

14. Immortal devotees of the Lord

THE inextricable relationship between the devotees and the Lord, a relationship maintained by unassailable and unflinching faith on the one side and a continuous and loving care for the devotee on the other, was the central theme of the series of discourses given by Bhagavaan during the ten-day Summer Course to students held in Brindhaavan from May 20th to May 30th. Bhagavaan took up for each discourse one episode from the Bhaagavatham to bring out illuminating lessons about the nature of devotion and significant role of the Divine in coming to the rescue of the devotee.

Produced here are stories narrated by Bhagavaan from 21-5-1995 to 29-5-1995.

The Krishna Avathaar

(From the first discourse on 21-5-1995)

There are four qualifications needed by anyone to understand the underlying significance of the Bhaagavatham, which describes devotion as a bridge between the Divine and the devotees. They are:

1. Flee from evil company.
2. Seek the company of the pious.
3. Indulge always in meritorious deeds.
4. Discriminate between the eternal and the transient.

Shuura, a king of the Yaadhava dynasty, had two sons, Ugrasena and Dhevaka. The former had a son, Kamsa, and the latter had only one daughter, Dhevaki. Kamsa had great affection for Dhevaki and considered her as his own sister and celebrated her marriage to Vasudheva with great enthusiasm. When he was driving the chariot of the newly-wed couple to take them to the bridegroom's place, an ethereal voice declared that the eighth child of Dhevaki would kill him. Kamsa, on hearing this voice, immediately unsheathed his sword and decided to kill Dhevaki on the spot to prevent the predicted catastrophe. Then at once Vasudheva gave Kamsa his assurance, that he would hand over all Dhevaki's newborn babies to Kamsa and appealed to him to spare Dhevaki. Kamsa relented and allowed them' to go. The pious Vasudheva kept his word and handed over each child as it was born to Kamsa. On learning from Naaradha that the threat to his life might come from any one of Dhevaki's children, Kamsa killed six of them.

The Magadha Emperor, Jaraasandha, gave his daughters in marriage to Kamsa, who harboured increasing hatred against the Yaadhavas, from whom he apprehended the threat to his life, and also because, according to Naaradha's words to Kamsa, the gods were to incarnate as Yaadhavas with the advent of Krishna.

God made His master-plan to punish the wicked and help the pious and pure devotees. Vasudheva's other wife, Rohini, was staying at Nanda's house away from Kamsa's tyranny. The Lord by His *Maaya Shakthi* (deluding power) transferred Dhevaki's seventh child to Rohini's womb. He was Balaraama (who was always with Krishna after he grew up). He was also called Sankarshana (transferred from one womb to another).

The Lord incarnated as Krishna, the eighth child of Dhevaki, and both Dhevaki and Vasudheva had a vision of the effulgent form of the Lord, who directed Vasudheva to take the new-born

child to Repalle (Gokulam), a village on the other bank of the Yamuna. According to the Divine Plan all the warders were fast asleep and the doors and gates of the prison, in which Kamsa has confined Vasudheva and Dhevaki, opened of their own accord, and the river in flood gave way, while Aadhissha protected the child from the torrential rains as he was being carried in a basket by Vasudheva. No power can stand against the Divine Will. The child was exchanged with that born to Yashodha, without anyone knowing about it, due to *Yogamaya*.

The child brought by Vasudheva to his cell started to cry and immediately the warders woke up and informed Kamsa, who rushed to the prison. He seized the baby and lifted it up to kill it but the Baby escaped from his clutches, went up in the air, and announced that the slayer of Kamsa had taken birth and was alive somewhere else. Enraged by this, Kamsa started killing all newborn babies. He sent his demons to Repalle also, but Krishna, even as a tiny babe, destroyed all of them.

Yashodha had *vaathsalya* (maternal love) for Krishna at the physical level, while the Gopikas of Gokulam had real devotion which was symbolically demonstrated by Krishna, who used to go after their butter rather than receive that offered by his mother Yashodha. Butter here signifies the spiritual heart of the devotee, which Krishna shared as the Divine. Krishna demonstrated to the innocent devotees of Repalle, His Divine Power in several ways.

Ambarisha's devotion

(From the discourse on 22-5-1995)

Ambareesha's father was Naabhaaga, who was rewarded by Lord Shiva for his attitude of detachment to worldly things.

Ambareesha was pious and devout and adhered firmly to the truth. He performed a *Yajna* (ritual sacrifice) with such great devotional fervour that Lord Naaraayana was pleased and blessed him with *Sudharshana*, which means good vision, and which manifested as a wheel of prosperity, peace and security to his kingdom. On sage Vashishtha's advice, Ambareesha performed another *Yajna* called the *Dhvaadhasi Vratha*. An important rite to be observed in this *vratha* was that the king must start a fast on the day prior to *Dhvaadhasi* (the twelfth day after new moon) and break it at the start of *Dhvaadhasi* and feed all the people. As the moment of breaking the fast was drawing near, the mighty sage Dhuurvaasa arrived and was received with all honours by Ambareesha. Dhuurvaasa agreed to the king's request to be his honoured guest, and asked the king to wait till he finished his bath in the river and returned. As the auspicious moment approached when the king had to break his fast to fulfill the vow of the *Yajna*, Dhuurvaasa did not turn up. On the advice of the sage Vashishtha, the king broke his fast by taking a *thulasi* leaf with water, and waited for the arrival of sage Dhuurvaasa to offer him food.

Dhuurvaasa, who was well known for his short temper, felt that Ambareesha had violated the respect due to a guest by breaking his fast before the guest had taken his meal, and in his rage created a demon to kill Ambareesha. Lord Naaraayana's *Sudharshana* (discus) intervened, destroyed the demon, and started chasing Dhuurvaasa himself. Dhuurvaasa went to Brahma and Shiva for protection. Both pleaded their inability to save him. He went to Lord Naaraayana himself, who said that He could do nothing as He was bound by the blemishless devotion of Ambareesha and suggested to the sage to seek the pardon of the king. Dhuurvaasa went to Ambareesha, who prayed to Lord Vishnu to recall the *Sudharshana* and save Dhuurvaasa.

The lesson of this episode is that God regards Himself as a servant of His true devotee. Students need to learn the lesson that it is not enough if they do good work, but should do so with humility and devotion. Ambareesha was the embodiment of humility.

The saga of Dhruva

(From the discourse on 23-5-1995)

Dhruva was a young lad of five years, who did penance with single minded devotion and determination and was blessed with the vision of Lord Naaraayana.

Uthanaapaadha, the elder of the two sons of Manu, who gave to mankind the *Dharma Shaasthra* (the Code of Righteousness), had two wives, Suruchi and Suneethi. Uthama was the son of Suruchi, the younger queen while Dhruva was born to Suneethi.

Once both of the boys were playing in the garden. Spotting their doting father sitting on the throne, they rushed forward to sit on the king's lap. While Uthama sat on his father's lap, the five-year old Dhruva was prevented by Suruchi, who said that only her sons had the right to sit on the king's lap. Dhruva went to his mother Suneethi and sat weeping. When he started criticizing his step-mother for her action, his mother silenced him and said, "Desist from criticizing anyone. If you criticize others the defects pointed out by you will come to you. Accept everything as something good."

So saying she advised Dhruva to go to the forest and do penance to secure the Grace of Lord Naaraayana, who was the only hope for the helpless. Dhruva obeyed his mother implicitly and proceeded to the forest without any fear and with full faith in his mother's words that God was the only refuge for the forlorn. Having noticed this wonderful determination of the young boy who was ready to brave the perils of the forest with firm determination, sage Naaradha appeared before him and tried to dissuade him from undertaking a severe penance to earn the Lord's Grace. But Dhruva refused to go back and expressed his confidence that he would surely succeed in winning the Lord's Grace with his mother's blessings and his unshakable faith. This is the ideal that today's students should learn. Naaradha was pleased with the young Dhruva's firm faith and initiated him in the chanting of the twelve-lettered *manthra*, "Om *Namo Bhagavathe Vaasudhevaaya*."

Dhruva did intense penance, giving up food and drink, and was reduced to a skeleton. He transcended his *Annamaya Kosha* (food sheath). He was saturated with the Lord's name, which he chanted with each breath ceaselessly. His *Manomaya Kosha* (mind sheath) was also dedicated to the Lord, driving away all other thoughts. His entire being was filled with bliss in the contemplation of the Lord. This is another ideal taught by Dhruva to students that meditation must be with total concentration on the Divine Form.

Lord Naaraayana appeared before Dhruva, whose radiance went on intensifying as the Lord was approaching him. Looking at the majestic form of the Cosmic Lord, Dhruva burst into ecstatic praise. He exclaimed, "O Lord! Till now you were in me and you have come out to grace me. Are you going to leave me?"

Lord Vishnu, who was astonished at the amazing wisdom of such a young child, patted him on his cheek and asked him to say what boon he wanted. Dhruva said, "Oh Lord, after having your *Dharshan* (audience) and getting your Grace, I don't want anything else." The Lord replied,

"Dhruva, you undertook this penance with one thought, namely, to sit on your father's lap, but now you speak differently. Your words and action are contrary to your thought. You must go back to your father with my blessings. He will receive you with full affection. You must rule the kingdom and then come to Me." The Lord also assured Dhruva that after ruling the kingdom for a long time he would occupy a most exalted position in the firmament as a star around whom the constellation of the Seven *Rishis* (sages) and other galaxies would revolve.

Dhruva, on his return to the kingdom, was received with ceremonial honours by his penitent and joyous father. Dhruva consoled his father by reminding him that all are forms of Naaraayana. Uthanaapaada entrusted the kingdom to the six-year old Dhruva, saying that a boy who could get the Divine vision and grace at that tender age, could rule the kingdom. He retired to *Skanda Aashrama*, (hermitage) seeking realisation of the Divine.

Dhruva ruled for a long time very wisely and well, maintaining justice and peace. When his sojourn in the world came to an end, a celestial chariot came to take him to God's Abode. He told the charioteer that God was everywhere and so the question of taking him to God's place did not arise. So saying, he sat down closing his eyes in meditation and merged in the Divine.

The infinite power of *Bhakthi* (true devotion to the Lord) must be understood by all. It contains all the six qualities, namely, *Bhukthi* (food), *Rakthi* (charm), *Yukthi* (knowledge of how to love all), *Anurakthi* (great attraction), *Virakthi* (cessation of desires) and *Mukthi* (Liberation). When from the word Bhagavaan (the Lord), the root word, '*Bhag*', (relating to the Divine) is taken and combined with '*kthi*', which is common in all the six qualities, it becomes *Bhakthi*.

The story of Dhruva must teach the students the value of determination and devotion to God.

The example of Jadabharatha

(From the discourse on 24-5-1995)

Priyavratha was the son of Svayambhuva Manu and brother of Uthanaapaadha. Having realised the futility of mundane comforts, which are transient, he renounced his kingdom at the early age of 19 years and left for the forest in pursuit of realisation of the *Athma*. He had strong belief in the truth that the human body is given only for realising and experiencing the bliss of *Athma*. The students of those days sacrificed all comforts to pursue their studies, unlike those of the present day who hanker after materialistic pleasures. Priyavratha developed the steadfastness and mental tranquillity and purity of heart. Emperor Manu, his father, was worried and tried to wean him back to the kingdom. He declined, stating that without realising his own nature and reality he could not satisfy the people. Manu sought the advice of the sage Naaradha, who prevailed upon Priyavratha to agree to rule the Kingdom as a command from God.

After a few years, Priyavratha again felt that association with people and worldly objects constituted obstacles to spiritual *saadhana*. So he renounced the kingdom and returned to the forest. King Rishabha took over the reigns of the kingdom and ruled with a sense of detachment, while pursuing his spiritual *saadhana* for the realisation of Truth.

Bharatha, the son of Rishabha, was a righteous prince. He would not embark on any work without praying to God and seeking Divine Grace. Our country: Bhaarath is named after this king Bharatha. Even though he was not attracted by worldly pleasures, he had a special attachment for a deer, which he was bringing up with great affection. At the moment of his

death he was thinking of this deer and was born as a deer and later on had a human birth. Students should be careful to remember the Divine name and form always, so that even at the time of death one will have the Divine name on the lips and merge with the Divine.

In his new birth, Bharatha was immersed in *Aathmik* consciousness from the very beginning and was totally oblivious to his physical existence. In this state he was caught by a band of brigands to be offered as a human sacrifice for their deity Kaali. He was totally unaffected by what was being done to him. Just as the brigands were about to cut off his head, Goddess Kaali Herself appeared and rescued him and bade him continue on his righteous path.

Just then the king Sindhu Saveera (Rahugana) was going that way in a palanquin accompanied by some of his attendants. The servants carrying the palanquin were tired and asked Bharatha to help them in carrying it for sometime to relieve their strain. Bharatha took this also as a divine dispensation and assisted in carrying the palanquin. As he was very compassionate by nature, he was careful not to trample on any insects on the ground and swayed continuously and walked slowly while carrying the palanquin. The king became angry at the slow and swaying movement of the palanquin and asked his servants why they were going slow. He peeped out of the palanquin and found that Bharatha was the cause for the slow movement and rebuked him for walking like a corpse. Bharatha replied calmly: "It is not me alone. All of us are corpse. It is only the power of the Divine that is making us function." The King was on his way to meet Kapila, the great sage, to have *Aathmik* Knowledge. He was astounded at the wise reply of Bharatha. He got down and sat there listening to Bharatha's exposition about *the Aathma*.

Because Bharatha had obtained the knowledge by his own experience, he was able to influence several kings and scholars with his expositions. Some of his teachings were'

- One should have sense control by which alone one could avert the danger of attachment to the physical.
- To have no attachment for mundane comforts.
- To reduce desires for worldly objects. Man must not try to propitiate God for achieving paltry worldly desires.
- One cannot escape the consequences of one's action despite intense meditation, pilgrimages or rituals.
- As is the heart so is one's experience.
- Everyone should, on his own, forge a path to get over his destiny.

Manu and the kings in his lineage were examples of enlightened beings described in the Bhaagavatham.

Students should learn to serve society selflessly without expecting any' return. They should combine spiritual *saadhana* with academic studies.

Thrishanku and Vishvaamithra

(From the discourse on 25-5-1995)

Thrishanku, of the Lunar dynasty; was a noble, pious king, but developed an irrational desire to go to heaven in his human body. His preceptor, Bhrahmarishi Vashishtha told him that his desire was like seeing to pack an unsuspecting dead body and taking it to heaven. Thrishanku was adamant, but Vashishtha refused to help him in his unholy desire. The king approached the learned sons of Vashishtha, who had immense spiritual powers. They refused to help one who had defied the advice of his own preceptor, their father. Finally the king approached sage Kaushika, who harboured an ill-feeling towards Vashishtha because of an earlier encounter with him. Kaushika agreed to take up the case of Thrishanku as a challenge. He performed a *Yajna* for the purpose of sending Thrishanku bodily straight to heaven. At the conclusion of the *Yajna*, the gods did not come down to accept the offering. Enraged by this, Kaushika concentrated all the powers acquired by him by his penance on his Brahmadhanda (flagstaff) to transport Thrishanku to heaven. But Indhra, the Lord of the celestial ones, blocked his path and Thrishanku came hurtling down towards the earth. On seeing this, Kaushika stopped him in the middle of the firmament and proceeded to create a parallel heaven, with all its paraphernalia. Even today, it is known as *Thrishanku Svarga* (In western astronomy, this is known as the constellation Southern Cross, consisting of four stars).

Consequences of breach of promise

King Thrishanku had a son by name Harishchandhra (not Emperor Harishchandhra who sacrificed everything for truth). This Harishchandhra had no sons and prayed to Lord Varuna (the Rain God) for a son, with the promise that he would sacrifice his son later to the same God. He got a son, Raahul. As he became attached to the son, he did not keep his promise and was afflicted by a strange disease.

Raahul, being afraid of the consequences of his father's failure to keep his promise, fled to the forest. He got the idea that his father's illness could be cured if someone else was offered to Varuna in his place. Seeing a Brahmana couple with three children, he asked them to offer one of the sons for sacrifice in return for a large herd of cows and other wealth. The Brahmana was attached to the eldest son and would not part with him. His wife was attached to the youngest son and would not let him go. So it was the middle son who was offered and preferred to die as an offering to God, rather than live without the love of father and mother. Raahul was taking this boy with him when on the way they passed through Kaushika's Aashram. The Brahmana boy, Shunassepha, sought refuge with the sage. Pledging to protect him, Kaushika asked one of his sons to go with Raahul, saying that the human body has to be offered in service to others. His sons ridiculed the idea and declined to comply with Kaushika's proposal. Thereupon the sage taught Shunassepha a *manthra* to propitiate Lord Varuna. The boy chanted the *manthra* and Lord Varuna appeared before him and chided Harishchandhra for agreeing to offer his son to Varuna and then going back on his word and offering some one else in his place. He said because of his breaking the promise, he would be consumed by the disease afflicting him.

Students should learn from this the lesson that they must not develop excessive attachment to anything and should always keep their plighted word.

Sage Kaushika himself was a victim of an unbecoming desire (when he was an emperor) to possess the wish-fulfilling cow of sage Vashishtha. Foiled in his attempt, he embarked on severe penances to acquire the title of Brahmarishi on a par with Vashishtha. He forfeited the fruits of his penances several times before he could earn ultimately the title of Brahmarishi from Vashishtha himself.

The all conquering faith of Prahlada

(From discourse on 25-5-1995)

This is the story of Prahlada, who remained utterly unshaken in his faith in Lord Naaraayana despite the ordeals to which he was subjected by his father, Hiranyakashipu, who hated Naaraayana as the slayer of his brother.

Hiranyaaksha, the younger brother of Hiranyakashipu, was killed by Vishnu in his incarnation as Varaaha (Boar). In order to acquire invincible power, Hiranyakashipu left for Mount Mandhara to perform a rigorous penance. While he was away doing penance, his wife, Leelavathi, was taken by sage Naaradha to his *Aashram* to protect her and the child she was carrying, from the onslaught of *dhevas*. He imparted to her the knowledge of the exploits of Naaraayana. Though she did not pay much attention to the teachings of Naaradha, the child in the womb absorbed them and started meditating on the *Mahaa manthra*, "*Om Namoh Narayanaaya*" while still in the womb.

Brahma was pleased with the penance of Hiranyakashipu and granted him the boon that he would not meet with his death either during day or night, either on earth or sky; either from man or beast or from the gods. With this boon, he became lord of the universe and decreed that he alone should be worshipped.

When Prahlada was five years old, he was entrusted to the care of two teachers, Chanda and Amarka, both sons of the sage Kripaachaarya, with strict instructions to impart all demonic traits to the child and banish Vishnu's name from his mind. The teachers taught him about *Artha*(wealth), and *Kama* (desire) but abstained from teaching about the other two goals of human life, *Dharma* (Righteousness) and *Moksha* (Liberation). But in spite of their best efforts, the teachers could not create a single negative thought in Prahlada's mind. He persisted in his own belief that Lord Naaraayana was the Supreme Master of the world to be worshipped by nine modes of devotion, beginning with listening to the glories of the Lord and culminating in total surrender of the self.

Hiranyakashipu tried all means of gentle persuasion to coax Prahlada to accept him as the supreme master and forget Naaraayana. Prahlada told his father that though he had mastered the entire external world he could not master his senses. Enraged at this son's unshakable devotion to his arch-enemy, Hiranyakashipu decided to put an end to Prahlada by all possible means. Prahlada was totally devoid of body consciousness and was always in a state of bliss chanting the name of Hari. He survived all tortures inflicted on him and came out unscathed. In utter exasperation, Hiranyakashipu finally asked Prahlada: "Who is this God that protects you? Where is he?" Prahlada, who had realised the omnipresence of God, told his father that God was everywhere in the cosmos, from the tiniest microcosm to the mighty macrocosm. He added "One who is a slave to his senses cannot see Him. As long as you have ego and attachment you cannot see Hari, though He is within and outside every being." Hiranyakashipu then asked Prahlada: "Is He in this pillar?" When Prahlada said, "Yes, He is," Hiranyakashipu smote the pillar with his mace. The pillar split into two and there emerged from it the Lord in the dreadful form of Narasimha (half-lion and half-man). He seized the demon by the throat, placed him on his lap and tore his entrails with his nails.

Though everyone trembled at the sight of the awe-inspiring form of Narasimha. Prahlada stood beside the Lord cheerfully, in adoration. When he was asked by the Lord if he had no fear,

Prahlaadha replied, "To me You are only the embodiment of Love. I believe in your Divine form of Love and not this physical form." Lord Narasimha then commanded Prahlaadha to take over the reigns of the kingdom, transform the demons into virtuous beings and then come back to His divine Abode. Prahlaadha requested the Lord to pardon his father and take him to heaven. The Lord granted the boon. Prahlaadha ruled over the world for a long time with justice and righteousness.

Students must imbibe at least one quality of the great devotee, Prahlaadha, and practise it in daily life. You should always remember God and chant His name and have his Form in mind in any situation.

Krishna and the gopalas

(From the discourse on 26-5-1995)

Balarama and Krishna were in the habit of taking the other cowherd boys with their cows for grazing in the forest near Gokulam. Once the Gopalas engaged in merry making, in dancing and singing, quite unconcerned about the time, while the cows were out grazing. Suddenly they found that the cows had disappeared and they went in different directions to search for them. They found the cows grazing at a distant place and saw a fire blazing all around. The cowherd boys could not approach the cows. They cried in desperation, "Krishna, Krishna." When Krishna called the cows by their names, they responded, running towards him, crying "Ammma." The cows could always recognise Krishna's voice and understand his call. The cowherd lads were terribly shaken by the sight of the advancing fire. Balarama and Krishna told them: "Why fear when we are here?" Krishna asked them to close their eyes and not to open them until he gave the order. They always implicitly obeyed the command of Krishna, in whom they had full faith.

When Krishna asked them to open their eyes they did so, and found themselves in the same place where they had been dancing, and it was cool all round. The fire had disappeared. Immediately they fell at the feet of Krishna and hailed him as the Supreme Lord.

When such miracles were performed they used to hail Him as God, but after some time they would revert to their old habit of calling him their friend. Even now people consider the *Avathaar* (divine advent) as God only when miracles happen, but at other times they consider Him an ordinary being.

Krishna wanted to teach the Gopalas about the *Aathma*. It was the rainy season, and dark clouds were hovering over the sky. There was lightning followed by thunder. Krishna said that the dark clouds represent the *Thaamasik* (ignorance) quality in man, thunder the *Raajasik* (passionate) quality and lightning the *Saathvik* (enlightening). Because of *Thamo-guna* you are not able to see the vast sky which is the Divine. Just as lightning shines in a dark cloud, *Jnaana* (wisdom) shines beyond the cloud of ignorance.

A lesson for *pandiths*

On another occasion, Krishna gave the Gopalas a sublime experience. The cowherd boys had taken the cows to the forest to graze. When they felt hungry, they asked Krishna and Balarama to give them food. Krishna said, "When you have the all powerful Being with you, why do you worry about food? There is a *Yajna* being performed by some *pandiths* nearby. All of you may

go and tell them that you are hungry. They will feed you." Accordingly they went to the place and asked for food. *The pandiths* told them that they could serve food only after the *Purnaahuthi* (completion of the sacrificial ritual). The lads returned disappointed and informed Krishna about it. Krishna asked them to go to the wives of the *pandiths* who were cooking the food, and not to the *pandiths* who could not recognise the nature of Divinity. Krishna asked them to go behind the *yajnashaala* (hall of ritual) and ask the women to serve food. They went there and informed the ladies that they were Krishna's friends. While the *pandiths* could not recognise the greatness of Balaraama and Krishna, the ladies asked them with great devotion as to where Balaraama and Krishna were. When told that they were nearby; the ladies took all the food in their vessels to the place where Krishna was. They forgot body-consciousness and were in ecstasy at the sight of Krishna. They made all the cowherds sit and served the food. The *pandiths* came in search of their women and found them serving food to Balaraama, Krishna and their friends. The *pandiths* later realised that the God to whom they had been making their offerings at the *Yajna* was Himself there in the form of Krishna. Krishna showed the form of Naaraayana to the *pandiths*, who prostrated before Him. What was the use of doing *yajnas* without realising the God who was in human form available close by?

Nothing in the world is yours and you are just a trustee for the wealth which belongs to the Divine. Developing the feeling of "mine" and "thine" people get attached to the unreal and the transient and forget the eternal.

Devotion of the Gopikas

The Gopikas were examples of true devotion. Krishna was five years old when He did the *Rasakreeda* (sporting with the Gopikas). There is nothing sensuous in this; it is the sacred *Aathma-thathva* which the Gopikas experienced, that is oneness with the Divine. They enjoyed the music of Krishna's flute as *Naadha-brahman* (the Cosmic Absolute in the form of sound). Krishna gave them the essence of the music of the *Vedhas* in his music and talked to them in the language they could understand.

The Gopikas had only the name of Krishna on their lips and the form of Krishna in their hearts. When Uddhava was sent by Krishna to teach them the *shaasthras* (spiritual texts) they said they had only one mind and that was given to Krishna and that they had no room in their mind for anything else. Uddhava read out the letter to them which Krishna had sent. The letter said 'I am always with you and around you. I am the Indweller of your hearts. Uddhava will pass on the message. Practise it.' The Gopikas had no patience to learn any lesson from Uddhava. Finally they said they wanted one message to be sent to Krishna and that was 'Let Krishna come and make the flower of our hearts blossom.' Uddhava went to Krishna and extolled the pure unalloyed devotion of the Gopikas.

You should understand the real devotion of the Gopikas. You should have full faith in and single-minded devotion to God.

Akruura's vision of the Lord

(From the discourse on 28-5-1995)

Everyone in the world loves objects or persons or even God, for his or her own selfish purpose. No one loves God for God's sake. Man exists in three states

waking, dream, and deep sleep. In the waking state all his senses and mind are at work, while in the dream state only the mind is active, and in deep sleep everything merges in the Self and one enjoys bliss. Man should make efforts to experience the reality beyond all the three states.

Naaradha told Krishna in advance about the impending visit of Akruura and mentioned that Akruura would perceive Him as Naaraayana and Balaraama as Aadhissha. Akruura arrived shortly afterwards with an invitation to Krishna and Balaraama to attend the *Dhanur-Yajna* to be performed by Kamsa. Akruura was very devoted to Balaraama and Krishna and so he informed them that Kamsa's invitation was only a part of his nefarious scheme to lure them to Mathura and kill them.

The Gopikas and Gopaalas tried their best to prevent Akruura from taking Krishna and Balaraama in his chariot. They were not worried about 'any harm that might be caused by the evil-minded Kamsa. Their fear was that Krishna might not return from Mathura. Krishna told them, "We must go to Mathura to fulfill our mission. You are not the body. The Indweller in the heart is directing the whole show. That is the *Aathma*. You are in Me. I am in you. Understand this truth and you will know everything."

After thus pacifying the Gopis and Gopikas, Krishna and Balaraama left in the chariot driven by Akruura. In the evening Akruura alighted near a river to perform his ablutions. While having a dip in the river he had the vision of Lord Vishnu reclining on Aadhissha, the hydra-headed Divine Serpent. On hurrying back he saw Krishna and Balaraama sitting in the chariot unperturbed. Krishna asked Akruura what he had seen to make his face so radiant. Akruura was thrilled at the experience and praised them. He requested them both to stay at his house, but Krishna politely declined, promising to visit him after finishing his mission in Mathura.

The next day, while they were walking along the road, they spotted the royal washerman and asked him for some royal clothes. The washerman rudely replied that the royal clothes could not even be touched by low-born cowherds. Infuriated at this, Krishna struck the *dhobi*, who fell down. They took some of the royal clothes, and went on their way.

Later they met an old hunch-backed lady, Kubja, who was providing scents and perfumes for Kamsa. She had a beautiful face but an ugly body, bent over in three ways. Seeing the two brothers, she was overjoyed and gave away all the perfumes to them. Though God never asks anything from anyone, if someone offers something He returns it a hundredfold. Krishna planted His foot on her feet, caught hold of her chin and lifted it up. Lo and behold! Her crooked back was gone! She shed tears of gratitude to Krishna for restoring her beautiful shape and prayed to Him to visit her house to accept her prayerful offerings. Krishna promised to do so after finishing His mission.

Parents freed

Kamsa heard of these exploits of the young lads and tried to send an elephant in rut, to kill them, but it was the elephant that was killed. Next Kamsa had two of his best wrestlers challenge them in combat. The wrestlers met with their end and realised that the Divine had come in the form of Krishna and Balaraama. Then Kamsa ordered his troops to close in on them. But Krishna, in a trice, jumped on the platform where Kamsa was seated and rained severe blows on him till he dropped dead.

After the death of Kamsa, Krishna and Balaraama went to the prison where Dhevaki and Vasudheva were confined, and freed them. Krishna reinstated Kamsa's father on the throne.

Later Krishna went to Akruura's house. Akruura referred to the inexplicable ways of the Lord in His various incarnations and said that he was greatly blessed by Krishna's visit to his house. He hugged Krishna, who was well aware of Akruura's boundless devotion.

Students should develop devotion to God, such as this. Whatever you do must be done as an offering to God; that in itself will be a penance to win the grace of God.

Creation of Dhvaaraka city by Lord Krishna

(From the discourse on 29-5-1995)

People are generally hankering after academic education and worldly attainments, but forget the Super Power, who is the Basis for all knowledge and the entire cosmos.

After Kamsa was killed, Nandha and Yashodha made arrangements for the education of Krishna and Balarama in the traditional manner, by sending them to a *Gurukul*. In those days, even princes had to go to the *aashram* of a *guru* to study, and no distinction was made between the rich and the poor or high and low among students. Even though Krishna and Balarama had exhibited superhuman powers in vanquishing Kamsa and other demons, they had to learn the regular lessons in *Brahma Vidhya* from sage Sandheepani, in his *aashram* in the forest.

They had to go to the forest and gather firewood for *the Guru's* household. All the students had to share the work in the *aashram* among themselves equally without any distinction. At the end of the educational course the students used to give *Gurudhakshina* (offering to the preceptor). Krishna and Balarama asked their preceptor what he would like them to give. The teacher, who was quite aware of the Divine powers of Krishna, told Him that since He was the incarnation of the Supreme, He could do anything, and so he would like to have his son, who had died some time earlier, restored to life, as his wife was very much attached to the son and was in great grief after his death. Krishna and Balarama chanted some *manthras* and brought the *Guru's* son back to life. The *Guru* was immensely pleased and expressed his gratitude to Krishna and Balarama.

After they returned to their kingdom from the forest, Jaraasandha, the ruler of Magadha, who had given both his daughters in marriage to Kamsa, and bore a grudge against Krishna, invaded the Yaadhava kingdom and caused considerable destruction. Krishna's strategy was to weaken Jaraasandha after each encounter and finally destroy him. The followers of Jaraasandha harboured hatred towards Balarama and Krishna and were harassing the Yaadhavas during *yajnas*. Krishna wanted to settle his people in a secure place. He had an island city constructed by Vishvakarma, the architect of the gods. That city was Dhvaaraka, a city of unmatched splendour and beauty. The Yaadhavas began to lead happy lives in the new place.

Here, students must understand the difference between the Yaadhavas and the Gopikas. The Yaadhavas considered Krishna as their relative, and were proudly proclaiming Krishna as their own kinsman. Because of their pride, they finally perished in mutual strife after Krishna's exit from the world. In contrast, the Gopikas considered themselves as Krishna's worshippers, and were humble and devoted to the Divine.

I conclude the series of discourses on the Bhaagavatham with a stirring appeal to students to learn the following lessons:

- Students should learn humility and obedience and serve society.

- If you have God's Grace, you can progress fearlessly in the world.
- For this, faith in oneself or self-confidence is the foundation.
- You should cultivate *Ekaathma-bhaava* or oneness of the *Aathma* dwelling in all beings, as taught by Prahlada's example.
- Students should have determination, like Dhruva, to follow the righteous godly path.
- You should follow the discipline necessary to maintain the balance in life.
- Everything should be within limits, and excessive desires should be curbed.
- Following examples of great devotees as a guide, you should strive as exemplary individuals leading ideal lives.

I want each one of you to grow into a strong, steady and straight person. Your eyes should not seek evil sights; your ears should not seek evil tales; your tongue should not seek evil speech; your hands should not seek evil acts; your minds should not seek evil thoughts. Be pure and be full of Love. Help those who are in a worse condition and serve those who need your help.

BABA