan, Mathura is such a grand city. If we go dressed like this, it will not look appropriate. In a fine city, one should wear fine clothes." The Lord replied, "Where shall we bring them from?" Just then, Kamsa's washerman was passing by, carrying Kamsa's clothes. The Lord said to him, "Will you give us some clothes?" The washerman of Kamsa replied arrogantly, "O villagers! Have you ever even seen such garments? Go away—you will get nothing." The Lord immediately understood: this is the same washerman from the Ram avatar. With a single slap, the Lord struck him— and the washerman was liberated.

When Kamsa's clothes were taken out, they were enormous. It seemed they could only be worn if altered. Nearby, a tailor was sitting. They approached him and said, "Will you adjust these clothes for us?" The tailor asked, "What will you give me in return?" He replied, "Grant me sarupya mukti." The Lord said, "Go—you are liberated."

Just think: if one who rendered a single service of clothing received sarupya mukti, then what will the Lord not grant to those who offer new garments to Shrinathji every day?

The garments were adjusted, and just then a mali named Sudama arrived. He was carrying garlands. The Lord said to him, "Will you give us some garlands?" The mali replied, "What will you give me in return? I desire ananya bhakti—exclusive devotion—and sauharda among devotees, loving harmony within the community of bhaktas." Shri Thakur ji said, "Tathastu." Just reflect on this: if one who rendered a single service of garlands was granted bhakti by the Lord, then what will the Lord not bestow upon those who offer fresh flower garlands to Shri Thakur ji every day? The service of malaji is among the highest forms of seva. In our tradition, it is said to embody the very form of the Vraj bhaktas. When garlands are gathered and placed around the Lord's neck, it is as though all the Vraj devotees are united and offered to Him, and through this act, one receives the blessings of all those Vraj bhaktas.

Now it happened that the garlands were obtained and the garments were ready. If Chandan could be secured, the shringar would be complete. Just then Trivakra Kubja, crooked and bent as she walked, came forward carrying bowls of chandan. The Lord said, "Sundari, will you give Me chandan?" Kubja replied, "If You have called me sundari, then make it true—and I will give it at once." The Lord pressed her feet and gently lifted her chin. In that very moment, her entire form became beautiful—she became sarvanga-sundari. She offered the chandan and said, "Fulfil my desire." The Lord replied, "Your desire will be fulfilled—later."

The next day, all preparations for the Dhanur Yajna were complete. All the people of Mathura had gathered and taken their places in the pavilion for the Dhanur Yajna. In the center, the wrestlers were positioned, and all arrangements for the wrestling bout had been made. In the very middle, the great bow was placed. Outside, the elephant Kuvalayapid was stationed. The command of King Kamsa had already been issued: "Wherever Krishna and Balaraj are seen, finish them. Whoever gets the chance—kill them." Meanwhile, the Lord and Dauji were walking through the streets of Mathura. They approached and entered the pavilion. At that moment, the elephant Kuvalayapid charged forward. The Lord seized him by the trunk, whirled him around, and cast him down. Kuvalayapid was liberated. Cries of victory resounded in all directions, and now the Supreme Lord entered the Rang Mandapa (the place where the wrestlers will fight). To each and every one, the Lord granted darshan according to their own bhava—as one felt Him, so did He reveal Himself.

मल्लानामशनिर्नृणां नरवरः स्त्रीणां स्मरो मूर्तिमान् ।
गोपानां स्वजनो सतां क्षितिभुजां शास्ता स्वपित्रोः शिशुः ॥

mallānām aśanir nṛṇāṁ naravaraḥ strīṇāṁ smaro mūrtimān |
gopānāṁ svajano satāṁ kṣitibhujāṁ śāstā sva-pitroḥ śiśuḥ ||

Many, many forms of bhava were revealed in the darshan granted to all. Then Shala, Toshala, Kuta, Chanura, and Mushtika—the different wrestlers—came forward. The Lord struck them down one by one and liberated them all. Dauji then said, "There is Kamsa—seated on the raised platform." The Supreme Lord leapt up to where Kansa sat. Seizing him, He hurled him down and moved to strike him. He got struck by such a terror that he was liberated then and there. Cries of victory echoed on all sides. Raise the call—"Mathuradhish ki Jai!"

Kamsa, the king, was thus liberated, and Ugrasena was installed upon the throne. Many more divine episodes are narrated thereafter. The Lord said to Nandbaba, "Now I shall not return to Gokul."

The sacred rites such as the janeu (upanayana) of the Lord were performed. For the sake of learning, the Supreme Lord proceeded to the ashram of Sandipani. Here begins the description of Yashodaji's viraha—the pain of separation.

The Lord arrived back in Mathura after the completion of education. Once, standing upon the palace terrace, He looked toward Gokul, and the Lord's eyes overflowed with tears.

Uddhavji was the Lord's foremost attendant, a supremely learned soul— 'शिष्यो बृहस्पतेः साक्षात्' **('śiṣyo bṛhaspateḥ sākṣāt')** — a direct disciple of Brihaspati himself.

Uddhav said, "Prabhu! You have tears in Your eyes? How can this be understood? That You should weep? The Vedas describe You as 'आनंदमात्रकरपाद मुखोदरादि' **('ānanda-mātra-kara-pāda-mukhodara-ādi')** — One whose every pore, every limb, every breath is made only of bliss. Tears in Your eyes—how is this possible?"

The Lord replied, 'નંદબાવા ને માતા જશોદાજી સાંભરે, મમતાની મૂર્તિ મારી રહી ગઈ ગોકુળમાં. નંદબાવા ને માતા જશોદાજી સાંભરે.' **('Nandbaba ne mata Yashoda ji sambhare, mamtani moorti mari rahi gai gokul ma' Nandbaba ne mata Yashoda ji sambhare')** "When I remember Nandbaba and Mother Yashodaji, the very embodiment of affection remains behind in Gokul. I remember Nandbaba and Mother Yashodaji."

He continued, "Uddhav, Vraj is never forgotten. Even when I lie down to sleep, my mother's words strike my ears— 'Are Lala... are Lalan... are Kanhaiya...' My mother's weeping face appears before my eyes. I see my father before me. I see my gopis, my cows. I see the gopis churning butter every day, their tears falling as they churn."

Uddhavji began to speak: "O Prabhu! When did this maya seize You? You are the Lord of maya—how can You Yourself become entangled in it? 'This is I, this is mine, this belongs to me'—all this is maya. And what happiness did the people of Vraj really give You? For a mere lump of butter, the gopis made You dance. Nandbaba and Yashodaji sent You out to graze the cows. Your mother would chase You with a stick to beat You. Your sakhas would take You along for stealing. What joy did You actually receive from all this?"

The Lord replied, "O Uddhav! What do you know of the joy of receiving a mother's beating? How could you ever understand that bliss?

And what do you know of the joy of playing together with sakhas? That delight—how could you possibly know it?"

As Uddhavji kept trying to explain things again and again, the Lord felt, "This is not my case anymore. He will have to be sent to a bigger doctor." Just as when a patient comes to a

physician, and the doctor—seeing the symptoms—realizes, "This illness is more serious," writes a referral note and sends the patient to a specialist, the Lord felt the same. The Lord thought, "This knowledge has itself become a disease for him. Surgery of the heart I can still perform—but surgery of the brain is not my work. That must be done by some greater doctor. I should send him elsewhere." So, the Lord wrote a note and said to him, "The wisdom that you are trying to explain to Me—go and explain that to My gopis instead. Go and make them understand." "Explain it to them, because they are burning in separation from Me. They are weeping, shedding tears constantly. They neither eat nor drink."

"The knowledge you have attained—go and distribute a little of it among the gopis. If even a little of your knowledge reaches them, perhaps they will find some consolation."

Uddhav said, "This is a matter of play for me. But will those unlettered gopis understand my language? I am so learned. I speak the language of the devas. How will I make these cowherd women understand?" Shri Thakurji replied, "At least make the effort." And Uddhav thought to himself, "Yes, yes—I will teach them." Those who are learned often feel a great eagerness to teach. Those who know something greatly enjoy offering advice. With that confidence, Uddhavji set out on his journey.

Uddhava arrived in Vraja. The following episodes have the descriptions of events such as the Bhramara-geet.

As soon as the gopis saw Uddhava, a bumblebee came buzzing—gun... gun... gun...—and began hovering around him. Taking the bee as a pretext, the gopis started mocking and reproaching Uddhava with sharp, ironic remarks. They said: '**मधुप कितवबन्धो मा स्पृशाङ्घ्रिं सपत्न्याः ।**' **('madhupa kṛta-vabandho mā spṛśād ghrīṁ sapatnyāḥ')** "O bumblebee! Go away. Do not touch our feet. You have come here after sitting on the garland worn around the neck of the woman in Mathura—the very cause of our sorrow. The pollen of that garland is still clinging to your feet. Do not even come near us."

They went on: "Just as your master is deceitful, so are you. He never stays in one place, and neither do you. What was the fault of Bali? He was killed deceitfully, from hiding. And what was the fault of King Bali? He came as a dwarf and then became colossal, taking everything away. You are cunning—and your master is cunning too."

Thus, using the bumblebee as an excuse, the gopis hurled taunts and reproaches at Uddhava, giving example after example, pouring out their grief, irony, and wounded love.

Uddhava ji came close and said, "Gopis, do not lose heart." At last, the hearts of the gopis overflowed, and they said, "However he may be, living without him is very difficult. He has stolen our chitta, our inner being, and gone away. We try again and again to explain things to our manas, but this manas does not listen." Uddhavaji said, "All this is moha and mamata. I have come carrying his message. I have brought his letter."

Just as Uddhava had spoken this much, the gopis burst out laughing loudly. "What message? From whom? What letter, and from where?" they said. "When someone goes to a far-off place, letters are sent. But Uddhava, how can letters come from one who dwells in every hair, in every pore of our being? Krishna is playing within every pore of us. Sometimes he weeps, sometimes he laughs."

Uddhava began to wonder, "Have they gone mad? At one moment they weep in viraha, and at another they taste the joy of union." "O Uddhava," the gopis said, "our Shree Thakur ji has not gone anywhere. Look, it is the time of sandhya now. Just now he must be returning from the forest after grazing the cows." Uddhava replied, "He left long ago. He is in Mathura. I have come carrying his message."

The gopis said, "That may be your Krishna. Ours is the one who comes back with the cows. Look, Uddhava, towards the forest. Any moment now, the cows of Nandababa will arrive. Any moment now, the sound of the venu will be heard, and in the midst of the cows, our Krishna Kanhaiya will be walking towards us." As soon as they pointed with their fingers, the tinkling of the bells tied around the cows' necks began to ring out. Tall, majestic cows—five or six feet high—the white cows of Nandababa, marked with vermilion on their foreheads, bearing golden horns, with golden bells tied around their necks. Their resonant sounds echoed as herd after herd of cows emerged from the forest.

Clouds of dust rose into the air. "Look," the gopis said, "now our Krishna will play the venu." And just then, from a distance, the sound of the flute began to be heard.

Uddhava's ears perked up. This really is the sound of the venu! "Look carefully, Uddhava," the gopis said. "In a moment the cows will move aside, and you will have darshan of Shyamsundar." As the cows shifted, cries of joy rose up: "Krishna Kanhaiya Lal ki jai!"

Uddhava stood stunned. "How is this possible?" he wondered. "The one whom I left behind in Mathura—how can he be found here in Gokul?"

The gopis replied, "The one who came seated in a basket went to Mathura. But our Krishna appeared in Gokul, and in Gokul alone he has always remained." 'वृंदावनं परित्यज्य पादमेकं न गच्छति ।' **('vṛndāvanaṁ parityajya pādamekaṁ na gacchati')** "Our Prabhu has made a resolve—he will not take even a single step outside Vraja."

Uddhava was drenched in the colors of love. He bowed to Prabhu, and then, again and again, bowing to the gopis, he said:

वन्दे नन्दव्रजस्त्रीणां पादरेणुमभीक्ष्णशः ।
यासां हरिकथोद् गीतं पुनाति भुवनत्रयम् ॥

vande nanda-vraja-strīṇāṁ pāda-reṇum abhīkṣṇaśaḥ |
yāsāṁ hari-kathodgītaṁ punāti bhuvana-trayam ||

"I bow again and again to the dust of the feet of the women of Nanda's Vraja, whose singing of the stories of Hari purifies all the three worlds."

'Gopis, I have been colored in the hue of your love.' Grant me one favor. 'What favor do you seek?' At that moment, Uddhavji offered prostrated obeisances (Saashtang Dandvat Pranam) and said, 'Please place your feet upon my head just once. I desire nothing else. This dust of your feet is capable of purifying the three worlds. 'आसामहो चरणरेणुजुषामहंस्यां' **('āsāmaho caraṇa-reṇu-juṣāmahaṁsyām')** — I wish to become a shrub, a creeper, or a medicinal herb. I pray for this before the Lord: that in my next birth, should I become a creeper or a plant, your feet may touch my head as you pass by to fetch water.'

Uddhavji has returned here. Many other stories have been described further. Here, multiple invasions began to take place. Jarasandha attacked seventeen times, and on the eighteenth time, Kalayavana joined him. The Lord left and fled. He arrived here at Dwaraka. In the Girnar mountains, Kalayavana was liberated through the gaze of King Muchukunda.

Vishvakarmaji was summoned and commanded, 'Construct a Dwarika of gold.' Thus, the golden city of Dwarika was established. Following this, the narrative described the marriage of Balaramji, who was wedded to Revatiji.

The King of Vidarbha was Bhishmaka. He had five sons and one daughter named Rukmini, who was the very embodiment of Goddess Lakshmi. Her marriage had been fixed with Shishupala. Although the match was decided, Naradji thought, she is the manifest form of Lakshmi herself, and her ultimate fulfillment lies only in being wedded to the Lord.

Naradji went to Rukmini and began his request: 'It is a matter of great joy that your marriage has been fixed with Shishupala. This is very good. He continued to praise the match, but after talking for five minutes, he added, However, if it had been with Dwarikadhish, the pair would have looked truly unique. Only Dwarikadhish is worthy of you; but whatever the Lord has done is for the best. He spoke a bit more, and then after five minutes, he said again, but if it had been with Dwarikadhish, the pair would have looked truly unique.'

After doing these three or four times, Rukminiji could no longer restrain herself. She also confessed, 'I too am in love only with Dwarikadhish.' Naradji replied, 'then tell Him!' She asked, 'how can I tell Him? I have never even met Him.' He suggested, 'Write a letter.' And so, Rukminiji wrote the letter.

'श्रुत्वा गुणान् भुवनसुन्दरशृण्वतां ते' **('śrutvā guṇān bhuvana-sundara śṛṇvatāṁ te')** — 'O Lord!, having heard of your virtues, I have fallen in love with you. O Lord! If a fox were to make away with a lion's share, it is the lion who would suffer the disgrace. O Lord, I belong to you; and if Shishupala takes me away, the dishonor will not be mine, but yours.

Every woman looks for seven qualities in her future husband: lineage (Kula), character (Shila), beauty (Rupa), knowledge (Vidya), age (Vaya), wealth (Vitta), and home. In all seven, there is no one in the world like You. Please come and take me away.'

I have finalized the plan. Please arrive when I go to perform Ambika-pujan. Rukminiji arrived for the worship of Ambika. The Supreme Lord stood there, pulling the reins of His chariot. As Rukminiji began to descend the steps one by one, He tightened the reins. The chariot began to rumble forward. Just as Rukminiji reached the final step, the Lord extended His hand. The Supreme Lord took her hand in His and pulled her up; say, Rukmini-Bhagavan ki Jay'

They have arrived with the chariot in Madhavpur. In Madhavpur, the preparations for the Lord's wedding are beginning.

Let us rest here the katha of the sixth day

|| Shrimad Bhagawata ||

DAY - 7

Lord Krishna abducted Rukminiji. Next came the story of the birth of Pradyumnaji.

Pradyumnaji is the incarnation of the divine Kamadeva. He is married to Rati. The day of Vasant Panchami is the day of Pradyumnaji's manifestation. One is worldly desire, which is Shambarasura, and Pradyumnaji is the incarnation of divine Kamadeva. That is exactly why it is said in the Yamunashtakam, smarapituḥ śriyaṁ bibhratīm I' What is the nature of Shri Yamunaji's divine form? What is the essence of her splendor? In describing the magnificence of Shri Yamunaji's form, Shri Mahaprabhuji says: 'smarapituḥ:'—Smara refers to Kamadeva, and his father is Shri Krishna. Shri Yamunaji is the one who embodies His divine splendor.

The father of Pradyumnaji is Shri Krishna. In the Ramayana and other scriptures, it is told that when Kamadeva went to enchant Mahadevji, Mahadevji opened his third eye. Under its influence, Kamadeva was burnt to ashes. Consequently, he was named Ananga—the one who has no limbs, the one who has no body.

Rati came weeping to Mahadevji and began to plead, when will I meet my husband again? How can I regain him? So he said: "jab jadumbas Krishna avataara, krishna tanaya hoihi pati tora". That is, when the Krishna incarnation occurs, you will regain your husband in the form of His son. This Pradyumnaji is the incarnation of the divine Kamadeva.

Next, the stories of the Lord's other marriages were told. A Yadav named Satrajit lived in Dwarika. He possessed the Syamantaka jewel. It yielded eight *bhar* (a specific weight) of gold every day. The Lord explained to him and said, 'you should give this jewel to the royal treasury so that all the citizens can be happy. He did not agree.

Once, he gave the jewel to his brother Prasen. Prasen tied it around his neck and went into the forest to hunt. He went, but instead of hunting, he became the hunted himself. When a long time passed and his brother did not return, Satrajit began to think that Krishna had killed his brother. He believed that since Krishna wanted the jewel and Satrajit had refused, He must have killed his brother to take it. He placed an accusation upon the Lord.

The Lord thought, 'If I go and try to explain, he will not believe me by any means. Let me go find this jewel myself and return it to Satrajit.' Because this world—this mundane existence—has not even spared God. Therefore, when one wishes to perform noble deeds, one should not pay too much heed to everyone's opinions. Otherwise, this world is such that it can alter our virtuous thoughts before we even realize it; and such is the nature of man as well. If one wishes to do good, they become surrounded by endless doubts and suspicions, yet if they wish to commit a sin, they find such audacity that it is surprising. One never feels fear while committing a sin. A person is always positive when it comes to sinning—thinking that it will not be a problem, no one will find out, or that it will somehow be managed. One becomes courageous when committing a sin, but when it comes to performing a virtuous deed, we look at this with skepticism. In doing wrong, courage comes unintentionally. That is why, whenever an auspicious resolve arises in the mind, do not let it take too long. If possible, take decisions quickly and fulfill that resolve. Because, who knows if the circumstances will remain or not later? Who knows if favorable conditions will come or not later? Fulfill auspicious resolves with as much speed as possible. In the Mahabharata also, it was said in an episode that, once when Arjun, Yudhishthir, and everyone were standing and were fixing some chariot, in the meantime, some beggar came and started saying to Yudhishthir, 'Give something.' Yudhishthir said, 'You come tomorrow, right now we all are busy. I will give to you tomorrow.' As soon as this was said, Bhima tied a drum around his neck and, while playing the drum, started roaming through the whole village, saying, 'My brother has conquered time.' Yudhishthir said, 'Hey Bhima! What are you doing? Where did I conquer time?' 'You said, right, come tomorrow? Is it not possible that tomorrow we might not be alive? Is it not possible that tomorrow he might

not be alive? Is it not possible that tomorrow we might not be in a position to give? Is it not possible that tomorrow he might not be in a position to ask?' Bhima gave many, many reasons and said, 'There are so many reasons in which there are no possibilities of giving.'

'That is to say, you said, 'Come tomorrow.' Therefore, you know that tomorrow the same circumstance as today is going to remain. You would be called the one who conquered time.' Then Yudhishthir understood his own mistake and immediately called that person and gave it.

When we are living amidst so many uncertainties, how can good deeds be deferred? How can they be pushed back? Whenever an auspicious thought arises, do it. If you have had the thought after listening to the discourse that you want to take Brahmsambandh, if you have had the thought that I want to establish Seva (worship), then do not defer this thought, and if possible, the elders should not frighten them either; the Lord takes care of everything for the one who does it.

'Alas, after establishing (the Seva), who will do it? How will it happen? In what way will it happen?' Shri Thakur ji Himself gets Shri Thakur ji's works done. If you go on thinking too much, you will not be able to fulfill auspicious resolves. If it has come to mind, then definitely do it. The Lord does everything. The Lord Himself finds such people who become helpful to us.

Here, Shri Thakur ji thought, If I go to explain, they are not going to understand. I myself should search for the jewel and bring it back.

In order to search for the jewel, the Lord Himself went into the forest. While going into the forest, He saw the corpse of Prasen ahead. There were marks of a lion's paws. He went further. A dead lion was seen. There were marks of a bear's paws. He followed behind them. A cave appeared. He entered inside it. The bear pounced. He fought a terrible war with the Lord. This bear was no ordinary one; he was Jambavanji from the Ram-avatar.

A terrible war took place with the Supreme Lord. Jambavanji thought, 'There can be no one of equal strength as me except for the Lord.' He recognized the Lord's form. He offered his salutations. He saw that Jambavanji's daughter, Jambavatiji, was playing with the jewel. The Lord explained the whole matter. He (Jambavan) said, 'Do take this jewel; but please also marry my jewel-like daughter.' With the blessings of Jambavan, the marriage of Jambavatiji took place with the Lord.

The stories of other marriages appear in the Shri Bhagavatji. With Kalindiji, Mitravinda, Satya, Bhadra, Lakshmana—and thus, there were the Lord's eight principal queens. Their story appears in the Tenth Canto (Dasham Skandh). This is the eightfold nature.

भूमिरापोऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च ।
अहंकार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा ॥

Bhūmir āpo 'nalo vāyuḥ khaṁ mano buddhir eva ca |
Ahaṁkāra itīyaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā ||

The eightfold nature that the Lord speaks of in the Gita represents His eight principal queens, while the Lord Himself resides as the Supreme Soul.

Bhaumasura had kept 16,000 maidens in captivity. They pleaded with the Lord: Please liberate us from the bondage of this sinner.

The Lord arrived, seated upon Garuda. There was a fortress in the middle of the water where the demon had kept these maidens imprisoned. This fortress was guarded by a demon named Mura. The Lord reached there and liberated the demon Mura; hence, He came to be known as Murari Bhagavan—the enemy of Mura. This demon Mura represents the prohibitive flaw that prevents the meeting of the devotee and the Lord. It is the Lord Himself who removes the obstacles that come between the devotee and God. Whatever distractions or restrictions arise in your devotion (bhakti), your service (seva), or your spiritual association (satsanga), Shri Thakur ji Himself will remove them. Certain obstacles are simply beyond our own power to eliminate.

In the context of Seva (divine service), the Seva-phala treatise also describes two types of obstacles (pratibandhas): (1) those created by the individual soul (Jiv-krut) and (2) those orchestrated by the Lord Himself (Bhagavat-krut).

No one can remove the obstacles that have been placed by the Lord Himself. Despite your greatest efforts, if Shri Thakur ji does not accept the service of your hands, then understand that it is simply not the Lord's will. These are God-ordained obstacles (Bhagavat-krut). On the other hand, there are obstacles created by the soul (Jiv-krut), which arise due to one's past karmas, inherent nature, or worldly attachments. The Lord alone removes these obstacles.

Therefore, whenever you perform any divine task(Bhagvatkarya), you should do so only after bowing to Shri Thakur ji. This is our established tradition; this is our heritage. Make it a rule for any auspicious task—whether worldly (laukik) or spiritual (alaukik)—to first remember the Lord, offer your salutations, and only then proceed with the work. A bow offered to the Lord removes all our obstacles.

The Supreme Lord liberated the demon named Mura. It is for this reason that Shri Mahaprabhuji remembers Him in the Yamunashtakam. 'murāri-pada-paṅkaja-sphurad-amanda-reṇutkaṭām' — When you sip the holy water of Shri Yamuna ji, you are not merely drinking water; you are partaking in the divine dust from the lotus feet of Lord Murari. This is the divine dust of Murari. The word Murari was used intentionally here because this sacred dust possesses the power to eliminate every single obstacle that hinders your devotion.

The Lord liberated the sixteen thousand maidens. He said, 'You go to your homes.' The maidens began to request the Lord, 'Alas! Even if a maiden stays out somewhere for even one night, the world slanders her. It does not accept her. So we have been in the captivity of this demon for this much time. Society will not accept us. You accept us. We have been liberated by Your grace. We have come to Your refuge. If possible, make us Your servants and keep us in Your refuge.' But He is the Lord. He is compassionate.

The Supreme Lord did not make them servants. But, in a single auspicious moment, having assumed sixteen thousand forms, the Supreme Lord performed marriage with everyone. The Lord gave the honor of queenship to each one. He ensured everyone received respect. Our Krishna knows how to maintain relationships. The Lord gave respect to each and every one. This is a story of honoring women. People use this as a pretext to slander the Lord. The Lord gives respect to women. The woman whom society is not ready to accept, the Lord is giving an honorable place by granting the status of a queen.

Next came the story of the slaying of Rukmi by Balaramji. The story of the marriage of Usha-Aniruddha came. The story of King Nriga has been told.

King Nriga was such a great donor; it is said that he had donated as many cows as there are drops of rain. He was such a great donor.

Once, he donated cows to a Brahmin. That donated cow returned to the King's cowshed during the night, and the King donated that same cow to another Brahmin. Such a conflict-quarrel happened between both the Brahmins that the King was cursed. He fell into a well having become a chameleon. That is why, in our tradition, a discernment has been given even in charity—in good deeds. श्रद्धया देयम्, अश्रद्धया देयम्, श्रिया देयम् ह्रिया देयम्, भ्रिया देयम्, संविदा देयम् **('śraddhayā deyam, aśraddhayā deyam, śriyā deyam, hriyā deyam, bhiyā deyam, saṁvidā deyam')** — the Taittiriya Upanishad shows the types of charity. In what way should charity be done? What is called charity?

The scriptures have shown three destinies of wealth. Charity, enjoyment, and destruction. These are the three main destinies of wealth. Either give in charity, or enjoy it, and or it will be destroyed. These are the only three destinies. There is no fourth destiny. Therefore, the best destiny of this is that you make some good use of it with your own hands. What you leave behind will belong to others. If children are clever, they are going to earn it anyway, and if they are spoiled, they are going to squander it away! But whatever you want to do in life, do it with your own hands before you go.

We may not be able to build an entire school. But we can at least educate one student, can't we? We may not be able to build an entire hospital. But we can at least get one sick person treated, can't we? It is not necessary that if we do a good deed, we must do something very big. If nowhere else, if not in an unknown place, then look around. Somewhere among our relatives, somewhere among our acquaintances, somewhere among our known ones, is someone not in distress?

When it is your small children's birthdays, instill this habit in them. You may do all the enjoyment and celebration with them, but give an additional hundred rupees and say, Give this to some poor person with your own hands. Instill in them the habit of earning merit (Punya). Instill in them the habit of doing good deeds (Satkarma).

When you take them to the Haveli on their birthdays, make a rule; whatever the Prasad is, let them distribute it particle by particle (kanika-kanika) to every vaishnav with their own hands on their birthday. Let them form the habit of doing good deeds, let them get inspiration. Good deeds done in childhood are remembered somewhere after growing up. If we remember

today, we remember our grandfathers, our elders; they used to make us do this, they used to make us recite prayers. We remember the good deeds made to be done by elders after growing up.

Our problem nowadays is that we say, He is still small. What is there to say to him now? Then later we say, now he has grown up. He cannot be told anything. So, when is one to say it? When understanding comes, one can educate; when there is no understanding, one should train. These both are its parts. We train first, then he will be educated. But we give such wrong logic. Alas, the child is a form of God. What is there to say to him? What is there to teach him? Yes, then after the TV is broken by his hands, see if God is visible? But if the Lord's work is to be done, then in that we see God. That is to say, if we do not train at the right time, then after growing up, we will not be able to educate either.

That is why, instill the habit of doing good deeds. Make them perform small acts of merit with their own hands. Because, those merits are going to be useful in their own life.

King Nriga is such a great donor. But somewhere a deficiency remained in the charity. That is why, in our tradition, the noble destiny of wealth is stated as charity. What was given is ours, what was spent is ours, what remained is for others' share. People, elders may well say while leaving, We are going to leave this much and that much for you. Because, it is known. There is no arrangement to take it along. Therefore, we pass it off as a favor. If perhaps a bank branch were to open (in the afterlife), would anyone leave it here?

Since there is no such arrangement (to take it with you). But I have an arrangement. I have a solution. Do you want everything collected in this life in your next life? I have a way. The straight and simple way is this: convert the happiness you have received into merit (Punya), so that in the next life also, you receive happiness.

Just as when we want to go from here to America, we convert our rupees into dollars so that we can use them there. In the same way, if you convert the happiness gathered in this birth into merit, then that merit will find you and give you happiness. Therefore, a wise person's vision of life should be exactly this: God gave me happiness, and with this happiness, I will gather merit. With this happiness, I will think of Shri Thakur Ji happiness. This is the

understanding of an excellent person. Can you accumulate the happiness received by your fortune in the form of merit? Instead of trying to accumulate more wealth, try to accumulate more merit. Because that is what will improve your life through birth after birth.

Here, many types of charity were shown. Three destinies of wealth were shown. That is why in our tradition, it is said that there are three types of relationships a soul has with wealth—Lakshmi: (1) Many try to make wealth—Lakshmi—their maid-servant (dasi). (2) Many try to make Lakshmi their wife, and (3) The one who is excellent protects Lakshmi as a daughter.

Those who try to make Lakshmi a maidservant merely keep accumulating and hoarding it. Those who try to make her a wife enjoy it only for their own personal purposes. But for the one who makes her a daughter, the duty of a father is to find a suitable groom and give the daughter away in marriage.

In this way, the one who, upon seeing a good deed, finds a suitable groom for the maiden-like Lakshmi and gives her away, becomes the father of Lakshmi. Therefore, one should try to become the father of Lakshmi and, finding a suitable place, utilize it there.

The Upanishad says, '**श्रद्धया देयम्**' **('Śraddhayā deyam')** — whenever you give, give with faith. '**अश्रद्धया देयम्**' **('aśraddhayā deyam')** — at the very least, give even without faith. '**श्रिया देयम्**', '**ह्रिया देयम्**' **('Śriyā deyam, Hriyā deyam')** — give with a sense of modesty. Give with fear. The fear should be this: that I might develop an ego from giving; keep such a fear in your mind.

In our tradition, it is said: '**दौलत की दो लात हैं, तुलसी निश्चय कीन, आवत अंध करे है और जावत करे अधीन।**' **('Daulata ki do laat hain, Tulasi nishchaya keen, aavat andh kare hai aur jaavata kare adheen.')** It makes one blind when it comes, and it makes one dependent when it goes. That is why, when the Lord gives the opportunity, when the Lord provides the circumstance, a person must perform good deeds.

God has shown grace. He has liberated King Nriga.

Next comes the story of Naradji's visit to witness the Lord's household life. Naradji felt that in this world, even five people cannot manage to live together, so how does the Lord's such vast

family live? What kind of great quarrels must be happening there? Let me go and see for myself! How does the Lord manage the Lord's family?

Many have a strong habit of peeking into others' houses. Now, they have even found a window for it. The name of that window to peek into others' houses while sitting at home is Facebook and WhatsApp. Sitting at home, one finds out: where did this person go and what are they doing? When platforms to display happiness start becoming available in society, competition increases greatly. And in a society where competition increases, agitation always remains. These are all platforms to display happiness. A person constantly starts showing: I did this, I went to see this, I went traveling like this, I bought this. So, it starts directly upon waking up at home. Everyone is going on vacation; only we are not going. It starts directly from there. Everyone is buying a new car, and only we are not.

When places to display happiness are found, conflict is created in society. Therefore, rather than displaying in them, one should try to find something like inspiration.

Create a platform through which people can gain some inspiration. Do not make it a platform for the display of happiness. Because what you give to society eventually comes back to your own home. That is why discernment (vivek) is necessary. Everything needs to be restrained somewhere. Otherwise, previously, a man upon waking would search for Shri Thakur ji; nowadays, as soon as they wake up, they keep scrolling through their mobile. Whose messages have arrived? There is nothing wrong with being connected, but the problem of current society is that numbers in contacts are increasing and relations are decreasing.

Previously, we used to save contacts so that we would know whose call to pick up. Now, we save them so that we know whose call not to pick up. We save those names first whose calls we want to avoid, just so we can recognize them when they ring.

Naradji felt, Let me go into the palace and see for myself; the Lord's such vast family, so many children, so many wives—how must the Lord be managing the family? And in every palace Naradji goes and sees, every Queen feels as if the Lord loves her the most.

The biggest challenge and trouble of society in current times, and the strangeness of history, is that those Mahatmas, those leaders, those people who built huge organizations in the world

by talking about unifying society—even they cannot keep the five members of their own home together. You check the history of the world. Check the lives of those who established the biggest organizations in the world, the great inspirational people; they haven't been able to keep five people of the home in peace, haven't been able to keep them together. It is difficult to live with five people in the house with love. Otherwise, building institutions in the world and gathering people by giving inspirations is very easy. It is easy to make a crowd; it is difficult to make an organization.

Our Lord Krishna is such that He does not talk about running away from relationships; He talks about fulfilling them. Look at every relationship by keeping Shri Krishna in it. If you ask what a brother should be like: like Krishna; what a father should be like: like Krishna; what a husband should be like: like Krishna; what a friend should be like: like Krishna. See Krishna in every relationship. The Lord has fulfilled every relationship. He has fulfilled them by sacrificing Himself. If you check history in each relationship, look at the episodes of Mahabharata and others. To protect His brothers, to protect His friends, the Lord Himself has taken arrows. That is why one who is a vaishnav does not run away from responsibilities; they do not run away from relationships. They fulfill those relationships. Learn to fulfill your responsibilities.

Pushtimarg teaches this. You are a relative, but you are a vaishnav relative. Never forget that. If you are a father, you are a vaishnav father. If you are a husband, you are a vaishnav husband. If you are a wife, you are a vaishnav wife. Whenever you separate vaishnavism from your personality, the world will become a form of conflict, but keep vaishnavism joined with your personality.

One should go far and wide to perform good deeds and earn merits, yet one fails to see the Vaishnav within the five members of one's own home. We go among strangers to engage in vaishnav Satsang, but why do we forget that the five people in our own house are also vaishnav?

Shri Mahaprabhu ji teaches that you must not forget that your own family members are also vaishnav. Our Lord fulfills every relationship and thus inspires us. Fulfill the relationships you have received in life. The person who learns to live happily with their own kin is the truly wise person of current times. Otherwise, it is very easy to spoil things with those close to you and

live nicely with strangers. But has God given us the ability to live with harmony among the five, ten, or fifteen close relatives in the home? This is the greatest knowledge of current times. It is very easy to talk big; it is difficult to live with the tendency to keep known people happy by sacrificing one's own desires. Is the tendency to live so that people keep me happy, or so that I keep people pleased?

Do you live with that attitude? Decide now. Is your attitude that everyone should take care of me, or is it that I should take care of everyone? That is why we say "Saga-Vhala" (Relatives and Dear Ones). Often, those who are relatives are not dear, and those who are dear are not relatives.

Those who come when invited and grace the occasion are relatives; but those who stay when the event is over and help pick up the chairs are called "Vhala" (Dear Ones). They are the ones who stay to help you wind up. When some people arrive at an event, everyone gets tense thinking, we won't be able to get out of just serving this person. They are so demanding. But when others arrive, you feel a sense of relief: "Don't worry now, the event will be managed. Since this person has arrived, they will take care of everything." These are the Dear Ones. Those who need to be taken care of are relatives, and those who take care of everything are Dear Ones. One can be both. Be the kind of person that when you go to someone's house for an event, they feel certain that now everything will be handled. Develop an attitude where you take care of everyone.

Our Lord takes care of everyone. Look, for the sake of the Pandavas, He left Dwarka and His own family for years to help them. Think of how much effort our Lord put in for their protection!

He has shown us the vision of an ideal household. We are all householders. Taking care of the family, ensuring children receive good values (Sanskar), seeing them grow up educated, respecting elders, and living together with great love—this is the true success of life. Happiness never comes by belittling someone, crushing someone's desires, or hurting someone's ego. You can never be happy by making someone else miserable. Understand this one principle in life: one cannot become happy by hurting another. One who feels happy seeing someone else in pain cannot be called a vaishnav. To enjoy seeing tears in someone's

eyes is a demonic (Asuri) tendency. Write this down in your life: you will never be happy by making someone miserable. On the contrary, it is only by making others happy that one becomes happy and joyful. If you want to be happy, the simple formula is: Whom did I make happy today? Making someone happy doesn't just mean giving money; it can be done through encouragement, giving respect, through your words, or your behavior. There isn't just one way to give happiness. Just learn to give happiness in life, and happiness will come to your life automatically. And if you cannot give great happiness to the outside world, at least decide after hearing this Katha: I want to keep everyone happy whom God has given me as family and relatives in my home.

If you make such a resolve, then listening to this Katha is considered successful. It means the Katha has settled within you. That is why, to make everyone happy, Shri Mahaprabhu ji says: increase one member in your family. And His name is Shri Thakurji. Invite Shri Thakur ji into your home through Pushti (initiation/grace); let Him become a member of your house. Keep the Lord in your home as a family member.

Naradji was delighted to see the Lord's household life. He thought, How beautifully the Lord takes care of His kin!

Next comes the story of Jarasandha's liberation. The Rajasuya Yagya is to be performed, but Jarasandha is yet to be conquered. Bhima and Arjuna, disguised as Brahmins, went to Jarasandha with the Lord. They made a request, and when Jarasandha said he would give whatever they asked, they asked for a battle as alms. They asked for a wrestling match (Malla Yuddha). Jarasandha fought with Bhima, but every time his body was split apart, the pieces would join back together. The Lord used a tactic to show the way: throw the pieces in opposite directions. Thus, Jarasandha was liberated.

The Rajasuya Yagya was then determined. King Yudhishthira performed the Rajasuya Yagya and invited everyone.

Today, offer it to Shri Thakur ji, especially if there is a joyous occasion in your home today.

It is your child's birthday; do everything, host a party, invite everyone, and celebrate fully—there is no objection to that. But just ensure this one routine: on that day, in the

morning, every member of the household should gather together to offer Dandavat (prostrations) to Shri Thakur ji.

Whether it is our own birthday or a festival for Shri Thakur ji, we must maintain that culture (Sanskar) and atmosphere in our home: "Look, son, when our birthday comes, see how grandly we celebrate it." If it is the Patotsav (anniversary of the deity's installation) of Shri Thakur ji and on that day we don't even show our face to Him, it is an insult to the Lord. Every family should make a firm resolution: when the Patotsav of the Shri Thakur ji residing in your home arrives, there must be a rule that every member, from the youngest child to the eldest adult, must gather together in front of the Lord to offer congratulations (Vadhai), perform Dandavat (prostrations), and offer Mishri-bhog (sugar candy). You must celebrate the Lord's festival.

In our tradition, we have the Bal-bhava (the sentiment of relating to God as a child). Therefore, our ancient Acharyas say that just as a child is extremely enthusiastic about celebrating their birthday—waiting the entire year, planning what to do, whom to invite, and how to celebrate—they keep that excitement in their heart all year long. In the same way, even if you happen to forget another festival, you must never fail to celebrate the Patotsav (the installation anniversary) of the Shri Thakur ji residing in your home.

In our tradition, the way to celebrate is that on that day, a Paina (swing) ceremony is performed for Shri Thakur ji. Special Samagri (food offerings) are offered as Bhog. If possible, on that day, give charity to a Brahmin, ensure at least one vaishnav is fed Prasad, and set aside a portion of food for a cow (Gau-gras). In our culture, these are the essential parts of celebrating a festival. In this tradition, these four things are very important: (1) Offering special Bhog to the Lord, (2) giving charity to a Brahmin according to one's capacity, (3) setting aside a portion of food (Gras) for the cow, and (4) ensuring a vaishnav partakes in Prasad—even if it is just a small particle (Kanika) or a full leaf-plate (Paatal). Only if these four things are done is it truly considered a festival. In our tradition, it is said: Khan (Eating), Paan (Drinking), Taan (Enthusiasm), Gaan (Singing), Maan (Respect), and Daan (Charity). When these things come together, only then can it be said that a festival was celebrated. So, if possible, do maintain this discernment (vivek) in your home. Try to make it a point that at least once a week, the whole family goes together for Darshan at a Haveli (temple) that is

convenient for you, and everyone offers Dandavat together. Because the trouble nowadays is that an entire month passes, yet there isn't a single place where the whole family goes together. This is because where the elders like to go, the youth do not; and where the youth like to go, the children do not. Thus, those places where everyone finds joy and can go together are disappearing.

Can we all sitting here today not make a resolve? Tell the children: For the whole week, we will do whatever you say, we will cook everything you like, and we will take care of all your wishes; but you must listen to one thing of ours. On Saturday, Sunday, or whichever day is convenient, during the time of Rajbhog or Shayan Bhog, we must all go together before Shri Thakur ji and before our Guru. If this one resolve remains in every home, then Dharma will never leave your household. This is such a small resolve. I am not asking for a huge pledge or a massive donation. Just a small resolve to have the whole family go together to bow before the Lord. This will become woven into our family as a sacred value (Sanskar). Make an effort. If you try, it will happen.

Sometimes we feel, it will happen when Shri Thakur ji (the Lord) showers His grace. Thus, we leave all of God's work entirely to God. But does it ever happen that we say, I don't want to open the shop today; God will run it for me? At that time, we feel, No, no, if I don't open it, how will it function? Therefore, we ourselves must perform noble deeds. We must become resolute. Only then will a sublime atmosphere be created in society.

When there is such a grand event planned, every member of the household is assigned different responsibilities. You take care of this, and we give each responsibility to the one who is skilled in it. You do this, and you do that—everyone has been given various duties. In the Mahabharata, this episode is described in great detail.

Whoever has a passion for something and whoever has the skill for it, that task should be assigned to them. Bhima was given the responsibility of food because he is a lover of food. And it should only be assigned to someone who is a connoisseur. You cannot give the responsibility of a grand feast to someone who only likes simple Khichdi. Otherwise, they would say, what is the need for this? What is the need for that? and they wouldn't let anything be prepared! Many people are like that. Therefore, the responsibility for a task should be given to someone

who has both the passion and the skill for it.

Duryodhana came. He said, I am also a family member. Which responsibility should I take? So, he was told, The responsibility of giving charity is yours. Everyone got scared. They thought, if you give him the responsibility to give, he will intentionally squander all our wealth. Then how will we perform the Yagya? The Lord said, do not worry. Duryodhana has the sign of a lotus (Padma) on his palm. Whoever has the sign of a lotus, for whatever charity they give, double that amount returns to the treasury the next day. Therefore, the more charity he gives, the more wealth will come to us.

Different responsibilities were assigned to everyone. Finally, it was the Lord's turn. Which responsibility would Lord Shri Krishna take? At that time, the Lord said, I have already decided on my service (Seva). They said, Lord! Are You supposed to perform service? He replied, No, I have accepted my responsibility. I am also a member of your family, a member of the household; therefore, I must also be involved, and I have already decided what I should do.

At that time, the Pandavas asked, what will You do? And should You really have to undergo such labor? Then the Lord replied, My service shall be only this: whichever saints and great souls come to our Yagya, I myself will perform the service of washing their feet.

The Lord resolved: Whichever great souls arrive at my place, I will give them a bath with saffron water. I will wash their feet. Thus, as each Mahatma arrives, the Lord Himself washes their feet. This service is being performed by the Lord Himself.

Now, when the Yagya was about to begin, a discussion arose: whose Agra-Puja (foremost worship) should be performed? Everyone unanimously decided that the foremost worship should be offered to the Lord. Because when we set out to do any auspicious task, if we worship the Lord first, our endeavor becomes successful. This is the very essence of vaishnav vivek (discernment). We also have that same ordinance. It is the very culture (Sanskar) of Pushtimarg that whenever any joyous occasion arises in the home, we first perform a Manorath (a devotional offering/celebration) for Shri Thakur ji. What brings us auspiciousness? Who is the form of auspiciousness itself? It is said, the Supreme Soul. 'मंगलं भगवान् विष्णु: मंगलं गरुड़ध्वज: ।' **'Maṅgalaṃ Bhagavān Viṣṇuḥ, maṅgalaṃ Garuḍadhvajaḥ'**

or 'मंगल रूप निधान साँवरो मंगल रूप निधान ।' **'Mangala roop nidhan saanvaro, mangala roop nidhaan'** The Supreme Lord Himself is the treasure of auspiciousness. Therefore, vaishnavs, whenever any good occasion arises in your life, perform the Agra-Puja (first worship) of Shri Thakur ji. If you cannot do anything grand, it is no problem. It is said that even with a small bowl of Mishri (sugar candy), one should perform the first worship of the Lord.

Shishupala fiercely opposed this. He hurled all kinds of unspeakable words and insults at the Supreme Lord. The entire story follows where it was predestined that his liberation (Uddhar) would happen at the hands of the Lord. Finally, the Lord released the Sudarshan Chakra, and Shishupala was liberated.

The narrative now moves to the description of the Sudama Charitra (the story of Sudama). In describing this, the Shri Bhagavata states...

कृष्णस्यासीत् सखा कश्चित् ब्राह्मणो ब्रह्मवित्तमः ।
विरक्तः इन्द्रियार्थेषु प्रशान्तात्मा जितेन्द्रियः ॥

Kṛṣṇasyāsīt sakhā kaścit brāhmaṇo brahmavittamaḥ |
Viraktaḥ indriya-artheṣu praśānta-ātmā jitenriyaḥ ||

Krishna has a friend who is a Brahmin. He possesses no worldly wealth, but he possesses the wealth of Brahma (spiritual knowledge). His only treasure is the Name of the Lord. He is a serene soul (Prashant Atma), with no worldly desires in his heart, having conquered his senses. This is Sudama, the friend of the Lord. Shri Mahaprabhu ji also says in the Madhurashtakam: 'सख्यं मधुरं' **('Sakhyaṃ madhuraṃ')** — the friendship of the Lord is sweet. Who are the Lord's friends? If you look at the Vraj-lila, first and foremost, the children of Vraj are the Lord's companions. The names of these friends are not in the Shri Bhagavata, yet their names are known: Vishal, Tok, Shridama, and others. The devotion of these friends is equal to that of the Gopis! Often in the path of devotion (Bhakti-marga), we sing the sagas of the Gopis but tend to overlook the friends. However, the sentiment (Bhava) held by the friends is the same as that of the Gopis. These friends remain constantly in the Lord's presence and constantly in the Lord's service. The devotion of the friends is just like that. In childhood, the

children of Vraj are His friends. When the Lord went to Mathura, Uddhavji was called the Lord's friend. He was a minister, yes, but also a friend. He was supremely wise (Param Gyani), yet the Lord showered grace upon him too. He gave him a letter to deliver. We previously discussed the Bhramar-Geet (The Song of the Bee). In that episode, who received the grace? The Lord stayed where He was, and the Gopis stayed where they were, but it was Uddhavji who became completely drenched in that divine color. In that entire Lila, the Supreme Lord showered grace upon Uddhavji by fulfilling the role of a friend. The third friend is the one whom the Lord repeatedly addresses as Friend-Friend in the Gita—that is Arjuna. How the Lord showered grace upon Arjuna! He took the arrows upon Himself but protected Arjuna. This is the Lord's friendship. The fourth friend in the Dwarka Lila is Sudama. He had taken the vow of Ayachak (the non-seeker) — I will never ask for anything in life; I will accept whatever comes. What is the difference between a king and a beggar? The one who has the tendency to give is a king. The one who has the tendency to ask is a beggar. What is your tendency? A person might be physically big, but that is a different matter—how is their internal tendency? Do you always keep asking from the world? You should do this for me, you should give this to me, you should take this. What is the constant tendency within you? A true devotee of the Lord is one who has the tendency to give.

Sudamaji held the vow of Ayachak (not asking for anything). He had a wife and children. His wife began to say, "Lord! I respect your resolves, your rules, and your Dharma. In my heart, I have immense respect for you. As your better half, I am joined with every one of your resolves. I am proud of you. But Lord! I cannot bear to see the children forced to sleep hungry. I can fast along with you. I can honor and maintain your vow of not asking, but at night, when the children have tears in their eyes and cry, 'Mother, give us food,' I have to put them to sleep by telling them false stories. 'I will feed you Puri tomorrow, I will feed you Shiro, I will get you this.' And when the children fall asleep on an empty stomach, seeing their faces, I cannot stop the tears from my own eyes."

"Lord! I have heard that the Master of Dwarka is your friend. I am not telling you to go and ask for anything. I have heard that if someone simply has his Darshan even once, the poverty of many lifetimes is wiped away. Please, go and meet him just once. I am not asking you to beg; just go, see him, and return."

When his wife began to say this daily, repeatedly urging him, Sudama thought to himself, It is not just my wife speaking; it feels as though the Lord Himself desires to meet me. He is using her as an instrument (Nimitta) to call me to His side.

Sometimes, Shri Thakur ji uses someone's tongue to say something. We should have the understanding to realize that it is not this person speaking, but the Lord sitting upon their tongue, making them speak. Often, through the mouth of a Guru or a vaishnav, we are told, Come, let's go to the Haveli, Let's go to Vraj, or Come to the Katha. At that moment, we must understand that this person isn't saying it—the Lord is sitting on their tongue and calling us. God desires for you to come to His Katha. This is the Lord showering His grace upon you.

It occurred to his mind, It seems the Lord Himself wishes to meet me. He said to his wife, since you have been saying this for so many days, I will go to meet the Lord of Dwarka tomorrow itself. But as soon as the thought of meeting Him arose, it immediately struck him: I am going, but how can I go to my friend empty-handed? Even in such a dire state, he thinks of giving—only such a person can truly be a devotee of the Lord. Look at someone who has nothing in his house, yet when he goes to God, what does he think? He doesn't sit down to make a list of What will I ask for? instead, he thinks, When I go to the Lord, what will I give Him?

The story is famous: four handfuls of tandul (beaten rice) were filled and given to him. The next day, Sudamaji set out from his home toward Dwarka, carrying the bundle on his shoulder, wearing only a simple loincloth (potadi), and holding a staff in his hand, all while constantly chanting the Lord's name.

His body was frail and emaciated. His stomach was empty. He could not walk much further and grew weary, eventually falling asleep under a tree. As he slept, the Lord thought, If my devotee takes ten steps toward me, I will walk ninety steps to meet him. In a state of divine sleep (Yoganindra), the Lord lifted Sudamaji and placed him just outside the gates of Dwarka. When Sudamaji opened his eyes, he saw the golden city of Dwarka standing before him. On all sides, he could see towering domes and magnificent palaces.

He asked someone passing by, Which town is this? They replied, this is the Dwarka of Dwarkadhish. Surprised, he thought, Oh! I have arrived already! I didn't even realize how the

time passed. Asking along the way for the location of the palace, he finally reached the very gates of Dwarkadhish's residence. He saw the high spire (Shikhar), the flag fluttering in the wind, and walls made of gold studded with precious gems. The Lord's palace appeared magnificent and otherworldly.

As he was about to enter, the gatekeepers suddenly stood before him. Who are you? Where are you going? Whose business do you have? What is your purpose? Sudama was startled. Oh! I am the friend of Dwarkadhish. I have come all the way from Porbandar. I have come to meet my friend.

Oh, people like you come and stand outside every single day! If the Lord went to meet everyone, when would He ever find the time to run the kingdom? Go, go away! He won't meet you right now. Get out of here!

Sudama said, But just go once and tell Him that Your friend Sudama is standing outside. Just once, go and tell Dwarkadhish my name.

People don't just go and announce names to Him like that, the guard replied. He doesn't have time right now. When He comes to meet the public in the general assembly, you can meet Him then. He won't meet anyone personally at this moment.

When Sudamaji repeatedly requested entry, the gatekeeper finally lost his patience and pushed him, saying, I told you once already, get out of here!

Sudama's heart overflowed with emotion. His throat choked up with tears. He thought, O Dwarkadhish! I have come from so far just to meet You, and will I not even get a single glimpse (Jhankhi) of You? Please, just once, go and tell Dwarkadhish that His friend Sudama is here. I give you my word, I will leave from here immediately after that.

The gatekeepers were moved to pity. Seeing the weeping Brahmin, compassion awoke within them, and they began to discuss it amongst themselves. Come, let us just go and tell Him once. If there is truly something between them, the Lord will call him. Or perhaps He will send something out for him. It seems he needs something from the Lord, which is why he keeps insisting on a meeting. He appears to be in great distress. Come, let's go and tell Him. And so, the gatekeeper went inside.

The Lord is swinging on a golden swing (hindolo) with Rukmani Devi. The gatekeeper entered, offered his respectful salutation (jayghosh), and said, Lord, there is a poor Brahmin standing outside, and he calls himself Sudama.

And the moment those words, Sudama, fell upon His ears, the Supreme Lord leaped up and ran! His yellow silk robe (Pitambar) went flying in the wind as He sprinted. Jumping and racing with unparalleled speed, He reached the very gate and pulled Sudama into a tight, crushing embrace. All the gatekeepers and the Queen Consorts stood frozen in shock, watching this scene. They thought, Until today, so many great kings and emperors have come here as guests, but we have never seen such intense eagerness within the Lord before!

He held him in a tight embrace, and tears began to flow from the Lord's eyes. Oh, Sudama! After all these years, you finally remembered me? Calling out to him repeatedly, He escorted Sudamaji inside. He seated Sudamaji upon His own golden throne. He said to His Queens, Quickly, bring saffron-scented water! I wish to wash Sudama's feet. But even before the water could be brought: Pani parat ko chhuyo nahi, ansuan jal se pag dhoyo. Shri Thakur ji did not even touch the water in the vessel; He washed Sudama's feet with the flowing tears from His own eyes.

Oh, Sudama! After so many years, you finally thought of me? They sat together, sharing stories from far and wide. When it was time to eat, the Lord sat down to take His meal with Sudama from plates of pure gold.

They are reminiscing about their childhood. Sudama, do you remember? We used to study together at Sandipani Rishi's ashram in Ujjain. We studied together, what a joy we had! The Lord is revisiting those childhood events, and while talking, He reminded him: Sudama! Do you remember that day? Guruma sent us into the forest to collect firewood. She gave you two handfuls of chickpeas and told you, if you feel hungry, share them and eat. It started raining. I was on a lower branch and you were on an upper branch. At that time, you were eating alone, and when I asked if Guruma had given us anything, Sudama, you ate them all by yourself. Upon hearing this, Sudama began to cry uncontrollably.

Lord! This is the fate of one who eats what You have given without first offering it back to You. Poverty was not written in my destiny; I chose it by my own will. Otherwise, were I to perform

just one Yagya, millions would rain down. The deities themselves would come and grant me boons—such is the power of my penance and truth. But this poverty is my own choice. Because I can never forget that moment when I ate Your share.

Sudama is weeping uncontrollably, and the Lord, placing His hand in Sudama's hand, says, Sudama! All of that is in the past now. Saying this, it was as if the Supreme Lord wiped away the lines of misfortune from Sudama's destiny. Your future is so bright, Sudama! They remembered many incidents together. Lord, I did not offer back to You what was already Yours.

The Lord asked, Has my sister-in-law sent anything for me? Sudama began to hide the bundle. Having come as a guest to the palace of such a great Emperor, how could he possibly offer such humble tandul (beaten rice)?

But for the Lord, the devotee's emotion (Bhaav) is important, not the object. He snatched the bundle. He began to partake of the tandul, and in doing so, He bestowed the entire opulence of Kuber upon Sudama. When the Lord gives, He does it in such a way that even the one receiving it doesn't realize that God is the one giving.

He gave to Sudama, but did not let him realize it. He kept Sudama there for many days. He gave him His own clothes, His own ornaments. He kept Sudama with immense respect and honor. Sudama thought to himself, it is good; the Lord has not given me anything. I did not ask the Lord for anything. He stayed for several days, and the hospitality he received was extraordinary.

Sudama felt that his wife and children must be waiting for him. So he came to the Lord and said, Lord! Please give me permission to leave now. I should return to my home. The Lord replied, you may go, that is fine, but what about my clothes and my ornaments? He took back His royal attire and placed the old, tattered rags back into Sudama's hands. Sudama thanked the Lord in his heart, thinking, It is for the best that the Lord is giving me nothing. This way, there will be no regret in my mind that I asked anything of my friend. In fact, I am leaving after having given something to the Lord-I gave Him the tandul.

This reflects our own ignorance as well. We often think, I gave this to Shri Thakur ji, I offered this food, or I presented this gift. But we completely forget-who gave it to us in the first place?

We feel as though we are the ones giving to the Lord. Who are we to be givers? He is the only Giver. We are merely the medium through which it reaches Him. Therefore, whenever we do anything for the Lord, we should only express our gratitude to Him.

Sudamaji began his journey back. Wearing that same simple loincloth (potadi) once again, holding his staff in his hand, he walked slowly until he reached the palace gates. Suddenly, the Lord called out, Sudama! Wait. Sudama turned back to look. Both had eyes filled with tears. The Lord came close and said, Sudama, you have come here after so many years. Now, who knows when you might return? Who can say? Whether we meet again or not... Sudama replied, Yes, Lord! Who knows when the circumstances will align for us to meet again. Krishna then said, Sudama, since you are leaving, leave some token of remembrance (nishani) with me. That way, by looking at that object, I can keep remembering you.

Sudama felt a deep sense of hesitation. He had absolutely nothing. He began to say, Lord! I have nothing at all. What can I possibly give to You before I leave?

The Lord began to say, Leave your sandals (padukas) with me. Sudama said, Oh Lord, what will You do with my sandals? Krishna replied, No, it is simply my wish. Leave them here before you go. By looking at your sandals, I will keep remembering you. Sudama replied, As You command, Lord. He took off his sandals in a corner and set out into the marketplace of Dwarka barefoot.

Now the Queens lost their patience and said, Lord! You are crossing all limits. You filled his home with such opulence of Kuber, yet You never even told him. Had You told him, his journey back would have felt much shorter.

The Lord replied, If the one who seeks is unable to ask, how can I tell him that I have given? I never belittle a person by reminding them of what I have bestowed. Everyone should feel that it is through their own right, their own intellect, their own hard work, or their own cleverness. If I give, I do it so that it feels as though they earned it through their own efforts. This is My way of giving.

But Lord, you have truly crossed all limits! You even made that poor Brahmin take off his sandals. Does it look right for Your own friend to walk through the streets of Dwarka barefoot like this?

The Lord replied, "I took those sandals intentionally." But why? The Lord explains, "I wandered through Vraj with bare lotus feet and sanctified that land; I have the power to purify Vraj, but I do not have the power to sanctify Dwarka on My own. That power lies only with devotees like Sudama. When a devotee like him walks through Dwarka barefoot, my Dwarka will become the fourth Dham (holy pilgrimage) of this world. People will come here on pilgrimage, and by touching this soil, they will dissolve the sins of many lifetimes. I bow my head at the feet of such devotees who, even in the midst of such dire adversity and crisis, come only to give to Me. I desired for the touch of his feet to grace the dust of Dwarka. If that dust receives the touch of his feet, my Dwarka becomes the fourth Dham."

Sudama arrived, walking slowly into Sudamapuri; but as he looked around, his hut was nowhere to be seen. In its place stood palaces of gold. Sudama panicked. "Oh no! While I was away, some king must have launched an attack. They have even destroyed my humble hut. Now I don't even have a place to live. Lord, what kind of test is this You are putting me through?"

In that moment, a woman adorned like a queen, dressed in exquisite finery, came running toward him. Sudama was struck with fear, thinking, this queen must be the one who demolished my hut to build her palace. He trembled with anxiety. But as the running woman drew closer, he realized-it was his own wife.

"Lord! Shri Thakur ji has showered His grace upon us. He has filled our home with the opulence of Kuber. Where were we, and where has the Lord placed us now!" Upon hearing this, Sudama broke down and wept loudly. He sank to his knees. "You remained a trickster through and through!" he cried. "I was returning so happily, thinking that I was the one who had given something to God. Only after reaching home did I realize that You are the true Giver. You are a trickster! You give, yet You don't even let us realize that it is You who is giving." We ordinary beings believe that we are doing all this-that we are performing service or giving things to God. But we are not capable of giving anything. You are the only Giver. Sudamaji then began to immerse himself in the remembrance of the Lord's gratitude.

The narrative now moves to the episode of the solar eclipse. News reached the residents of Vraj that Shri Thakur ji had arrived at Kurukshetra for the holy dip. He was now the King of

Dwarka-Dwarkadhish. The Lord went to meet the Vrajvasis, reuniting with Nandbaba and Yashodaji. He held them close to His heart. Yashodaji began to weep uncontrollably, crying, Lalan! How big you have grown! After how many years am I finally seeing you? The Lord then met with all His childhood friends (Sakhas) as well.

The Lord reminisces about their childhood events—how they used to go to steal butter and how they went to graze the cows together. The Lord is meeting everyone and talking to them all, but His eyes are searching for someone specific. He met the childhood friends (Sakhas), and they told Him, "The Gopis are waiting for You." A group of Gopis was standing there, and Shri Thakur ji went to meet them. All the Gopis were upset and said, "Go away, Krishna! we don't want to talk to You. You gave us Your word and left, but You never returned."

He said, "I became so entangled in the affairs of the kingdom that I simply could not get away." Shri Thakur ji is sharing stories from far and wide with the Gopis. He meets each and every Gopi, but His eyes are still searching for someone. Finally, unable to hold back, He asked the Gopis, "Where is Radha?" A Gopi pointed her finger and said, "That one standing with her back toward You is Radha. She is standing under that tree. She has told us, 'I do not want to see Krishna's face. He has betrayed us. I spent my whole life waiting for Him, and He did not come even once. I do not want to see Him.'"

'The banks stay apart to keep the stream alive. Our separation keeps our remembrance alive.' Many people ask, why did Radha and Krishna not become one? Oh, they are the two banks of the river of love; if two banks were to meet, the flow would stop. In this river of love, one bank is Krishna and the other is Radha. Only by staying apart does the stream of love continue to flow. Otherwise, the love would cease.

The Lord began walking toward Radha with soft, slow steps. The sound of His approaching footsteps sent a thrill through every pore of Radha's being. The Lord came close. He gently placed His hand upon her shoulder, and at that touch, Radhaji broke down and wept bitterly. "Lord! What was our crime? Why did You leave us like this? You never came back even once, Lord. We kept waiting. We spent our entire lives waiting for You. Lord, what sin did we commit?"

The Lord said, "The fault was not yours. The fault is mine. When a person's debt in a village grows so large that they cannot possibly repay it, they often flee from that village. Similarly," the Lord began to tell Radhikaji, "Oh Radha! The debt of all your love and kindness grew so heavy upon me that I became afraid. I realized that if you were to ask for its repayment, I would have to take birth and return again and again. I simply cannot repay it in a single lifetime. That is why I ran away from Vraj."

Many stories of the devotees' characters have been described. It is said that when the eight chief queens (Patranis) learned of Radhaji's arrival, they finally understood the truth. They knew that even though the Lord might be resting beside them on the golden beds of the palace, every single pore of His body resonated with only one sound: Radha, Radha, Radha, Radha. A single voice echoed from every fiber of the Lord's being. The eight queens invited Radhaji to their camp, wishing to meet her. All eight were seated on their thrones, but the moment Radhaji entered, they were so struck by her form, her personality, and her divine beauty that all eight stood up in respect. They thought, "Until today, we heard so much about Radha, but after seeing her, it feels as if we had heard nothing at all." Such is Radhaji. They welcomed her, called for milk, and offered it to her, engaging in various discussions and stories. Later, at night, when the Lord went to rest, Rukmani was pressing His feet. As Rukmani was pressing His feet, the moment her hand touched the soles, the Lord cried out in pain and sat up abruptly. "Oh! What happened, Lord?" "Nothing," He replied, trying to hide His feet. When Rukmani saw His lotus feet, the soles were covered in blisters. "Oh Lord! How is this possible?" "It is nothing," He said, dismissing the matter. Rukmani insisted, "Lord! From where did You experience such a painful strain?" After much persistence, the Lord finally spoke: "Today, you all invited Radhaji to meet you. When she arrived, you ordered milk to welcome her. But in her haste, the maid brought milk that was boiling hot and served it to Radhaji. Out of respect for all of you, Radhaji drank that scalding milk. She drank it; but since My lotus feet reside eternally within her heart, the heat caused these blisters to appear on the soles of My feet." It was then that Rukmaniji realized that although Radha and Krishna appear separate, they are one and the same element. Radha and Krishna are not different; they are one. Thus, the episode of the solar eclipse is described in the Shri Bhagavatji. Moving forward, the narrative describes the abduction of Subhadra, the Veda Stuti (praises by the Vedas), and the test of the three deities by Bhriguji. Bhriguji tested all three gods: Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh. He went to Brahmaji and insulted him; Brahmaji became enraged. He went to

Mahadevji and insulted him, and Mahadevji also became displeased and angry. Finally, he approached Lord Vishnu, who was resting on the bed of Sheshnag. Bhriguji came close and struck the Lord's chest with his foot. Even today, if you look at many divine forms (idols), you will see a small footprint on the Lord's heart. This is called Bhrigulanchhan. When Bhriguji struck Him, the Lord immediately held his feet. Holding them, the Lord said, "Gurudev! My chest is hard, while your feet are tender. I hope you didn't get hurt?" At that moment, Bhriguji was left stunned and remorseful.

He came to test them. Brahmaji and Mahadevji became displeased, but the Lord held his lotus feet. Therefore, it is said here that a vaishnav should fear three types of offenses: (1) Vachik (Speech), (2) Kayik (Physical/Body), and (3) Mansik (Mental). One must remain cautious of these three faults. This is why, in the Bhagavad Gita as well, the Lord has described three types of Tapa (Austerity/Penance).

मनः प्रसादः सौम्यत्वं मौनमात्मविनिग्रहः ।
भावसंशुद्धिरित्येतत्तपो मानसमुच्यते ॥

Manaḥprasādaḥ saumyatvaṃ maunam ātmavinigrahaḥ |
Bhāva-saṃśuddhiḥ ity etat tapaḥ mānasa-mucyate ||

The Lord described the austerity of the mind. 'Keeping the mind in a state of joy is the true penance of the mind. This is because the very nature of the mind is to remain unhappy. Watch closely—the mind will find sorrow from anywhere. You might go to a wedding feast where everything was perfect, but the salad was missing. People will return home crying about that one thing. Those who are determined to be unhappy will always find a reason for it. We must keep checking ourselves: have we unknowingly become seekers of sorrow? Often, we aren't even aware of it, but we actively search for something wrong, find it, and then make ourselves miserable.'

We see many people who create their own suffering with their own hands. If circumstances make you sad, it is understandable. Some situation or event might happen, but please, do not become miserable because of your own nature (swabhav). Because being miserable by nature is like intentionally striking your own foot with an axe. God may have given you everything good, but if your nature has become such that you constantly manufacture some problem or

another, you will create your own unhappiness. Now, there is no cure in the world for that. If you create your own suffering, who is going to come and make you happy? Remember one thing: no one else is going to come and make you happy. We have to find our happiness ourselves.

One must live with the firm resolve to be happy. I want to remain joyful. I want to remain happy. Will peace come from speaking or from remaining silent? We must decide for ourselves. Will peace come from giving or from taking? We must decide for ourselves. In life, we must determine and accept our own happiness and peace. I want to be happy. I want peace in my life. If this remains your firm resolve, then happiness and peace will surely enter your life. But the idea that some unknown person will come and make you happy-that is simply not possible in this life.

Maintaining Mauna (silence) purifies the mind. Mauna is not an austerity of speech; it is an austerity of the mind. Mauna does not simply mean not speaking—that is just being quiet. Often, people remain quiet on Ekadashi, yet they get everything done through gestures. And when we observe silence, those around us become silent too; they also start talking through gestures, even though they can still hear—you should tell them, "You speak! My ears are still open." Mauna does not mean staying quiet. I define Mauna like this: "To become free of all wants/demands is called Mauna." On the day no desire arises in the mind, consider that you have achieved true Mauna. When the mind produces no demands, that is Mauna.

The Lord described the austerity of the body in the same way, and He described the austerity of speech in that same manner.

अनुद्वेगकरं वाक्यं सत्यं प्रियहितं च यत् ।
स्वाध्यायाभ्यसनं चैव वाङ्मयं तप उच्यते ॥

Anudvegakaraṃ vākyam satyaṃ priyahitaṃ ca yat |
Svādhyāyābhyasanaṃ caiva vāṅmayaṃ tapa ucyate ||

Not to speak in a way that causes agitation or distress to others is the austerity of speech. It should be truthful, pleasant, and beneficial. Is our truth actually beneficial for the person in front of us? Even a good piece of advice can be shared by taking someone aside to a private

corner; however, if you say that same good thing by insulting them in front of everyone, it will become bitter. Do not serve the truth by making it bitter. Offer it with a coating of sugar; give it sugar-coated. Our problem is that we have created a false definition: Truth means bitter. We have established such a wrong notion—that a person who speaks the truth must be a bitter person, or that truth itself is bitter. No! There is nothing in this world as sweet as the truth, provided you say it in the right way.

कौन सी बात कहाँ कैसे कही जाती है ।
इतना सलिका हो तो हर बात सुनी जाती है॥

Kaun si baat kahaan kaise kahi jaati hai |
Itana salikaa ho to har baat suni jaati hai ||

If you can learn which thing to say, when to say it, and in what manner, then everyone will listen to whatever you say. However, even a good point, if said in the wrong place or in a bad manner, will not be accepted by anyone. Afterward, you might say, Now I won't do this at all. Why did it turn out like this? If you say something good while hurting someone's ego, they will stop doing it even if they were originally going to. Therefore, one must know how to serve the truth in a way that is acceptable. These are called the austerities of speech.

So, in this manner, Bhriguji tested the three deities. Moving forward, the description of Krishna's divine Leelas (Leela) and His wanderings (Vihar) has been presented.

Let us conclude the Tenth Canto (Dasham Skandh) here.

'Shri Goverdhannath ki Jai!'

'Vallabhadhish ki Jai!'

'Bhagavata Bhagwan ki Jai!'

Let us rest here the Katha of the 11th Canto

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II Shri Hari: II

The Eleventh Skandha (Mukti Leela)

This Mukti Leela (the Leela of liberation) is described within 31 chapters of the Shri Bhagavatji. The Eleventh Canto represents the head of Shrinathji Bawa. Since the head is the seat of knowledge (Gyan), it is here that the dialogue in the form of supreme wisdom takes place between the Lord and Uddhavji.

The Yadavas became reckless and undisciplined. This happened because youth arrived, they attained high positions, wealth followed, and they gained immense power. When life becomes filled with too many comforts and favorable circumstances, a person must remain extremely vigilant. When you feel that there is no one left to question you or hold you accountable, that is the time to be most cautious. The truth is, as long as there were people to criticize or advise you, they were actually your protectors. They were the ones keeping you safe and alerting you to danger. This is why more accidents occur on freeways where there are no signals. Because one thinks, Where is the need to stop here?

Life is exactly like that. When there is no one left to stop you, the risk of crashing into a dead end becomes the highest. Therefore, even if you reach a point where your elders are no longer around, keep at least one person in your life who can call you out when you are doing something wrong-someone who can warn you. These individuals might hurt our ego, but they are the ones who truly wish us well. If you cannot find such a person, stay in the presence of a Guru. But keep at least one person who can tell you the difference between right and wrong without any hesitation. Because when such people are no longer in our lives, the probability of losing our way increases. The chances of a downfall rise. That is why such people are necessary in life.

No one was left to hold the Yadavas accountable. A sacrifice (Yagna) was being performed nearby, and some of the young Yadavas thought, Come on, let's play a prank.

There was a Yadava named Samba. They dressed him up as a pregnant woman. They created such a lifelike disguise and said, "Let's make fun of these Sages." They took him before the Sages and said, "O Great Souls! You are knowers of the three periods of time (past, present,

and future). You are the knowers of all scriptures. You know everything. Please show us your grace; we have come to find out—this woman is pregnant. So tell us, will she give birth to a son or a daughter?"

The Sages realized that the Yadavas' intellect had become corrupted. Where they should have shown respect, they harbored doubt. They were testing the very people they should have been prostrating before. The Sages pronounced a curse: "Neither a son nor a daughter. From his belly, an iron mace (Musala) shall emerge, and it will cause the total destruction of the entire Yadava clan."

The Yadavas were terrified. A Sage's curse had taken hold. What could be done?

They went to Ugrasena, and when they looked beneath the clothes, an iron mace actually emerged. They said to Ugrasena, "Oh! What shall we do with this mace? We have been cursed; the Sage said a mace would be born and the entire family would be destroyed."

Ugrasena suggested a clever plan: Grind this down, turn it into powder, and throw it into the sea. They did exactly that. They pulverized the mace and cast the powder into the ocean. However, whatever you throw into the sea eventually washes back with the waves. Consequently, a sharp, spear-like grass called Erka (resembling the mace) grew along the shore. A small, solid fragment of the mace remained. When it was thrown into the sea, a fish swallowed it. That fish was later caught by a hunter named Jara. When he cut the fish open, he found that fragment of the iron mace and used it to tip his arrow.

Naradji has arrived in Dwarka. A beautiful spiritual discourse (Satsang) took place with Vasudevji. He Imparted the teachings of the Shri Bhagavata Dharma and narrated the story of the Nav Yogeshwaras (the Nine Sages). He described how, when King Nimi was about to perform a sacrifice (Yagna), these nine sons of Rishabhdev arrived at his assembly.

When a great soul or Mahatma arrives at any of our auspicious occasions, we should believe that God Himself has come to grace us with His blessings.

When King Nimi saw the Sages arrive, his heart filled with immense joy. He thought, nine great Yogeshwaras have graced my sacrifice with their presence! Who could be more fortunate than I? These nine Yogeshwaras were Kavi, Hari, Antariksha, Prabuddha, Pippalayan, Avirhotra, Drumila, Chamasa, and Karabhajan. After bowing down to them with deep reverence, the

King spoke:

दुर्लभो मानुषो देहो देहिनां क्षणभंगुरः ।
तत्रापि दुर्लभं मन्ये वैकुण्ठप्रियदर्शनम् ॥

Durlabho mānuṣo deho dehināṃ kṣaṇabhaṃguraḥ |
Tatrāpi durlabhaṃ manye Vaikuṇṭha-priya-darśanam ||

This human body is rare. Not only is it rare, but it is also fragile and transient (Kshana-bhangur). Who knows when it might slip away from our hands? And even rarer than this human birth is the proximity to great souls-the Darshan of Mahapurushas.

Shankaracharya also said the same thing.

दुर्लभं त्रयमेवैतत् देवानुग्रहहेतुकम् ।
मनुष्यत्वं मुमुक्षुत्वं महापुरुषसंश्रयः ॥

Durlabhaṃ trayamevaitat devānugraha-hetukam |
Manuṣyatvaṃ mumuṣu-tvaṃ mahāpuruṣa-saṃśrayaḥ ||

"These three things are rare: Human birth is rare, the desire for liberation (Mumukshutvam) is rare—the actual longing to be free from the cycle of birth and death is rare—and the company of great souls (Satsang) is rare. These three are truly difficult to obtain in life. Since you have graced my sacrifice with your presence, please grant me some spiritual instruction." The nine Yogeshwaras then delivered beautiful teachings. The first of them, the Sage named Kavi, spoke a world-famous shloka:

कायेन वाचा मनसैन्द्रियैर्वा
बुद्ध्यात्मना वा प्रकृतिस्वभावात् ।
करोमि यद् यत् सकलं परस्मै
नारायणायेति समर्पयामि ॥

Kāyena vācā manasendriyair vā
Buddhyātmanā vā prakṛti-svabhāvāt |
Karomi yad yat sakalaṃ parasmai
Nārāyaṇāyeti samarpayāmi ||

"Whatever we do, let us do it by offering it to Shri Thakur ji. This is the core principle of Pushtimarg. Shri Mahaprabhu ji also bestowed the same blessings upon us. In the Shodash Granth, while blessing the vaishnavas, Shri Mahaprabhu ji says: '**सर्वं समर्पितं भक्त्या कृतार्थोऽसि सुखी भव।' (Sarvaṃ samarpitaṃ bhaktyā kṛtārtho 'si sukhī bhava')** Offer everything with devotion, consider your life's purpose fulfilled, and be happy.

As long as you keep things gripped in your hands-as long as you carry the weight upon your head-your worries will persist. Only when you surrender everything to the Lord will you truly become happy. Everything belongs to Him; whatever I have received is merely the Prasadi (blessed offering) given by Shri Thakur ji. And in Prasad, there is no room for choice. The rule of Prasad is simple: when you sit down to receive it, you don't say, No, give me that Mathadi or Give me that Mohanthal. If you do that, you are simply eating a meal. True Prasad means gracefully accepting whatever is placed in your hands."

Therefore, whatever you have received in this world, do not accept it merely as fate (Bhagya); accept it as the Prasad of God. Once you do this, all your complaints will vanish. Stop asking, why did I get this? or Why is it like this? or Why this house? or Why was I paired with this person? No more complaints. This world is a form of Prasad given by God. My duty is to accept it and fulfill my responsibilities within it. If you maintain this attitude, true joy (Prasannata) will enter your life.

Otherwise, many people constantly complain, why did I end up with such people? Well, perhaps no one else was capable of looking after them except you, which is why God gave them to you. What else can we say? The Lord decided that you were the only one who could handle this responsibility. Or perhaps there is a Rinanubandh (karmic debt) between you, and God brings everyone together just to settle those accounts. Accept it as Prasad. Surrender is the only way.

If you try to grab everything while leaving God behind, you will end up with nothing in your hands. But if you keep God at the forefront and gather things only to offer them to Him, the Lord will return everything to you as Prasad. Do not try to claim things in life as a right. Try to receive them as a blessing. We have no right over anything. First, let go of this sense of entitlement. When we consider ourselves deserving, the desire to claim rights arises-This is

my right, that is my right. If you want peace, let go of your rights over this world. Whatever you have received has come as an act of God's grace. Therefore, if you live with an attitude of gratitude, you will find peace. No complaints. I didn't get this, I didn't get that, this didn't happen. Whatever has happened is already more than enough. In reality, we were worthy of even less, but God has given us more than our destiny deserved. Live with that belief.

Thus, moving forward, the Sage named Hari discussed the characteristics of the Uttam (highest), Madhyam (middle), and Prakrut (beginner) devotees of the Lord.

The Sage named Chamasa said that a person devoid of devotion (Bhakti-heen) inevitably faces a downfall (Adhogati).

The Sage named Karabhajan has explained the various ways to worship the forms of the Lord. A beautiful Satsang has taken place, highlighting the three types of devotees: the Uttam (Highest), Madhyam (Middle), and Prakrut (Beginner). The Uttam devotee is one who sees God in everyone and everything. The Madhyam devotee is one who loves God and His devotees while recognizing the Divine presence within everyone. The Prakrut devotee is one who sees God only within the idol or the Divine form itself, but fails to see Him anywhere else.

When we perform Seva (service), our mind is naturally focused on pampering Shri Thakur ji and making Him happy. However, a person performing service must maintain constant caution: never let your Seva become a cause of pain for others. Sometimes, in the name of service, we end up hurting many people. Seva is meant for our own joy and spiritual bliss; it is not meant to cause unnecessary hardship to others. Of course, teaching others is a different matter. If the responsibility of teaching someone falls on you, you must guide them. If you don't speak up, who will? As the head or elder of a family, if you see something going wrong, you must step in to ensure things are done correctly. On the other hand, a wise person should keep an open mind. If someone critiques or teaches you for the sake of God, accept it with a big heart, thinking, Look, I learned something new today. Don't harbor thoughts like, "How dare they tell me what to do? Just wait for my turn-I'll give them a piece of my mind too." Don't look for opportunities to settle scores.

Think of it this way: I am fortunate that there is someone in this house to guide me. There is someone to teach me. If the elders don't speak up, who will? Without their intervention,

I would have just kept doing the wrong thing. Today, I learned something good. Keep your heart large enough to maintain this attitude of gracefully accepting better ways of living.

King Nimi attained the supreme state (Param Gati). Meanwhile, the Lord is preparing to return to His divine abode (Swadham). Even today, the Bhalka Tirth exists as a testament to these final moments. Only Uddhavaji remains by His side; everyone else has been sent away.

The story of Lord Dattatreya has arrived, where he discusses his twenty-four gurus. Wherever Lord Dattatreya saw a virtue, he accepted that virtue as a guru. Do you know how to find God's grace even within tragedies? It is not possible for everything in life to be good; but do we know how to search for the good? Our collective problem is like this: when we sit down to sort wheat, we say we are sorting wheat. But are you really sorting wheat? What you are actually picking out are the pebbles. Life is exactly like that. There is so much more good in our lives, but when one or two pebble-like incidents happen or such people enter our lives, we grip onto them and keep making ourselves miserable. Learn to search for the goodness; only then can life be lived in a sublime way.

He chose twenty-four gurus. Wherever he saw a virtue, he accepted that entity as his teacher.

The first Guru he chose was the Earth. From the Earth, he learned the virtues of Patience, Forgiveness, and Tolerance. Consider how much this Earth endures. It bears an immense physical burden; it endures the weight of countless sins, yet it never complains. Therefore, a devotee (vaishnav) must learn the art of tolerance. Constantly clashing over every small thing only keeps the fire of conflict (Klesh) burning in life. Through endurance, the mind becomes strong. Even if something is rightfully yours, the ability to let go of that claim strengthens the inner self. Only a person with a large heart can renounce their rights; others simply come to fight. So, learn to endure. Learn to keep patience.

In the treatise vivekdhairyaashray, Shri Mahaprabhu ji Vallabhacharya explains...

त्रिदु:ख सहनं धैर्यम् आमृते: सर्वत: सदा ।
तक्रवदेहवद् भाव्यं जडवत् गोपभार्यवत् ॥

Triduḥkha sahanam dhairyam āmṛteḥ sarvataḥ sadā |
Takravad deha-vad bhāvyaṃ jaḍavat gopa-bhāryavat ||

A vaishnav should endure all three types of miseries. This is what Shri Mahaprabhu ji explains.

The second Guru he chose was the Wind (Vayu). From the Wind, he learned the art of Non-attachment (Nissangata). The wind keeps flowing; it passes through a foul smell and leaves it behind, and it passes through a fragrance and leaves that behind too. Similarly, events will happen in life, but one must learn to keep moving forward. If you grip onto the past too tightly, your future will become blurred. One should take inspiration from the past, but if we keep ruminating on it constantly, we won't be able to enjoy the bliss of the future. Therefore, keep flowing. Do not get tied down; do not get stuck. Learn to forget. Forget the tragedies and move your life forward. Because if any past event keeps you tied down, your life will remain stagnant. Move ahead. Keep flowing like the wind.

The third Guru he chose was the Sky (Akash). From the Sky, he learned Vastness (Vyapakta) and Expansiveness (Vishalta). Just as the sky is limitless, a devotee's mind should also be large. In fact, the very exercise to expand one's mind is to look at the sky for ten minutes every day. If you look at the sky every day, your mind will expand. Just think-how vast is this universe? In this universe, where is the Earth, which is like a tiny mustard seed? And on this Earth, where is India? Within India, where is Gujarat? Within Gujarat, where is Ahmedabad? Within Ahmedabad, where is Sannidhya Party Plot? And in that plot, a man sitting on a tiny chair says, 'I am this and I am that!' What is the value of that pride? In this entire existence, we are nothing, and we are not capable of doing anything on our own. The Sky is all-pervasive.

Keep your heart large. The hearts of those who are considered elders must truly be expansive. You should have a heart big enough to forgive the mistakes of those younger or subordinate to you. Give the younger ones repeated opportunities. Mistakes happen-after all, they are only human, right? Errors are part of human life, but do you have the greatness required to forgive? A person is not big simply because of their age; true greatness belongs to the one who is big in their understanding. As age increases, wisdom and maturity should grow along with it. Elders should understand how to live with dignity and self-respect within the home. One who gets swept away by every little thing just like a child is not truly an elder.

Just like when we were little and played with dolls or toy cars—remember how much fun that was? If someone took them away, we would burst into tears. But when that same five-year-old

turns twenty, they look at those toys and laugh. They think, what was so great about this? Look at me-I used to cry if someone took this car. How did I find joy in this? In the same way, as a person's age increases, their understanding must also grow. How should an elder speak? What should their thoughts be? How should they laugh, and how should they grieve? Does greatness overflow from every action? I am telling you to become "Mota" (Mature), not just "Gharda" (Old). Never become old in that sense. Becoming old is a different thing-it's when a person constantly complains, Now nothing is left, no one is worth talking to, there is no joy in this world. Someone who keeps crying like that is old. Don't become old; become great.

Look, there is such a beautiful senior citizen group active here. What wonderful activities they engage in! Become Great, not Old. The exhaustion of life should not be visible on you; instead, the wisdom of your experiences should radiate from your face. It should show that you have passed through so many life events and emerged with deep understanding. True understanding means being a person who can maintain inner peace even in adverse circumstances. Can you achieve peace through your wisdom when situations go against you? That person is truly wise; that person is Great. So, learn to cultivate that greatness in your life.

Thus, he learned expansiveness from the sky. From water, he learned cleanliness, sweetness, and purity; he learned the art of remaining in flow. Water only remains clean as long as it keeps flowing. In the same way, a person whose understanding, thoughts, and life remain in a state of flow is the only one who can preserve their inner sweetness. Otherwise, in the final stages of life, a person often becomes very bitter. This happens because their thoughts and perceptions become rigid-insisting on "It must be this way, and only this way. If you become stagnant (bound), you will become foul-smelling. If you get stuck, you will start to decay. One must keep flowing. Many people, as they age, constantly curse the new era and the new generation, saying, These youngsters are spoiled; everything is going to ruin. Oh, no. When you were young, your elders said the exact same thing about you! This is simply the cycle of life. It feels this way to every generation. Therefore, do not become bitter; keep flowing. Be open to accepting new thoughts.

Even if you are older, embrace the era of the mobile phone. Why shouldn't you learn it? Why shouldn't you know how to use a computer? The entire world is inside those devices now. Do not live as someone outdated; learn to live with the times. In these senior clubs, teach mobile

skills, computers, and the internet. Let them also connect with the world. Why should they be ignorant of today's reality? Why should the youth feel that the elders have become obsolete? Why can't we talk about new things? Anyone who feels there is nothing new left to do is truly old. New experiments should constantly happen in life-beautiful experiments. New things should be accepted, and technology should be embraced; we cannot do without it now. You must look and feel like you belong to the present. If you appear modern and current, even your grandchildren will listen to you. If you seem outdated, everyone feels your advice isn't worth following because times have changed. But if you are with the times, everyone will feel your words are worth hearing. So, don't become a relic; stay current. Being in the 21st century, learn cleanliness, sweetness, and the art of staying in flow from the Water.

From Fire, he learned Radiance (Tejasvita) and Upward Movement (Urdhvagamanata). Even if you take a burning stick and turn it upside down or point it toward the ground, the flame will still leap upward. It will never go down. Similarly, even if your circumstances weaken, never let your understanding weaken. It is said, Missing the target is forgivable, but aiming low is not. Your situation may hit a low point, and bad times may come. But a true devotee (vaishnav) is one who continues to think clearly and positively even in the worst of circumstances. That is the mark of a wise person. Can you maintain high-minded understanding even when the situation is against you?

One must maintain this firm resolve: even if the situation deteriorates, I must not let my mental state deteriorate. I must not let my mind be spoiled. Therefore, one must learn to extract the good essence from every single thing.

He learned from the Moon that although its phases (Kalas) appear to wax and wane-increasing and decreasing-the Moon itself remains whole and complete.

He learned from the Sun that it draws water from the ocean, but the Sun doesn't keep it for itself. It transforms it into clouds and returns it to the earth as life-giving rain. In the same way, we earn from the world and society, but we shouldn't hoard it all. Like a cloud, we should spend it back for the welfare of society.

He learned from the Moth (Butterfly), the Python, and the Pigeon. He observed the pigeons

and saw how they get trapped by their own infatuation (Moha). From the Python, he learned what true faith looks like. Look at the trust this python has-it does nothing. As the poet Baluka Das said: The python does no service, the bird does no work. Baluka says, the Giver for everyone is Lord Rama.

The python does nothing, yet God delivers food right into its mouth. So, O human, you put in so much effort—God will certainly take care of your needs. Have faith. Hard work is necessary, of course, but for the one who has faith, joy remains constant in life. Live with trust; never become cynical. Those who trust no one will eventually not even trust themselves. Often, you shouldn't seek advice from someone who has had very bitter life experiences, because they may have become entirely negative. They will only say, Don't trust anyone; don't put your faith in anybody. But it is trust that makes the world go around! After all, the one who is cheated is always better than the one who cheats. The cheater only took what was in their own destiny; do not harbor ill will. Instead of seeking counsel from a distrustful person, go to someone who has faith in everyone. They will always speak positively: No, no, go ahead and try; you'll see, everyone will come to help you. Someone or the other will step in. If you make the effort, Nature will start supporting you. Follow the advice of those who generate such trust in life, not those with bitter experiences. The world has both good and bad, but move your life forward by trusting the good. Do not let the ill intentions of bad people or past tragedies stop you. Miracles happen every day. Often, God grants benefits you never even imagined-at such times, you feel, what could be a bigger miracle than this? But the greatest miracle isn't a change in circumstances; it is when a person's thoughts change. That is the ultimate miracle.

In my travels across the world for spiritual discourses (Kathas), I witness such miracles every single day. I have seen people who didn't even believe in God become devoted to daily service (Seva); that is the miracle of the Katha that I have seen with my own eyes. I have seen countless people whose entire way of thinking has been transformed. What could be a greater miracle than a person being completely transformed from within?

Generating vermilion (Kanku) or sacred ash (Bhabhut) out of thin air is not a real miracle. The transformation of an entire person is the true miracle. Spiritual discourses (Kathas) perform such miracles every single day. The lives of thousands of people around the world have been

changed. Today, by the Lord's grace, as we manage Havellis, Pathshala (schools), and youth groups across all five continents, we have personally witnessed people undergoing this profound transformation.

If you had met them earlier, they wouldn't even believe in God; and yet, within five years, that same individual becomes such a devoted Bhagvadiya (godly person) that even their relatives cannot believe it is truly the same person! We are witnessing such miracles every single day.

He learned depth and the boundary of conduct (Maryada) from the Ocean. He observed how the moth is burnt by the lamp, and how the elephant meets its end due to the lure of touch. He shared the story of the hunter and the pigeon regarding those who hoard everything. The deer dies because of its addiction to sound (music), and the fish dies because of the pleasure of the tongue (taste).

The story of the courtesan Pingala was told. She spent the entire night waiting for someone to arrive, but when no one came, she had a sudden realization: If she had waited for God with that same intensity, she would have found Him. One must place their trust in God. Keeping faith in Him, one should perform their efforts (Purusharth). God is capable of doing everything. Even those who never come to your aid-if you have faith in God, He won't take even a moment to change their hearts.

Write this down in your heart as a rule for life: Whenever you form a wish (Manorath) or a desire in life, do not base that wish or desire on your own limited capability. Do not think, My capacity is only this much, so I should only think this small, or How could I ever host such a discourse (Katha)? or How could I ever perform such a grand service or celebrate my Beloved Shri Thakur ji in this way? Do not think like that. Do not form your heart's desires based on your own strength. Instead, form your desires based on the Lord's strength. Because if the Lord wishes to have something done through your hands, it will not take Him even twenty-four hours to completely change your circumstances.

Therefore, do not look at yourself when setting your goals. Look at the Lord and form your wish (Manorath), thinking: 'प्रभुः सर्वसमर्थो हि ततो निश्चिन्तां व्रजेत् ।' **('Prabhuḥ sarva-samartho hi tato niścintatāṃ vrajet')** My Shri Thakur ji is all-capable. If He wants to get something done,

how long would it possibly take Him? Form your desires with absolute faith; the Lord fulfills them.

He learned from the Lapwing (Titodi). She was carrying a piece of meat in her beak, and all the other birds were chasing her, attacking her to get it. The moment she dropped the piece of meat, everyone stopped bothering her; nobody came near her anymore. In the same way, as long as you have power, a high position, or money, everyone will swarm around you. But the moment that position is gone, no one will be seen near you. Therefore, one must reflect: Are the people close to me here because of my post, my wealth, and my prestige, or are they with me because of true affection (Sneha)?

He further learned from the Child; he made a small child his Guru. Whether you praise a tiny child in Sanskrit or speak harsh words to them, it makes no difference to them. How is a small child so carefree? Because they have total faith in their mother. It is that trust that brings them Nishchintata (freedom from worry). Have you ever seen a small child sitting with their head in their hands, stressed out, thinking, oh no, I bought the wrong stocks? They have no such anxiety. They trust their mother completely: My mother will do everything for me. If I am hungry, she will feed me; if I am sleepy, she will put me to bed. If we had that same level of trust in God, we would become as carefree as a child.

Children are always so full of joy! They are simply happy. They don't need special events or parties to be entertained; for them, every hour of the twenty-four is a party. As we grow big, we become so bitter that we can't even feel joy unless there is an event. We have to throw a party just to have fun; we have to borrow our happiness from external things. True happiness (Prasannata) should be our very nature. There is a beautiful saying: "Let the tiny hands of children reach for the moon and stars; after reading four books, they too will become like us." Give children the vast sky. Give them great understanding. Let their joy spring from their internal wisdom, not from external circumstances. If their happiness depends on circumstances, it won't last long. Attraction to objects lasts only two or four days; eventually, those very objects become causes of sorrow. No one can steal the happiness of a person who is happy through their own understanding. After all, how can you bribe or please someone who wants nothing from you?

What are we habituated to find happiness in? Objects, money, coincidences, or life situations. But tell me, how would you please someone who wants absolutely nothing of this from you? If happiness lets go of its dependency, then it becomes ours forever. Currently, happiness is paradhin (dependent), meaning we are dependent on others to be happy. We don't even hold the remote control to our own happiness.

He learned from the Maiden (Kumarika). Once, a family came to see a young girl for a marriage proposal. Everyone else had gone out, leaving the girl home alone. Since guests had arrived, they had to be served a meal. With no one else there, she sat down to pound grain herself. She was wearing many bangles on her wrists, which made a loud khan-khan-khan-khan clashing sound as she worked. The girl thought, If the sound of these bangles reaches the guests outside, what will they think? They might realize we don't even have pre-pounded grain in the house. To hide the noise, she took off her bangles one by one until only a single bangle remained on each wrist. When she started pounding again, the noise stopped completely.

In childhood, school taught us: Ekde Ek (One is one) and Bagde... (Two). The moment two come together, things start to go wrong. We get caught up in I'll show them, I'll prove it, I'll impress them. We exhaust ourselves just trying to impress others. As soon as there are two, the race to impress begins. Peace exists only in being One. Now, one doesn't just mean a single person; you can be one as a family, one as a society, or one as an organization. Wherever you become One, peace is born. Wherever you remain Two, the noise begins. Understand this: if you have to raise your voice to call someone, they have grown distant from you. You only have to shout when someone is far away, right? So, even if they are standing right next to you, if you are shouting, know that they have become distant from your heart. Conversely, if someone is far away but you speak softly and they understand, they are close. Because the voice of love is soft, while the voice of conflict is loud. In war, the conch (Shankh) is blown loudly, but in the Raas (the dance of love), the flute (Venu) plays gently. Reflect on this: is your language that of the flute or the conch? This is why the Maiden was made a Guru.

He learned the essence from wherever he could and made them his Gurus. He even made the Serpent (Snake) his Guru. Now, have you observed a snake? How does it move? It slithers in a zigzag, winding way-curving back and forth. He made that very movement his teacher. He made the Serpent a Guru because, while it moves in a zigzag manner in the outside world,

have you ever watched that same snake entering its own hole? When it enters its home, it becomes perfectly straight. Did you understand the point, or should I explain?

No matter how much you have to zigzag (be tactical or complex) in the outside world, when you go home, you must go in straight. If you return home carrying all the honors and titles given to you by the world on your head, you will belong neither to your home nor to the world. Go home. Even if you are worshiped by the world, even if you are a person of great stature, a high-ranking official, or a massive businessman-when you enter that house, enter only as a father, a brother, a sister, a wife, or a husband. Enter as a loved one (Snehi). If you try to enter as a dignitary, you will not be able to remain a part of that family; people will start to distance themselves from you. Enter as a kin (Svajan), so that everyone feels: Our loved one has arrived, our protector has arrived, our support has arrived. Be such a loving presence that everyone in the house feels you are their own. It is easy to control everyone, but it is difficult to win everyone's heart. When a person learns how to win hearts, that is when they truly become Great (Mota). Everyone should feel, If I'm going to do something, let me ask them first; I will get the right advice. However, the stubborn demand that No one should do anything without asking me only expresses your harshness. Instead, the family members themselves should want to ask you out of love and harmony (Sauharda). This desire to consult you should be voluntary. This is true harmony; this is true elderhood (Vadilpanu). Thus, from the Serpent, he learned Unattached Living (Nisangata).

He made the Spider his Guru. A spider weaves its own web; once the work is done, it can pull the web back into itself. Most importantly, it never gets trapped in its own creation. But humans? We weave our own webs and then get stuck in them. We expand our affairs so much that we eventually cry out, Oh, I'm under so much tension; I just can't keep up with it all!

Listen, you are the one who spread this web in the first place! You must know how to manage it. It is not a rule that success and stress must always come as a pair. Success should bring joy and fulfilment-why should it bring stress? You must learn the art of managing your success. There is no problem with being successful; by all means, be immensely successful. But if you don't know how to manage that success, it will become a burden. You must be careful and learn the skill to ensure that your progress does not become your weight.

Finally, he made the Wasp (Bhramara/Kitaka) his Guru. This is known as the 'Kita-Bhramara Nyaya' (The Logic of the Wasp and the Caterpillar). Just as the wasp stings the caterpillar and the caterpillar, in its constant, intense contemplation of the wasp, eventually transforms into a wasp itself-in the same way, a devotee who constantly contemplates the Divine begins to manifest the very qualities of God within themselves. Thus, he established these twenty-four Gurus.

Let us give rest to the Eleventh Canto (Ekadash Skandh).

Chant: 'Shri Krishna Kanhaiyalal ki Jai'

'Bhagavata Bhagwan ki Jai'

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II Shri Hari: II

The Twelth Skandha (The Leela of Ultimate Shelter/Ashray Leela)

(The uplifted hand of Shreenathji Bawa)

Just as Shreenathji Bawa raises His hand to call everyone into His shelter (Ashray), those five fingers on His uplifted hand represent the five shelters a soul must take. These are: Krishnashray, Namashray, Guru-ashray, Bhagavata-ashray, and Bhakta-ashray.

The description of the royal dynasties of Kaliyuga appeared. The influence of Kaliyuga will spread everywhere. The characteristics of Kaliyuga have been shown. Sankirtan (chanting the holy names) will remain the only remedy. Discussion on the four types of Pralaya (cosmic dissolution) has been conducted.

Shri Shukadevji began addressing King Pareekshit, "Maharaja! The seven days are nearing completion. Be vigilant, O King. Takshaka (the serpent) could arrive at any moment. No one can stop death. Is there anything else you wish to hear?"

With hands joined in prayer, King Pareekshit was overwhelmed with emotion, his heart overflowing with gratitude. 'सिद्धोऽस्मि, अनुग्रहितोऽस्मि' **('Siddho 'smi. Anugṛhito 'smi')** Gurudev!

By listening to the Shrimad Bhagavata from your lotus lips, I have become truly graced. Who can kill me? What is there to fear? That which is born must die, but I am unborn. I am immortal. I am a fragment of the Divine. The body was born, so the body must go. By hearing the Bhagavata from you, my 'I-ness' (ego) has been completely extinguished. Mohan (Krishna) is playing in every pore of my being. Now, only the Supreme Soul pervades every fiber of my existence. In every single word of this Shrimad Bhagavata, the Lord resides; every word has touched every pore of my body, and the Divine is dancing in every cell. I fear no one. Now, I myself am waiting for Takshaka to arrive and bite me. Because now, even this body feels like a bondage. Gurudev! The bird has grown large, and now the cage is too small. It wishes to fly. I am waiting for Takshaka to strike so that this 'Ghat' (the earthen pot/body) may break, and the space within may merge with the infinite sky.' 'जहाँ तक घडा हैं तब तक बंधन हैं। घडा तूट जायेगा तो आकाश और मैं दोनो एक हो जायेंगे। मैं विराट हो जाऊँगा, मैं व्यापक हो जाऊँगा, मैं आनंदरूप हो जाऊँगा। मैं आत्मा परमात्मा बन जाऊँगा।' **('Jahan tak ghadaa hai, tab tak bandhan hai. Ghada toot jaayega to aakaash aur main dono ek ho jayenge. Main virat ho jaunga, main vyapak ho jaunga, main anandroop ho jaunga. main aatmaa, paramatmaa ban jaunga.')** (As long as the pot exists, there is bondage. When the pot breaks, the space within and I will become one. I will become infinite (Virat), I will become all-pervading (Vyapak), and I will become the very form of Bliss (Anandrup). I, the individual soul (Atma), will become the Supreme Soul (Paramatma).)

Shri Shukadevji began to say, "As long as I am here, even Death does not have the power to touch you. But it is the Lord's will, and we must respect His will." Shri Shukadevji stood up. King Pareekshit performed sashtang dandvat (a prostration where eight parts of the body touch the ground). "O Gurudev! I can never repay my debt to you. I had seven days left. You haven't saved me from dying-you have made me immortal. Fear has vanished. Bliss has spread throughout my being." In this life, the greatest debt one can owe is to their Guru.

We express gratitude to those who give us material objects, but the Guru is the one who gives us God Himself. By bestowing the Divine, the Guru makes us truly wealthy. He grants us light, he grants us bliss, and he grants us knowledge. God gave us eyes, but the Guru showed us what to look for. God gave us legs, but the Guru showed us where to walk. God gave us a tongue, but

it was the Guru who taught us what to speak. The Guru is the greatest benefactor of this life. For even a stone was destined to sink, but the Guru inscribed the Name of God upon it and made it float.

Shri Shukadevji stood up. King Pareekshit performed sashtang dandvat pranam (prostrating with his entire body), and Shri Shukadevji moved forward-on a journey to find another Pareekshit.

King Pareekshit sits in profound peace. There is cheerfulness, not fear. There is bliss, not regret. He is waiting for Takshaka to arrive. Before him, the gently smiling lotus-face (Mukharvind) of Shreenathji Bawa begins to appear. Radiance spreads everywhere. He closes his eyes, and the vision of the Divine, smiling softly, begins to manifest within. It is as if Shreenathji, in the form of a Mother with an uplifted hand, is calling out to this child-like soul: Come, my child! Come. Countless lifetimes have passed since you were separated from me. This moment has arrived through the Shrimad Bhagavata. Come, merge into my lap. Become mine. For infinite births, you belonged to the world; but by hearing the Bhagavata, you have finally become mine.

He is waiting, waiting for liberation from all bondage. Hiding and slinking, Takshaka arrived. As soon as the serpent bit him, flames of fire began to blaze. King Pareekshit was freed from the shackles of the body. Running with all his might, he took a leap and climbed into the lap of Shreenathji. Speak out, "Shree Govardhannath ki Jai!", Bhagavata Bhagwan ki Jai!", "Krishna Kanhaiyalal ki Jai!"

King Pareekshit found the ultimate shelter of the Lord. The cursed man became the surrendered one. Such is the profound influence of the Shrimad Bhagavata.

King Pareekshit's son, Janamejaya, stationed soldiers everywhere. He declared, I will not let this serpent race live. He performed the Sarpa Satra Yajna (The Serpent Sacrifice). As they chanted Svaha, Svaha and made offerings into the sacrificial pit, serpents began falling into the fire one by one. He vowed, I will wipe out the entire serpent race from the face of the earth. The Lord (and the sages) counseled him, and finally, the Yajna was stopped.

Further into the story, the Supreme Lord granted Sage Markandeya a vision of His Maya (Illusion). In this vision, the entire universe was submerged; water pervaded everywhere. And in that vast expanse of water, there was a single, small leaf of a banyan tree.

करारविन्देन पदारविन्दं मुखारविन्दे विनिवेशयन्तम् ।
वटस्य पत्रस्य पुटे शयानं बालं मुकुन्दं मनसा स्मरामि ॥

Karāravindena padāravindaṃ mukhāravinde viniveśayantam |
Vaṭasya patrasya puṭe śayānaṃ bālaṃ Mukundaṃ manasā smarāmi ||

Upon a single banyan leaf, the infant Lord Krishna holds His lotus foot and places His toe into His mouth, gently swaying as He rests upon that leaf.

Even Sage Markandeya is among the Chiranjivis (The Immortals).

Moving forward, the index of the Shrimad Bhagavata was recounted once more. All the divine episodes and Leelas of the Bhagavata were brought back to memory. Here, on the banks of the Ganges, Shri Shukadevji brought the narration to a restful pause (Viraam). Simultaneously, in Naimisharanya, Suta Goswami is now bringing the Bhagavata to a conclusion, as he was narrating the discourse to Shaunaka and the other sages.

With hands joined in prayer, Suta Goswami began to say: 'भवे भवे यथा भक्तिः पादयोस्तव जायते ।' **('bhave bhave yathā bhaktiḥ pādayostava jāyate')** "Wherever we may be, in whichever form of life we may be born, please grant us Your grace so that we always find devotion to the Lord. May the richness of this devotion never leave our lives. The Name of the Lord is the destroyer of all sins. To that Supreme Lord, we offer our humble salutations."

There, on the banks of the Ganges, Shri Shukadevji brought the narration to a pause. Here, in Naimisharanya, Suta Goswami brought the narration to a pause; and here, I am bringing the narration to a pause.

We have lived for seven days. The Shrimad Bhagavata is, indeed, life itself. Simply breathing was not life; living with the Lord is truly living. We have spent seven days with the Lord. We have listened to the Lord for seven days. Today, as this entire assembly moves toward a pause,

I request all the deities to return to their respective realms. I request all the holy pilgrimages to return to their respective places. And I pray to the Lord: Please, go and take Your seat within the hearts of all these listeners.

This is the ultimate fruit (Param Phal) of the Shrimad Bhagavata. For seven days, we sit in the Katha (discourse), but on the seventh day, the Katha must sit within us. I leave this discourse in your heart. I will take the physical scripture (Pothiji) back home with me, but I will go having enshrined the living Shrimad Bhagavata within your heart. Shrimad Bhagavata means Bhaav (Devotion) and Shraddha (Faith); Shrimad Bhagavata means the Lord Himself. Today, the Lord has taken His seat in all of your hearts.

A pause (Viraam) is also a part of the whole. Even dissolution (Visarjan) is the beginning of a new creation (Nav-sarjan). Where is there ever a full stop (Purnavirama)? This is merely a comma (Alpavirama). This journey continues to revolve throughout the world, twelve months a year. Today here, tomorrow somewhere else. Where does the flow of this Katha ever stop? Residing in the hearts of various "Pareekshits," this flow continues to stream eternally.

॥ Thus ends the narration of the holy Shrimad Bhagavata ॥



Shrimad Bhagawata



Late Shri Parsottamdas Narandas Morjariya

Born : 08-09-1926 / Death : 27-04-2022

Late Shri Parsottamdas Narandas Morjariya

Parivar's Jai Shrikrushna to All Bhagavadiya Vaishnavas

|| Shrimad Bhagawata ||



Late Smt. Pratibhaben Parsottamdas Morjariya

Born : 19-07-1932 / Death : 31-01-2025

Late Smt. Pratibhaben Parsottamdas Morjariya

Parivar's Jai Shrikrushna to All Bhagavadiya Vaishnavas


Shrinathdham
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VAISHNAVACHARY
DR. SHRI DWARKESHLALJI MAHODAYSHRI
(KADI - AHMEDABAD)

FOUNDER :
ANTARRASHTRIYA VAISHNAV SANGH

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