

The Story of Lord Nṛsimhadeva



The following story of the appearance of Lord Nṛsimhadeva is from [*Srimad-Bhagavatam, Canto 7, Chapters 2-10.*](#)

At the performance of the Rājasuya sacrifice by Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, the celestial sage Nārada Muni appeared to give spiritual instructions to the Pāṇḍavas.

Hiraṇyakaśipu, King of the Demons

Śrī Nārada Muni said: My dear King Yudhiṣṭhira, when Lord Viṣṇu appeared in the form of Varāha (the Boar incarnation), and killed the demon Hiraṇyakṣa, Hiraṇyakṣa's brother Hiraṇyakaśipu was extremely angry and began to lament.

Filled with rage and biting his lips, Hiraṇyakaśipu gazed at the sky with eyes that blazed in anger, making the whole sky smoky. Thus he began to speak. Exhibiting his terrible teeth, fierce glance and frowning eyebrows, terrible to see, he took up his weapon, a trident, and thus began speaking to his associates, the assembled demons:

‘O Dānavas and Daityas! O Dvimūrdha, Tryakṣa, Śambara and Tryakṣa, Śambara and Śatabāhu! O Hayagrīva, Namuci, Pāka and Ilvala! O Vipracitti, Puloman, Śakuna and other demons! All of you kindly hear me attentively and then act according to my words without delay.

‘My insignificant enemies the demigods have combined to kill my very dear and obedient well-wisher, my brother Hiraṇyakṣa. Although the Supreme Lord, Viṣṇu, is always equal to both of us—namely, the demigods and the demons—this time, being devoutly worshiped by the demigods, He has taken their side and helped them kill Hiraṇyakṣa.

‘The Supreme Personality of Godhead has given up His natural tendency of equality toward the demons and demigods. Although He is the Supreme Person, now, influenced by *māyā*, He has assumed the form of a Boar to please His devotees, the demigods, just as a restless child leans toward someone. I shall therefore sever Lord Viṣṇu’s head from His trunk by my trident, and with the profuse blood from His body I shall please my brother Hiraṇyākṣa, who was so fond of sucking blood. Thus shall I too be peaceful.

‘When the root of a tree is cut and the tree falls down, its branches and twigs automatically dry up. Similarly, when I have killed this diplomatic Viṣṇu, the demigods, for whom Lord Viṣṇu is the life and soul, will lose the source of their life and wither away.

‘While I am engaged in the business of killing Lord Viṣṇu, go down to the planet earth, which is flourishing due to brahminical culture and a *kṣatriya* government. These people engage in austerity, sacrifice, Vedic study, regulative vows, and charity. Destroy all the people thus engaged!

‘The basic principle of brahminical culture is to satisfy Lord Viṣṇu, the personification of sacrificial and ritualistic ceremonies. Lord Viṣṇu is the personified reservoir of all religious principles, and He is the shelter of all the demigods, the great *pitās* (forefathers), and the people in general. When the *brāhmaṇas* are killed, no one will exist to encourage the *kṣatriyas* to perform *yajñas*, and thus the demigods, not being appeased by *yajña*, will automatically die.

‘Immediately go wherever there is good protection for the cows and *brāhmaṇas*, and wherever the Vedas are studied in terms of the *varṇāśrama* principles. Set fire to those places and cut from the roots the trees there, which are the source of life.’ Thus the demons, being fond of disastrous activities, took Hiraṇyakaśipu’s instructions on their heads with great respect and offered him obeisances. According to his directions, they engaged in envious activities directed against all living beings.

The demons set fire to the cities, villages, pasturing grounds, cowpens, gardens, agricultural fields and natural forests. They burned the hermitages of the saintly persons, the important mines that produced valuable metals, the residential quarters of the agriculturalists, the mountain villages, and the villages of the cow protectors, the cowherd men. They also burned the government capitals.

Some of the demons took digging instruments and broke down the bridges, the protective walls and the gates [*gopuras*] of the cities. Some took axes and began cutting the important trees that produced mango, jackfruit and other sources of food. Some of the demons took firebrands and set fire to the residential quarters of the citizens.

Thus disturbed again and again by the unnatural occurrences caused by the followers of Hiraṇyakaśipu, all the people had to cease the activities of Vedic culture. Not receiving the results of *yajña*, the demigods also became disturbed. They left their residential quarters in the heavenly planets and, unobserved by the demons, began wandering on the planet earth to see the disasters.

After performing the ritualistic observances for the death of his brother, Hiraṇyakaśipu, being extremely unhappy, tried to pacify his nephews. O King, Hiraṇyakaśipu was extremely angry, but since he was a great politician, he knew how to act according to the time and situation. With sweet words he began pacifying his nephews, whose names were Śakuni, Śambara, Dhṛṣṭi, Bhūtasantāpana, Vṛka, Kālanābha, Mahānābha, Hariśmaśru and Utkaca. He also consoled their mother, his sister-in-law, Ruṣābhānu, as well as his own mother, Diti. He spoke to them all as follows.

Hiranyakasipu said: ‘My dear mother, sister-in-law and nephews, you should not lament for the death of the great hero, for a hero’s death in front of his enemy is glorious and desirable.

‘My dear mother, in a restaurant or place for drinking cold water, many travelers are brought together, and after drinking water they continue to their respective destinations. Similarly, living entities join together in a family, and later, as a result of their own actions, they are led apart to their destinations.

‘The spirit soul, the living entity, has no death, for he is eternal and inexhaustible. Being free from material contamination, he can go anywhere in the material or spiritual worlds. He is fully aware and completely different from the material body, but because of being misled by misuse of his slight independence, he is obliged to accept subtle and gross bodies created by the material energy and thus be subjected to so-called material happiness and distress. Therefore, no one should lament for the passing of the spirit soul from the body.

‘Because of the movements of the water, the trees on the bank of a river, when reflected on the water, seem to move. Similarly, when the eyes move because of some mental derangement, the land appears to move also. In the same way, O my gentle mother, when the movements of the modes of material nature agitate the mind, the living entity, although freed from all the different phases of the subtle and gross bodies, thinks that he has changed from one condition to another.

‘The living entity, accepting the body and mind to be the self in his bewildered state, considers some people to be his kinsmen and others to be outsiders. Because of this misconception, he suffers. Indeed, the accumulation of such concocted material ideas is the cause of so-called suffering and happiness in the material world. The conditioned soul thus situated must take birth in different species and work in various types of consciousness, thus creating new bodies. This continued material life is called saṁsāra. Birth, death, lamentation, foolishness and anxiety are due to such material considerations. Thus we sometimes come to a proper understanding and sometimes fall again to a wrong conception of life.

‘In this regard, an example is given from an old history. This involves a discourse between Yamarāja and the friends of a dead person. Please hear it attentively. In the state known as Uśīnara there was a celebrated king named Suyajña. When his enemies killed the King in battle, his kinsmen sat down around the dead body and began to lament the death of their friend.

‘His golden, bejeweled armor smashed, his ornaments and garlands fallen from their places, his hair scattered and his eyes lusterless, the slain King lay on the battlefield, his entire body smeared with blood, his heart pierced by the arrows of the enemy. When he died he had wanted to show his prowess, and thus he had bitten his lips, and his teeth remained in that position. His beautiful lotuslike face was now black and covered with dust from the battlefield. His arms, with his sword and other weapons, were cut and broken. When the queens of the King of Uśīnara saw their husband lying in that position, they began crying, “O lord, now that you have been killed, we also have been killed.” Repeating these words again and again, they fell down, pounding their breasts, at the feet of the dead King.

‘As the queens loudly cried, their tears glided down their breasts, becoming reddened by kuṅkuma powder, and fell upon the lotus feet of their husband. Their hair became disarrayed, their ornaments fell, and the queens began lamenting their husband’s death in a way that evoked sympathy from the hearts of others. “O lord, you have now been removed by cruel Providence to a state beyond our sight.

You had previously sustained the livelihood of the inhabitants of Uśīnara, and thus they were happy, but your condition now is the cause of their unhappiness. O King, O hero, you were a very grateful husband and the most sincere friend of all of us. How shall we exist without you? O hero, wherever you are going, please direct us there so that we may follow in your footsteps and engage again in your service. Let us go along with you!”

“The time was appropriate for the body to be burned, but the queens, not allowing it to be taken away, continued lamenting for the dead body, which they kept on their laps. In the meantime, the sun completed its movements for setting in the west. While the queens were lamenting for the dead body of the King, their loud cries were heard even from the abode of Yamarāja. Assuming the body of a boy, Yamarāja personally approached the relatives of the dead body and advised them as follows.

‘Śrī Yamarāja said: “Alas, how amazing it is! These persons, who are older than me, have full experience that hundreds and thousands of living entities have taken birth and died. Thus they should understand that they also are apt to die, yet still they are bewildered. The conditioned soul comes from an unknown place and returns after death to that same unknown place. There is no exception to this rule, which is conducted by material nature. Knowing this, why do they uselessly lament? “It is wonderful that these elderly women do not have a higher sense of life than we do. Indeed, we are most fortunate, for although we are children and have been left to struggle in material life, unprotected by father and mother, and although we are very weak, we have not been vanquished or eaten by ferocious animals. Thus we have a firm belief that the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who has given us protection even in the womb of the mother, will protect us everywhere.” ‘The boy addressed the women: “O weak women! Only by the will of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is never diminished, is the entire world created, maintained and again annihilated. This is the verdict of the Vedic knowledge. This material creation, consisting of the moving and nonmoving, is exactly like His plaything. Being the Supreme Lord, He is completely competent to destroy and protect.

““Sometimes one loses his money on a public street, where everyone can see it, and yet his money is protected by destiny and not seen by others. Thus the man who lost it gets it back. On the other hand, if the Lord does not give protection, even money maintained very securely at home is lost. If the Supreme Lord gives one protection, even though one has no protector and is in the jungle, one remains alive, whereas a person well protected at home by relatives and others sometimes dies, no one being able to protect him.

““Every conditioned soul receives a different type of body according to his work, and when the engagement is finished the body is finished. Although the spirit soul is situated in subtle and gross material bodies in different forms of life, they do not bind him, for he is always understood to be completely different from the manifested body.

““Just as a householder, although different from the identity of his house, thinks his house to be identical with him, so the conditioned soul, due to ignorance, accepts the body to be himself, although the body is actually different from the soul. This body is obtained through a combination of portions of earth, water and fire, and when the earth, water and fire are transformed in the course of time, the body is vanquished. The soul has nothing to do with this creation and dissolution of the body.

““As fire, although situated in wood, is perceived to be different from the wood, as air, although situated within the mouth and nostrils, is perceived to be separate from them, and as the sky, although all-pervading, never mixes with anything, so the living entity, although now engaged within the material body, of which it is the source, is separate from it.’

‘Yamaraja continued: “O lamenters, you are all fools! The person named Suyajña, for whom you lament, is still lying before you and has not gone anywhere. Then what is the cause for your lamentation? Previously he heard you and replied to you, but now, not finding him, you are lamenting. This is contradictory behavior, for you have never actually seen the person within the body who heard you and replied. There is no need for your lamentation, for the body you have always seen is lying here.

“In the body the most important substance is the life air, but that also is neither the listener nor the speaker. Beyond even the life air, the soul also can do nothing, for the Supersoul is actually the director, in cooperation with the individual soul. The Supersoul conducting the activities of the body is different from the body and living force.

“The five material elements, the ten senses and the mind all combine to form the various parts of the gross and subtle bodies. The living entity comes in contact with his material bodies, whether high or low, and later gives them up by his personal prowess. This strength can be perceived in a living entity’s personal power to possess different types of bodies.

“As long as the spirit soul is covered by the subtle body, consisting of the mind, intelligence and false ego, he is bound to the results of his fruitive activities. Because of this covering, the spirit soul is connected with the material energy and must accordingly suffer material conditions and reversals, continually, life after life.

“It is fruitless to see and talk of the material modes of nature and their resultant so-called happiness and distress as if they were factual. When the mind wanders during the day and a man begins to think himself extremely important, or when he dreams at night and sees a beautiful woman enjoying with him, these are merely false dreams. Similarly, the happiness and distress caused by the material senses should be understood to be meaningless.

“Those who have full knowledge of self-realization, who know very well that the spirit soul is eternal whereas the body is perishable, are not overwhelmed by lamentation. But persons who lack knowledge of self-realization certainly lament. Therefore it is difficult to educate a person in illusion.

“There was once a hunter who lured birds with food and captured them after spreading a net. He lived as if appointed by death personified as the killer of the birds. While wandering in the forest, the hunter saw a pair of kuliṅga birds. Of the two, the female was captivated by the hunter’s lure.

“O queens of Suyajña, the male kuliṅga bird, seeing his wife put into the greatest danger in the grip of Providence, became very unhappy. Because of affection, the poor bird, being unable to release her, began to lament for his wife.

““Alas, how merciless is Providence! My wife, unable to be helped by anyone, is in such an awkward position and lamenting for me. What will Providence gain by taking away this poor bird? What will be the profit? If unkind Providence takes away my wife, who is half my body, why should He not take me also? What is the use of my living with half of my body, bereaved by loss of my wife? What shall I gain in this way? The unfortunate baby birds, bereft of their mother, are waiting in the nest for her to feed them. They are still very small and have not yet grown their wings. How shall I be able to maintain them?’

“Because of the loss of his wife, the kuliṅga bird lamented with tears in his eyes. Meanwhile, following the dictations of mature time, the hunter, who was very carefully hidden in the distance, released his arrow, which pierced the body of the kuliṅga bird and killed him.”

‘Thus Yamarāja, in the guise of a small boy, told all the queens: “You are all so foolish that you lament but do not see your own death. Afflicted by a poor fund of knowledge, you do not know that even if you lament for your dead husband for hundreds of years, you will never get him back alive, and in the meantime your lives will be finished.”

Hiraṇyakaśipu said: ‘While Yamarāja, in the form of a small boy, was instructing all the relatives surrounding the dead body of Suyajña, everyone was struck with wonder by his philosophical words. They could understand that everything material is temporary, not continuing to exist.

‘After instructing all the foolish relatives of Suyajña, Yamarāja, in the form of a boy, disappeared from their vision. Then the relatives of King Suyajña performed the ritualistic funeral ceremonies.

‘Therefore none of you should be aggrieved for the loss of the body—whether your own or those of others. Only in ignorance does one make bodily distinctions, thinking, “Who am I? Who are the others? What is mine? What is for others?”’

Śrī Nārada Muni concluded: Diti, the mother of Hiraṇyakaśipu and Hiraṇyākṣa, heard the instructions of Hiraṇyakaśipu along with her daughter-in-law, Ruṣābhānu, Hiraṇyākṣa’s wife. She then forgot her grief over her son’s death and thus engaged her mind and attention in understanding the real philosophy of life.

Hiraṇyakaśipu’s Plan to Become Immortal

Nārada Muni continued speaking about the Absolute Truth to Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira: The demoniac king Hiraṇyakaśipu wanted to be unconquerable and free from old age and dwindling of the body. He wanted to gain all the yogic perfections like *aṇimā* and *laghimā*, to be deathless, and to be the only king of the entire universe, including Brahmāloka.

In the valley of Mandara Hill, Hiraṇyakaśipu began performing his austerities by standing with his toes on the ground, keeping his arms upward and looking toward the sky. This position was extremely difficult, but he accepted it as a means to attain perfection. From the hair on Hiraṇyakaśipu’s head there emanated an effulgent light as brilliant and intolerable as the rays of the sun at the time of dissolution.

Seeing the performance of such austere penances, the demigods, who had been wandering throughout the planets, now returned to their respective homes. Because of Hiraṇyakaśipu’s severe austerities, fire came from his head, and this fire and its smoke spread throughout the sky, encompassing the upper and lower planets, which all became extremely hot. Because of the power of his severe austerities, all the rivers and oceans were agitated, the surface of the globe, with its mountains and islands, began trembling, and the stars and planets fell. All directions were ablaze.

Scorched and extremely disturbed because of Hiraṇyakaśipu’s severe penances, all the demigods left the planets where they reside and went to the planet of Lord Brahmā, where they informed the creator as follows: ‘O lord of the demigods, O master of the universe, because of the fire emanating from Hiraṇyakaśipu’s head as a result of his severe austerities, we have become so disturbed that we could not stay in our planets but have come to you. O great person, chief of the universe, if you think it proper, kindly stop these disturbances, meant to destroy everything, before all your obedient subjects are annihilated.

‘Hiraṇyakaśipu has undertaken a most severe type of austerity. Although his plan is not unknown to you, kindly listen as we submit his intentions.

[Hiraṇyakaśipu's thinking is as follows:] "The supreme person within this universe, Lord Brahmā, has gotten his exalted post by dint of severe austerities, mystic power and trance.

Consequently, after creating the universe, he has become the most worshipable demigod within it. Since I am eternal and time is eternal, I shall endeavor for such austerity, mystic power and trance for many, many births, and thus I shall occupy the same post occupied by Lord Brahmā.

"By dint of my severe austerities, I shall reverse the results of pious and impious activities. I shall overturn all the established practices within this world. Even Dhruvaloka will be vanquished at the end of the millennium. Therefore, what is the use of it? I shall prefer to remain in the position of Brahmā."

'O lord, we have heard from reliable sources that in order to obtain your post, Hiraṇyakaśipu is now engaged in severe austerity. You are the master of the three worlds. Please, without delay, take whatever steps you deem appropriate. O Lord Brahmā, your position within this universe is certainly most auspicious for everyone, especially the cows and brāhmaṇas. Brahminical culture and the protection of cows can be increasingly glorified, and thus all kinds of material happiness, opulence and good fortune will automatically increase. But unfortunately, if Hiraṇyakaśipu occupies your seat, everything will be lost.'

O King, being thus informed by the demigods, the most powerful Lord Brahmā, accompanied by Bhṛgu, Dakṣa and other great sages, immediately started for the place where Hiraṇyakaśipu was performing his penances and austerities. Lord Brahmā, who is carried by a swan airplane, at first could not see where Hiraṇyakaśipu was, for Hiraṇyakaśipu's body was covered by an anthill and by grass and bamboo sticks. Because Hiraṇyakaśipu had been there for a long time, the ants had devoured his skin, fat, flesh and blood. Then Lord Brahmā and the demigods spotted him, resembling a cloudcovered sun, heating all the world by his austerity. Struck with wonder, Lord Brahmā began to smile and then addressed him as follows.

Lord Brahmā said: 'O son of Kaśyapa Muni, please get up, please get up. All good fortune unto you. You are now perfect in the performance of your austerities, and therefore I may give you a benediction. You may now ask from me whatever you desire, and I shall try to fulfill your wish.

'I have been very much astonished to see your endurance. In spite of being eaten and bitten by all kinds of worms and ants, you are keeping your life air circulating within your bones. Certainly this is wonderful. Even senior saintly persons like Bhṛgu could not perform such severe austerities, nor will anyone in the future be able to do so. Who within these three worlds can sustain his life without even drinking water for one hundred celestial years?

'My dear son of Diti, with your great determination and austerity you have done what was impossible even for great saintly persons, and thus you have certainly conquered me. O best of the asuras, for this reason I am now prepared to give you all benedictions, according to your desire. I belong to the celestial world of demigods, who do not die like human beings. Therefore, although you are subject to death, your audience with me will not go in vain.'

Sri Nārada Muni continued: After speaking these words to Hiraṇyakaśipu, Lord Brahmā, the original being of this universe, who is extremely powerful, sprinkled transcendental, infallible, spiritual water from his kamaṇḍalu (waterpot) upon Hiraṇyakaśipu's body, which had been eaten away by ants and moths. Thus he enlivened Hiraṇyakaśipu.

As soon as he was sprinkled with the water from Lord Brahmā's waterpot, Hiraṇyakaśipu arose, endowed with a full body with limbs so strong that they could bear the striking of a thunderbolt. With physical strength and a bodily luster resembling molten gold, he emerged

from the anthill a completely young man, just as fire springs from fuel wood.

Seeing Lord Brahmā present before him in the sky, carried by his swan airplane, Hiraṇyakaśipu was extremely pleased. He immediately fell flat with his head on the ground and began to express his obligation to the lord. Then, getting up from the ground and seeing Lord Brahmā before him, the head of the Daityas was overwhelmed by jubilation. With tears in his eyes, his whole body shivering, he began praying in a humble mood, with folded hands and a faltering voice, to satisfy Lord Brahmā.

‘Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto the supreme lord within this universe. At the end of each day of his life, the universe is fully covered with dense darkness by the influence of time, and then again, during his next day, that self-effulgent lord, by his own effulgence, manifests, maintains and destroys the entire cosmic manifestation through the material energy, which is invested with the three modes of material nature. He, Lord Brahmā, is the shelter of those modes of nature: sattvaguna, rajo-guna and tamo-guna.

‘I offer my obeisances to the original personality within this universe, Lord Brahmā, who is cognizant and who can apply his mind and realized intelligence in creating this cosmic manifestation. It is because of his activities that everything within the universe is visible. He is therefore the cause of all manifestations.

‘Your lordship, being the origin of the life of this material world, is the master and controller of the living entities, both moving and stationary, and you inspire their consciousness. You maintain the mind and the acting and knowledgeacquiring senses, and therefore you are the great controller of all the material elements and their qualities, and you are the controller of all desires.

‘My dear lord, by your form as the Vedas personified and through knowledge relating to the activities of all the yajñic brāhmaṇas, you spread the Vedic ritualistic ceremonies of the seven kinds of sacrifices, headed by agnistoma. Indeed, you inspire the yajñic brāhmaṇas to perform the rituals mentioned in the three Vedas. Being the Supreme Soul, the Supersoul of all living entities, you are beginningless, endless and omniscient, beyond the limits of time and space.

‘O my lord, your lordship is eternally awake, seeing everything that happens. As eternal time, you reduce the duration of life for all living entities through your different parts, such as moments, seconds, minutes and hours. Nonetheless, you are unchanged, resting in one place as the supersoul, witness and supreme lord, the birthless, all-pervading controller who is the cause of life for all living entities.

‘There is nothing separate from you, whether it be better or lower, stationary or moving. The knowledge derived from the Vedic literatures like the Upaniṣads, and from all the sub-limbs of the original Vedic knowledge, form your external body. You are Hiraṇyagarbha, the reservoir of the universe, but nonetheless, being situated as the supreme controller, you are transcendental to the material world, which consists of the three modes of material nature.

‘O my lord, being changelessly situated in your own abode, you expand your universal form within this cosmic manifestation, thus appearing to taste the material world. You are Brahmān, the supersoul, the oldest, the personality of godhead.

‘Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto the Supreme, who in his unlimited, unmanifested form has expanded the cosmic manifestation, the form of the totality of the universe. He possesses external and internal energies and the mixed energy called the marginal potency, which consists of all the living entities.

‘O my lord, O best of the givers of benediction, if you will kindly grant me the benediction I desire, please let me not meet death from any of the living entities created by you. Grant me that I not die within any residence or outside any residence, during the daytime or at night, nor on the ground or in the sky. Grant me that my death not be brought by any being other than those created by you, nor by any weapon, nor by any human being or animal.

‘Grant me that I not meet death from any entity, living or nonliving. Grant me, further, that I not be killed by any demigod or demon or by any great snake from the lower planets. Since no one can kill you in the battlefield, you have no competitor. Therefore, grant me the benediction that I too may have no rival. Give me sole lordship over all the living entities and presiding deities, and give me all the glories obtained by that position. Furthermore, give me all the mystic powers attained by long austerities and the practice of yoga, for these cannot be lost at any time.’

Hiraṇyakaśipu Terrorizes the Universe

Nārada Muni continued: Lord Brahmā was very much satisfied by Hiraṇyakaśipu’s austerities, which were difficult to perform. Therefore, when solicited for benedictions, he indeed granted them, although they were rarely to be achieved.

Lord Brahmā said: ‘O Hiraṇyakaśipu, these benedictions for which you have asked are difficult to obtain for most men. Nonetheless, O my son, I shall grant you them although they are generally not available.’ Then Lord Brahmā, who awards infallible benedictions, departed, being worshiped by Hiraṇyakaśipu, the best of the demons, and being praised by great sages and saintly persons.

The demon Hiraṇyakaśipu, having thus been blessed by Lord Brahmā and having acquired a lustrous golden body, continued to remember the death of his brother and therefore be envious of Lord Viṣṇu. Hiraṇyakaśipu became the conqueror of the entire universe.

Indeed, that great demon conquered all the planets in the three worlds—upper, middle and lower—including the planets of the human beings, the Gandharvas, the Garūḍas, the great serpents, the Siddhas, Cāraṇas and Vidyādhara, the great saints, Yamarāja, the Manus, the Yakṣas, the Rākṣasas, the Piśācas and their masters, and the masters of the ghosts and Bhūtas. He defeated the rulers of all the other planets where there are living entities and brought them under his control.

Conquering the abodes of all, he seized their power and influence. Hiraṇyakaśipu, who possessed all opulence, began residing in heaven, with its famous Nandana garden, which is enjoyed by the demigods. In fact, he resided in the most opulent palace of Indra, the King of heaven. The palace had been directly constructed by the demigod architect Viṣvakarmā and was as beautifully made as if the Goddess of Fortune of the entire universe resided there.

The steps of King Indra’s residence were made of coral, the floor was bedecked with invaluable emeralds, the walls were of crystal, and the columns of vaidurya stone. The wonderful canopies were beautifully decorated, the seats were bedecked with rubies, and the silk bedding, as white as foam, was decorated with pearls. The ladies of the palace, who were blessed with beautiful teeth and the most wonderfully beautiful faces, walked here and there in the palace, their ankle bells tinkling melodiously, and saw their own beautiful reflections in the gems. The demigods, however, being very much oppressed, had to bow down and offer obeisances at the feet of Hiraṇyakaśipu, who chastised the demigods very severely and for no reason. Thus

Hiraṇyakaśipu lived in the palace and severely ruled everyone. O my dear King, Hiraṇyakaśipu was always drunk on strong-smelling wines and liquors, and therefore his coppery eyes were always rolling. Nonetheless, because he had powerfully executed great austerities in mystic yoga, although he was abominable, all but the three principal demigods—Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva and Lord Viṣṇu—personally worshiped him to please him by bringing him various presentations with their own hands.

O Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, descendant of Pāṇḍu, by dint of his personal power, Hiraṇyakaśipu, being situated on the throne of King Indra, controlled the inhabitants of all the other planets. The two Gandharvas Viśvāvasu and Tumburu, I myself and the Vidyādharas, Apsāras and sages all offered prayers to him again and again just to glorify him. Being worshiped by sacrifices offered with great gifts by those who strictly followed the principles of varṇa and āsrama, Hiraṇyakaśipu, instead of offering shares of the oblations to the demigods, accepted them himself.

As if in fear of Hiraṇyakaśipu, the planet earth, which consists of seven islands, delivered food grains without being plowed. Thus it resembled cows like the surabhi of the spiritual world or the kāma-dughā of heaven. The earth yielded sufficient food grains, the cows supplied abundant milk, and outer space was beautifully decorated with wonderful phenomena.

By the flowing of their waves, the various oceans of the universe, along with their tributaries, the rivers, which are compared to their wives, supplied various kinds of gems and jewels for Hiraṇyakaśipu's use. These oceans were the oceans of salt water, sugarcane juice, wine, clarified butter, milk, yogurt, and sweet water.

The valleys between the mountains became fields of pleasure for Hiraṇyakaśipu, by whose influence all the trees and plants produced fruits and flowers profusely in all seasons. The qualities of pouring water, drying and burning, which are all qualities of the three departmental heads of the universe—namely Indra, Vāyu and Agni—were all directed by Hiraṇyakaśipu alone, without assistance from the demigods.

In spite of achieving the power to control in all directions and in spite of enjoying all types of dear sense gratification as much as possible, Hiraṇyakaśipu was dissatisfied because instead of controlling his senses he remained their servant.

Hiraṇyakaśipu thus passed a long time being very much proud of his opulences and transgressing the laws and regulations mentioned in the authoritative śāstras. He was therefore subjected to a curse by the four Kumāras, who were great brāhmaṇas.

Everyone, including the rulers of the various planets, was extremely distressed because of the severe punishment inflicted upon them by Hiraṇyakaśipu. Fearful and disturbed, unable to find any other shelter, they at last surrendered to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu.

Without sleep, fully controlling their minds, and living on only their breath, the predominating deities of the various planets began worshiping Hṛṣīkeśa with this meditation: 'Let us offer our respectful obeisances unto that direction where the Supreme Personality of Godhead is situated, where those purified souls in the renounced order of life, the great saintly persons, go, and from which, having gone, they never return.' Then there appeared before them a transcendental sound vibration, emanating from a personality not visible to material eyes. The voice was as grave as the sound of a cloud, and it was very encouraging, driving away all fear.

The voice of the Lord vibrated as follows: 'O best of learned persons, do not fear! I wish all good fortune to you. Become My devotees by hearing and chanting about Me and offering Me

prayers, for these are certainly meant to award benedictions to all living entities. I know all about the activities of Hiranyakaśipu and shall surely stop them very soon. Please wait patiently until that time.

‘When one is envious of the demigods, who represent the Supreme Personality of Godhead, of the Vedas, which give all knowledge, of the cows, brāhmaṇas, Vaiṣṇavas and religious principles, and ultimately of Me, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he and his civilization will be vanquished without delay.

‘When Hiranyakaśipu harasses the great devotee Prahlāda, his own son, who is peaceful and sober and who has no enemy, I shall kill Hiranyakaśipu immediately, despite the benedictions of Brahmā.’

The great saint Nārada Muni continued: When the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the spiritual master of everyone, thus reassured all the demigods living in the heavenly planets, they offered their respectful obeisances unto Him and returned, confident that the demon Hiranyakaśipu was now practically dead.

Hiranyakaśipu had four wonderful, well-qualified sons, of whom the one named Prahlāda was the best. Indeed, Prahlāda was a reservoir of all transcendental qualities because he was an unalloyed devotee of the Personality of Godhead. Prahlāda was completely cultured as a qualified brāhmaṇa, having very good character and being determined to understand the Absolute Truth. He had full control of his senses and mind. Like the Supersoul, he was kind to every living entity and was the best friend of everyone. To respectable persons he acted exactly like a menial servant, to the poor he was like a father, to his equals he was attached like a sympathetic brother, and he considered his teachers, spiritual masters and older Godbrothers to be as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He was completely free from unnatural pride that might have arisen from his good education, riches, beauty, aristocracy and so on.

Although Prahlāda Mahārāja was born in a family of asuras, he himself was not an asura but a great devotee of Lord Viṣṇu. Unlike the other asuras, he was never envious of Vaiṣṇavas. He was not agitated when put into danger, and he was neither directly nor indirectly interested in the fruitive activities described in the Vedas. Indeed, he considered everything material to be useless, and therefore he was completely devoid of material desires. He always controlled his senses and life air, and being of steady intelligence and determination, he subdued all lusty desires.

O King, Prahlāda Mahārāja’s good qualities are still glorified by learned saints and Vaisnavas. As all good qualities are always found existing in the Supreme Personality of Godhead, they also exist forever in His devotee Prahlāda Mahārāja. In any assembly where there are discourses about saints and devotees, O King Yudhiṣṭhira, even the enemies of the demons, namely the demigods, what to speak of you, would cite Prahlāda Mahārāja as an example of a great devotee.

Who could list the innumerable transcendental qualities of Prahlāda Mahārāja? He had unflinching faith in Vāsudeva, Lord Kṛṣṇa [the son of Vasudeva], and unalloyed devotion to Him. His attachment to Lord Kṛṣṇa was natural because of his previous devotional service. Although his good qualities cannot be enumerated, they prove that he was a great soul [mahātma].

From the very beginning of his childhood, Prahlāda Mahārāja was uninterested in childish playthings. Indeed, he gave them up altogether and remained silent and dull, being fully absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Since his mind was always affected by Kṛṣṇa consciousness,

he could not understand how the world goes on being fully absorbed in the activities of sense gratification.

Prahlāda Mahārāja was always absorbed in thought of Kṛṣṇa. Thus, being always embraced by the Lord, he did not know how his bodily necessities, such as sitting, walking, eating, lying down, drinking and talking, were being automatically performed. Because of advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he sometimes cried, sometimes laughed, sometimes expressed jubilation and sometimes sang loudly.

Sometimes, upon seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Prahlāda Mahārāja would loudly call in full anxiety. He sometimes lost his shyness in jubilation and began dancing in ecstasy, and sometimes, being fully absorbed in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa, he felt oneness and imitated the pastimes of the Lord. Sometimes, feeling the touch of the Lord's lotus hands, he became spiritually jubilant and remained silent, his hairs standing on end and tears gliding down from his half-closed eyes because of his love for the Lord.

Because of his association with perfect, unalloyed devotees who had nothing to do with anything material, Prahlāda Mahārāja constantly engaged in the service of the Lord's lotus feet. By seeing his bodily features when he was in perfect ecstasy, persons very poor in spiritual understanding became purified. In other words, Prahlāda Mahārāja bestowed upon them transcendental bliss. My dear King Yudhiṣṭhira, the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu tormented this exalted, fortunate devotee, although Prahlāda was his own son.

Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira said: 'O best of the saints among the demigods, O best of spiritual leaders, how did Hiraṇyakaśipu give so much trouble to Prahlāda Mahārāja, the pure and exalted saint, although Prahlāda was his own son? I wish to know about this subject from you.

'A father and mother are always affectionate to their children. When the children are disobedient the parents chastise them, not due to enmity but only for the child's instruction and welfare. How did Hiraṇyakaśipu, the father of Prahlāda Mahārāja, chastise such a noble son? This is what I am eager to know.'

Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira further inquired: 'How was it possible for a father to be so violent toward an exalted son who was obedient, well-behaved and respectful to his father? O brāhmaṇa, O master, I have never heard of such a contradiction as an affectionate father's punishing his noble son with the intention of killing him. Kindly dissipate our doubts in this regard.'

Prahlāda Mahārāja, the Saintly Son of Hiraṇyakaśipu The great saint Nārada Muni replied: The demons, headed by Hiraṇyakaśipu, accepted Śukrācārya as their priest for ritualistic ceremonies. Śukrācārya's two sons, Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka, lived near Hiraṇyakaśipu's palace. Prahlāda Mahārāja was already educated in devotional life, but when his father sent him to those two sons of Śukrācārya to be educated, they accepted him at their school along with the other sons of the asuras.

Prahlāda certainly heard and recited the topics of politics and economics taught by the teachers, but he understood that political philosophy involves considering someone a friend and someone else an enemy, and thus he did not like it. My dear King Yudhiṣṭhira, once upon a time the King of the demons, Hiraṇyakaśipu, took his son Prahlāda on his lap and very affectionately inquired: 'My dear son, please let me know what you think is the best of all the subjects you have studied from your teachers.'

Prahlāda Mahārāja replied: 'O best of the asuras, King of the demons, as far as I have learned from my spiritual master, any person who has accepted a temporary body and temporary

household life is certainly embarrassed by anxiety because of having fallen in a dark well where there is no water but only suffering. One should give up this position and go to the forest [vāna]. More clearly, one should go to Vr̥ṇḍavana, where only Kṛṣṇa consciousness is prevalent, and should thus take shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.’

Nārada Muni continued: When Prahlāda Mahārāja spoke about the path of self-realization in devotional service, thus being faithful to the camp of his father’s enemies, Hiranyaśipu, the King of the demons, heard Prahlāda’s words and he laughingly said, ‘Thus is the intelligence of children spoiled by the words of the enemy.’

Hiranyaśipu advised his assistants: ‘My dear demons, give complete protection to this boy at the guru-kula where he is instructed, so that his intelligence will not be further influenced by Vaiṣṇavas who may go there in disguise.’

When Hiranyaśipu’s servants brought the boy Prahlāda back to the guru-kula [the place where the brāhmaṇas taught the boys], the priests of the demons, Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka, pacified him. With very mild voices and affectionate words, they inquired from him as follows:

‘Dear son Prahlāda, all peace and good fortune unto you. Kindly do not speak lies; just reply with the truth. These boys you see are not like you, for they do not speak in a deviant way. How have you learned these instructions? How has your intelligence been spoiled in this way? O best of your family, has this pollution of your intelligence been brought about by you or by the enemies? We are all your teachers and are very eager to hear about this. Please tell us the truth.’

Prahlāda Mahārāja replied: ‘Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose external energy has created the distinctions of “my friend” and “my enemy” by deluding the intelligence of men. Indeed, I am now actually experiencing this, although I have previously heard of it from authoritative sources. When the Supreme Personality of Godhead is pleased with the living entity because of his devotional service, one becomes a paṇḍita and does not make distinctions between enemies, friends and himself. Intelligently, he then thinks, “Every one of us is an eternal servant of God, and therefore we are not different from one another.”

‘Persons who always think in terms of “enemy” and “friend” are unable to ascertain the Supersoul within themselves. Not to speak of them, even such exalted persons as Lord Brahmā, who are fully conversant with the Vedic literature, are sometimes bewildered in following the principles of devotional service. The same Supreme Personality of Godhead who has created this situation has certainly given me the intelligence to take the side of your so-called enemy.

‘O brāhmaṇas [teachers], as iron attracted by a magnetic stone moves automatically toward the magnet, my consciousness, having been changed by His will, is attracted by Lord Viṣṇu, who carries a disc in His hand. Thus I have no independence.’

The great saint Nārada Muni continued: The great soul Prahlāda Mahārāja became silent after saying this to his teachers, Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka, the seminal sons of Śukrācārya. These so-called brāhmaṇas then became angry at him. Because they were servants of Hiranyaśipu, they were very sorry, and to chastise Prahlāda Mahārāja they spoke as follows.

‘Oh, please bring me a stick! This Prahlāda is damaging our name and fame. Because of his bad intelligence, he has become like a cinder in the dynasty of the demons. Now he needs to be treated by the fourth of the four kinds of political diplomacy (the stick).

‘This rascal Prahlāda has appeared like a thorn tree in a forest of sandalwood. To cut down

sandalwood trees, an axe is needed, and the wood of the thorn tree is very suitable for the handle of such an axe. Lord Viṣṇu is the axe for cutting down the sandalwood forest of the family of demons, and this Prahlāda is the handle for that axe.’

Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka, the teachers of Prahlāda Mahārāja, chastised and threatened their disciple in various ways and began teaching him about the paths of religion, economic development and sense gratification. This is the way they educated him. After some time, the teachers Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka thought that Prahlāda Mahārāja was sufficiently educated in the diplomatic affairs of pacifying public leaders, appeasing them by giving them lucrative posts, dividing and ruling over them, and punishing them in cases of disobedience.

Then, one day, after Prahlāda’s mother had personally washed the boy and dressed him nicely with sufficient ornaments, they presented him before his father. When Hiraṇyakaṣipu saw that his child had fallen at his feet and was offering obeisances, as an affectionate father he immediately began showering blessings upon the child and embraced him with both arms. A father naturally feels happy to embrace his son, and Hiraṇyakaṣipu became very happy in this way.

Nārada Muni continued: My dear King Yudhiṣṭhira, Hiraṇyakaṣipu seated Prahlāda Mahārāja on his lap and began smelling his head. With affectionate tears gliding down from his eyes and moistening the child’s smiling face, he spoke to his son as follows.

Hiraṇyakaṣipu said: ‘My dear Prahlāda, my dear son, O longlived one, for so much time you have heard many things from your teachers. Now please repeat to me whatever you think is the best of that knowledge.’

Prahlāda Mahārāja said: ‘Hearing and chanting about the transcendental holy name, form, qualities, paraphernalia and pastimes of Lord Viṣṇu, remembering them, serving the lotus feet of the Lord, offering the Lord respectful worship with sixteen types of paraphernalia, offering prayers to the Lord, becoming His servant, considering the Lord one’s best friend, and surrendering everything unto Him (in other words, serving Him with the body, mind and words)—these nine processes are accepted as pure devotional service. One who has dedicated his life to the service of Kṛṣṇa through these nine methods should be understood to be the most learned person, for he has acquired complete knowledge.’

After hearing these words of devotional service from the mouth of his son Prahlāda, Hiraṇyakaṣipu was extremely angry. His lips trembling, he spoke as follows to Ṣaṇḍa the son of his guru, Śukrācārya.

‘O unqualified, most heinous son of a brāhmaṇa, you have disobeyed my order and taken shelter of the party of my enemies. You have taught this poor boy about devotional service! What is this nonsense? In due course of time, various types of diseases are manifest in those who are sinful. Similarly, in this world there are many deceptive friends in false garbs, but eventually, because of their false behavior, their actual enmity becomes manifest.’

The son of Śukrācārya, Hiraṇyakaṣipu’s spiritual master, said: ‘O enemy of King Indra, O King! Whatever your son Prahlāda has said was not taught to him by me or anyone else. His spontaneous devotional service has naturally developed in him. Therefore, please give up your anger and do not unnecessarily accuse us. It is not good to insult a brāhmaṇa in this way.’

Sri Nārada Muni continued: When Hiraṇyakaṣipu received this reply from the teacher, he again addressed his son Prahlāda.

Hiraṇyakaṣipu said: ‘You rascal, most fallen of our family, if you have not received this

education from your teachers, where have you gotten it?’

Prahlāda Mahārāja replied: ‘Because of their uncontrolled senses, persons too addicted to materialistic life make progress toward hellish conditions and repeatedly chew that which has already been chewed. Their inclinations toward Kṛṣṇa are never aroused, either by the instructions of others, by their own efforts, or by a combination of both.

‘Persons who are strongly entrapped by the consciousness of enjoying material life, and who have therefore accepted as their leader or guru a similar blind man attached to external sense objects, cannot understand that the goal of life is to return home, back to Godhead, and engage in the service of Lord Viṣṇu. As blind men guided by another blind man miss the right path and fall into a ditch, materially attached men led by another materially attached man are bound by the ropes of fruitive labor, which are made of very strong cords, and they continue again and again in materialistic life, suffering the threefold miseries.

‘Unless they smear upon their bodies the dust of the lotus feet of a Vaiṣṇava completely freed from material contamination, persons very much inclined toward materialistic life cannot be attached to the lotus feet of the Lord, who is glorified for His uncommon activities. Only by becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious and taking shelter at the lotus feet of the Lord in this way can one be freed from material contamination.’

After Prahlāda Mahārāja had spoken in this way and become silent, Hiraṇyakaśipu, blinded by anger, threw him off his lap and onto the ground.

Indignant and angry, his reddish eyes like molten copper, Hiraṇyakaśipu said to his servants: ‘O demons, take this boy away from me! He deserves to be killed. Kill him as soon as possible! This boy Prahlāda is the killer of my brother, for he has given up his family to engage in the devotional service of the enemy, Lord Viṣṇu, like a menial servant. Although Prahlāda is only five years old, even at this young age he has given up his affectionate relationship with his father and mother. Therefore, he is certainly untrustworthy. Indeed, it is not at all believable that he will behave well toward Viṣṇu.

‘Although a medicinal herb, being born in the forest, does not belong to the same category as a man, if beneficial it is kept very carefully. Similarly, if someone outside one’s family is favorable, he should be given protection like a son. On the other hand, if a limb of one’s body is poisoned by disease, it must be amputated so that the rest of the body may live happily. Similarly, even one’s own son, if unfavorable, must be rejected, although born of one’s own body. Just as uncontrolled senses are the enemies of all yogīs engaged in advancing in spiritual life, this Prahlāda, who appears to be a friend, is an enemy because I cannot control him. Therefore this enemy, whether eating, sitting or sleeping, must be killed by all means.’ The demons [Rakṣasas], the servants of Hiraṇyakaśipu, thus began striking the tender parts of Prahlāda Mahārāja’s body with their tridents. The demons all had fearful faces, sharp teeth and reddish, coppery beards and hair, and they appeared extremely threatening. Making a tumultuous sound, shouting, ‘Chop him up! Pierce him!’ they began striking Prahlāda Mahārāja, who sat silently, meditating upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Even though a person who has no assets in pious activities performs some good deed, it will have no result. Thus the weapons of the demons had no tangible effects upon Prahlāda Mahārāja because he was a devotee undisturbed by material conditions and fully engaged in meditating upon and serving the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is unchangeable, who cannot be realized by the material senses, and who is the soul of the entire universe.

My dear King Yudhiṣṭhira, when all the attempts of the demons to kill Prahlāda Mahārāja were

futile, the King of the demons, Hiranyakaṣipu, being most fearful, began contriving other means to kill him.

Hiranyakaṣipu could not kill his son by throwing him beneath the feet of big elephants, throwing him among huge, fearful snakes, employing destructive spells, hurling him from the top of a hill, conjuring up illusory tricks, administering poison, starving him, exposing him to severe cold, winds, fire and water, or throwing heavy stones to crush him. When Hiranyakaṣipu found that he could not in any way harm Prahlāda, who was completely sinless, he was in great anxiety about what to do next.

Hiranyakaṣipu thought: 'I have used many ill names in chastising this boy Prahlāda and have devised many means of killing him, but despite all my endeavors, he could not be killed. Indeed, he saved himself by his own powers, without being affected in the least by these treacheries and abominable actions. Although he is very near to me and is merely a child, he is situated in complete fearlessness. He resembles a dog's curved tail, which can never be straightened, because he never forgets my misbehavior and his connection with his master, Lord Viṣṇu. I can see that this boy's strength is unlimited, for he has not feared any of my punishments. He appears immortal. Therefore, because of my enmity toward him, I shall die. Or maybe this will not take place.'

Thinking in this way, the King of the Daityas, morose and bereft of bodily luster, remained silent with his face downward. Then Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka, the two sons of Śukrācārya, spoke to him in secret.

'O lord, we know that when you simply move your eyebrows, all the commanders of the various planets are most afraid. Without the help of any assistant, you have conquered all the three worlds. Therefore, we do not find any reason for you to be morose and full of anxiety. As for Prahlāda, he is nothing but a child and cannot be a cause of anxiety. After all, his bad or good qualities have no value.

'Until the return of our spiritual master, Śukrācārya, arrest this child with the ropes of Varuna so that he will not flee in fear. In any case, by the time he is somewhat grown up and has assimilated our instructions or served our spiritual master, he will change in his intelligence. Thus there need be no cause for anxiety.'

After hearing these instructions of Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka, the sons of his spiritual master, Hiranyakaṣipu agreed and requested them to instruct Prahlāda in that system of occupational duty which is followed by royal householder families. Thereafter, Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka systematically and unceasingly taught Prahlāda Mahārāja, who was very submissive and humble, about mundane religion, economic development and sense gratification.

The teachers Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka instructed Prahlāda Mahārāja in the three kinds of material advancement called religion, economic development and sense gratification. Prahlāda, however, being situated above such instructions, did not like them, for such instructions are based on the duality of worldly affairs, which involve one in a materialistic way of life marked by birth, death, old age and disease.

When the teachers went home to attend to their household affairs, the students of the same age as Prahlāda Mahārāja would call him to take the opportunity of leisure hours for play. Prahlāda Mahārāja, who was truly the supreme learned person, then addressed his class friends in very sweet language. Smiling, he began to teach them about the uselessness of the materialistic way of life. Being very kind to them, he instructed them as follows.

My dear King Yudhiṣṭhira, all the children were very much affectionate and respectful to Prahāda Mahārāja, and because of their tender age they were not so polluted by the instructions and actions of their teachers, who were attached to condemned duality and bodily comfort. Thus the boys surrounded Prahāda Mahārāja, giving up their playthings, and sat down to hear him. Their hearts and eyes being fixed upon him, they looked at him with great earnestness. Prahāda Mahārāja, although born in a demon family, was an exalted devotee, and he desired their welfare. Thus he began instructing them about the futility of materialistic life.

Prahāda Instructs His Demoniac Schoolmates

Prahāda Mahārāja said: ‘My dear friends born of demoniac families, the happiness perceived with reference to the sense objects by contact with the body can be obtained in any form of life, according to one’s past fruitive activities. Such happiness is automatically obtained without endeavor, just as we obtain distress.

‘Endeavors merely for sense gratification or material happiness through economic development are not to be performed, for they result only in a loss of time and energy, with no actual profit. If one’s endeavors are directed toward Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one can surely attain the spiritual platform of self-realization. There is no such benefit from engaging oneself in economic development.

‘Therefore, while in material existence, a person fully competent to distinguish wrong from right must endeavor to achieve the highest goal of life as long as the body is stout and strong and is not embarrassed by dwindling. Every human being has a maximum duration of life of one hundred years, but for one who cannot control his senses, half of those years are completely lost because at night he sleeps twelve hours, being covered by ignorance. Therefore such a person has a lifetime of only fifty years.

‘In the tender age of childhood, when everyone is bewildered, one passes ten years. Similarly, in boyhood, engaged in sporting and playing, one passes another ten years. In this way, twenty years are wasted. Similarly, in old age, when one is an invalid, unable to perform even material activities, one passes another twenty years wastefully. One whose mind and senses are uncontrolled becomes increasingly attached to family life because of insatiable lusty desires and very strong illusion. In such a madman’s life, the remaining years are also wasted because even during those years he cannot engage himself in devotional service.

‘What person too attached to household life due to being unable to control his senses can liberate himself? An attached householder is bound very strongly by ropes of affection for his family [wife, children and other relatives]. Money is so dear that one conceives of money as being sweeter than honey. Therefore, who can give up the desire to accumulate money, especially in household life? Thieves, soldiers of fortune and smugglers try to acquire money even by risking their very dear lives.

‘How can a person who is most affectionate to his family, the core of his heart being always filled with their pictures, give up their association? Specifically, a wife is always very kind and sympathetic and always pleases her husband in a solitary place. Who could give up the association of such a dear and affectionate wife? Small children talk in broken language, very pleasing to hear, and their affectionate father always thinks of their sweet words. How could he give up their association? One’s elderly parents and one’s sons and daughters are also very dear. A daughter is especially dear to her father, and while living at her husband’s house she is always in his mind. Who could give up that association? Aside from this, in household affairs there are

many decorated items of household furniture, and there are also animals and servants. Who could give up such comforts? The attached householder is like a silkworm, which weaves a cocoon in which it becomes imprisoned, unable to get out. Simply for the satisfaction of two important senses—the genitals and the tongue—one is bound by material conditions. How can one escape?

‘One who is too attached cannot understand that he is wasting his valuable life for the maintenance of his family. He also fails to understand that the purpose of human life, a life suitable for realization of the Absolute Truth, is being imperceptibly spoiled. However, he is very cleverly attentive to seeing that not a single farthing is lost by mismanagement. Thus although an attached person in material existence always suffers from threefold miseries, he does not develop a distaste for the way of material existence.

‘If a person too attached to the duties of family maintenance is unable to control his senses, the core of his heart is immersed in how to accumulate money. Although he knows that one who takes the wealth of others will be punished by the law of the government, and by the laws of Yamarāja after death, he continues cheating others to acquire money.

‘O my friends, sons of demons! In this material world, even those who are apparently advanced in education have the propensity to consider, “This is mine, and that is for others.” Thus they are always engaged in providing the necessities of life to their families in a limited conception of family life, just like uneducated cats and dogs. They are unable to take to spiritual knowledge; instead, they are bewildered and overcome by ignorance.

‘My dear friends, O sons of the demons, it is certain that no one bereft of knowledge of the Supreme Personality of Godhead has been able to liberate himself from material bondage at any time or in any country. Rather, the material laws bind those bereft of knowledge of the Lord. They are factually addicted to sense gratification, and their target is woman. Indeed, they are actually playthings in the hands of attractive women. Victimized by such a conception of life, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren surround them, and thus they are shackled to material bondage. Those who are very much addicted to this conception of life are called demons. Therefore, although you are sons of demons, keep aloof from such persons and take shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa, the origin of all the demigods, because the ultimate goal for the devotees of Nārāyaṇa is liberation from the bondage of material existence.

‘My dear sons of demons, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa, is the original Supersoul, the father of all living entities. Consequently there are no impediments to pleasing Him or worshiping Him under any conditions, whether one be a child or an old man. The relationship between the living entities and the Supreme Personality of Godhead is always a fact, and therefore there is no difficulty in pleasing the Lord.

‘The Supreme Personality of Godhead, the supreme controller, who is infallible and indefatigable, is present in different forms of life, from the inert living beings such as the plants, to Brahmā, the foremost created living being. He is also present in the varieties of material creations and in the material elements, the total material energy and the modes of material nature [sattva-guna, rajo-guna and tamo-guna], as well as the unmanifested material nature and the false ego.

‘Although He is one, He is present everywhere, and He is also the transcendental Supersoul, the cause of all causes, who is present as the observer in the cores of the hearts of all living entities. He is indicated in the Vedas as that which is pervaded and as the all-pervading

Supersoul, but actually He cannot be indicated by words. He is changeless and undivided. He is simply perceived as the supreme sac-cid-ānanda [eternity, knowledge and bliss]. Being covered by the curtain of the external energy, to the atheist He appears nonexistent.

‘Therefore, my dear young friends born of demons, please act in such a way that the Supreme Lord, who is beyond the conception of material knowledge, will be satisfied. Give up your demoniac nature and act without enmity or duality. Show mercy to all living entities by enlightening them in devotional service, thus becoming their well-wishers.

‘Nothing is unobtainable for devotees who have satisfied the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the cause of all causes, the original source of everything. The Lord is the reservoir of unlimited spiritual qualities. Therefore, for devotees who are transcendental to the modes of material nature, what is the use of following the principles of religion, economic development, sense gratification and liberation, which are all automatically obtainable under the influence of the modes of nature? We devotees always glorify the lotus feet of the Lord, and therefore we need not ask for anything in terms of dharma, kāma, ārtha and moksa [religion, economic development, sense gratification and liberation].

‘Religion, economic development and sense gratification— these are described in the Vedas as tri-vārga, or three ways to salvation. Within these three categories are education and selfrealization; ritualistic ceremonies performed according to Vedic injunction; logic; the science of law and order; and the various means of earning one’s livelihood. These are the external subject matters of study in the Vedas, and therefore I consider them material. However, I consider surrender to the lotus feet of Lord Viṣṇu to be transcendental.

‘Nārāyaṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the wellwisher and friend of all living entities, formerly explained this transcendental knowledge to the great saint Nārada. Such knowledge is extremely difficult to understand without the mercy of a saintly person like Nārada, but everyone who has taken shelter of Nārada’s disciplic succession can understand this confidential knowledge.’

Prahlāda Mahārāja continued: ‘I received this knowledge from the great saint Nārada Muni, who is always engaged in devotional service. This knowledge, which is called bhagavatadhārma, is fully scientific. It is based on logic and philosophy and is free from all material contamination.’

The sons of the demons replied: ‘Dear Prahlāda, neither you nor we know any teacher or spiritual master other than Ṣaṅḍa and Amarka, the sons of Śukrācārya. After all, we are children and they our controllers. For you especially, who always remain within the palace, it is very difficult to associate with a great personality. Dear friend, most gentle one, would you kindly explain how it was possible for you to hear Nārada? Kindly dispel our doubts in this regard.’

What Prahlāda Learned in the Womb

Prahlāda Mahārāja replied: ‘When our father, Hirāṇyakaśipu, went to Mandarācala Mountain to execute severe austerities, in his absence the demigods, headed by King Indra, made a severe attempt to subdue all the demons in warfare.

‘The demigods thought: “Alas, as a serpent is eaten by small ants, so the troublesome Hirāṇyakaśipu, who always inflicted miseries upon all types of people, has now been defeated by the reactions of his own sinful activities.” Saying this, the demigods, headed by King Indra,

arranged to fight the demons.

‘When the great leaders of the demons, who were being killed one after another, saw the unprecedented exertion of the demigods in fighting, they began to flee, scattering themselves in all directions. Simply to protect their lives, they hastily fled from their homes, wives, children, animals and household paraphernalia. Paying no heed to all these, the demons simply fled. The victorious demigods plundered the palace of Hiraṇyakaśipu, the King of the demons, and destroyed everything within it. Then Indra, King of heaven, arrested my mother, the Queen.

‘As she was being led away, crying in fear like a kurarī captured by a vulture, the great sage Nārada, who at that time had no engagement, appeared on the scene and saw her in that condition.

‘Nārada Muni said: “O Indra, King of the demigods, this woman is certainly sinless. You should not drag her off in this merciless way. O greatly fortunate one, this chaste woman is the wife of another. You must immediately release her.” ‘King Indra said: “In the womb of this woman, the wife of the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu, is the seed of that great demon. Therefore, let her remain in our custody until her child is delivered, and then we shall release her.”

‘Nārada Muni replied: “The child within this woman’s womb is faultless and sinless. Indeed, he is a great devotee, a powerful servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Therefore you will not be able to kill him.”

‘When the great saint Nārada Muni had thus spoken, King Indra, being respectful to Nārada’s words, immediately released my mother. Because of my being a devotee of the Lord, all the demigods circumambulated her. Then they returned to their celestial kingdom.

Prahlāda Mahārāja continued: ‘The great saint Nārada Muni brought my mother to his āśrama and assured her of all protection, saying, “My dear child, please remain at my āśrama until the arrival of your husband.”

‘After accepting the instructions of Devarṣi Nārada, my mother stayed in his care, without fear from any direction, as long as my father, the King of the Daityas, had not become free from his severe austerities. My mother, being pregnant, desired the safety of her embryo and desired to give birth after her husband’s arrival. Thus she stayed at Nārada Muni’s āśrama, where she rendered service unto Nārada Muni with great devotion.

‘Nārada Muni delivered his instructions both to me, who was within the womb, and to my mother, who was engaged in rendering him service. Because he is naturally extremely kind to the fallen souls, being in a transcendental position, he gave instructions on religion and transcendental knowledge. These instructions were free from all material contamination. Because of the long duration of time that has passed and because of her being a woman and therefore less intelligent, my mother has forgotten all those instructions; but the great sage Nārada blessed me, and therefore I could not forget them.’

Prahlāda Mahārāja continued: ‘My dear friends, if you can place your faith in my words, simply by that faith you can also understand transcendental knowledge, just like me, although you are small children. Similarly, a woman can also understand transcendental knowledge and know what is spirit and what is matter. Just as the fruits and flowers of a tree in due course of time undergo six changes—birth, existence, growth, transformation, dwindling and then death—the material body, which is obtained by the spirit soul under different circumstances, undergoes similar changes. However, there are no such changes for the spirit soul.

‘Ātma refers to the Supreme Lord or the living entities. Both of them are spiritual, free from

birth and death, free from deterioration and free from material contamination. They are individual, they are the knowers of the external body, and they are the foundation or shelter of everything. They are free from material change, they are self-illuminated, they are the cause of all causes, and they are all-pervading. They have nothing to do with the material body, and therefore they are always uncovered. With these transcendental qualities, one who is actually learned must give up the illusory conception of life, in which one thinks, “I am this material body, and everything in relationship with this body is mine.”

‘An expert geologist can understand where there is gold and by various processes can extract it from the gold ore. Similarly, a spiritually advanced person can understand how the spiritual particle exists within the body, and thus by cultivating spiritual knowledge he can attain perfection in spiritual life. However, as one who is not expert cannot understand where there is gold, a foolish person who has not cultivated spiritual knowledge cannot understand how the spirit exists within the body.

‘The Lord’s eight separated material energies, the three modes of material nature and the sixteen transformations—the eleven senses and the five gross material elements like earth and water—within all these, the one spiritual soul exists as the observer. Therefore all the great ācāryas have concluded that the individual soul is conditioned by these material elements. There are two kinds of bodies for every individual soul: a gross body made of five gross elements and a subtle body made of three subtle elements. Within these bodies, however, is the spirit soul. One must find the soul by analysis, saying, “This is not it. This is not it.” Thus one must separate spirit from matter. Sober and expert persons should search for the spirit soul with minds purified through analytical study in terms of the soul’s connection with and distinction from all things that undergo creation, maintenance and destruction.

‘Intelligence can be perceived in three states of activity—wakefulness, dreaming and deep sleep. The person who perceives these three is to be considered the original master, the ruler, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As one can understand the presence of the air by the aromas it carries, so, under the guidance of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one can understand the living soul by these three divisions of intelligence. These three divisions, however, are not the soul; they are constituted of the three modes and are born of activities.

‘Through polluted intelligence one is subjected to the modes of nature, and thus one is conditioned by material existence. Like a dreaming state in which one falsely suffers, material existence, which is due to ignorance, must be considered unwanted and temporary. Therefore, my dear friends, O sons of the demons, your duty is to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which can burn the seed of fruitive activities artificially created by the modes of material nature and stop the flow of the intelligence in wakefulness, dreaming and deep sleep. In other words, when one takes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, his ignorance is immediately dissipated.

‘Of the different processes recommended for disentanglement from material life, the one personally explained and accepted by the Supreme Personality of Godhead should be considered all-perfect. That process is the performance of duties by which love for the Supreme Lord develops. One must accept the bona-fide spiritual master and render service unto him with great devotion and faith. Whatever one has in one’s possession should be offered to the spiritual master, and in the association of saintly persons and devotees one should worship the Lord, hear the glories of the Lord with faith, glorify the transcendental qualities and activities of the Lord, always meditate on the Lord’s lotus feet, and worship the Deity of the Lord strictly according to the injunctions of the śāstra and guru.

‘One should always remember the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His localized

representation as the Paramātmā, who is situated in the core of every living entity's heart. Thus one should offer respect to every living entity according to that living entity's position or manifestation. By these activities [as mentioned above] one is able to cut down the influence of the enemies, namely lust, anger, greed, illusion, madness and jealousy, and when thus situated, one can render service to the Lord. In this way one surely attains the platform of loving service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

‘One who is situated in devotional service is certainly the controller of his senses, and thus he is a liberated person. When such a liberated person, the pure devotee, hears of the transcendental qualities and activities of the Lord's incarnations for the performance of various pastimes, his hair stands on end on his body, tears fall from his eyes, and in his spiritual realization his voice falters. Sometimes he very openly dances, sometimes he sings loudly, and sometimes he cries. Thus he expresses his transcendental jubilation.

‘When a devotee becomes like a person haunted by a ghost, he laughs and very loudly chants about the qualities of the Lord. Sometimes he sits to perform meditation, and he offers respects to every living entity, considering him a devotee of the Lord. Constantly breathing very heavily, he becomes careless of social etiquette and loudly chants like a madman, “Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa! O my Lord, O master of the universe!” ‘The devotee is then freed from all material contamination because he constantly thinks of the Lord's pastimes and because his mind and body have been converted to spiritual qualities. Because of his intense devotional service, his ignorance, material consciousness and all kinds of material desires are completely burnt to ashes. This is the stage at which one can achieve the shelter of the Lord's lotus feet.

‘The real problem of life is the repetition of birth and death, which is like a wheel rolling repeatedly up and down. This wheel, however, completely stops when one is in touch with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In other words, by the transcendental bliss realized from constant engagement in devotional service, one is completely liberated from material existence. All learned men know this. Therefore, my dear friends, O sons of the asuras, immediately begin meditating upon and worshiping the Supersoul within everyone's heart.

‘O my friends, sons of the asuras, the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His Supersoul feature always exists within the cores of the hearts of all living entities. Indeed, He is the wellwisher and friend of all living entities, and there is no difficulty in worshiping the Lord. Why, then, should people not engage in His devotional service? Why are they so addicted to unnecessarily producing artificial paraphernalia for sense gratification?

‘One's riches, beautiful wife and female friends, one's sons and daughters, one's residence, one's domestic animals like cows, elephants and horses, one's treasury, economic development and sense gratification—indeed, even the lifetime in which one can enjoy all these material opulences—are certainly temporary and flickering. Since the opportunity of human life is temporary, what benefit can these material opulences give to a sensible man who has understood himself to be eternal? ‘It is learned from Vedic literature that by performing great sacrifices one may elevate himself to the heavenly planets. However, although life on the heavenly planets is hundreds and thousands of times more comfortable than life on earth, the heavenly planets are not pure [nirmalam], or free from the taint of material existence. The heavenly planets are also temporary, and therefore they are not the goal of life. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, however, has never been seen or heard to possess inebriety. Consequently, for your own benefit and self-realization, you must worship the Lord with great devotion, as described in the revealed scriptures.

‘A materialistic person, thinking himself very advanced in intelligence, continually acts for

economic development. But again and again, as enunciated in the Vedas, he is frustrated by material activities, either in this life or in the next. Indeed, the results one obtains are inevitably the opposite of those one desires. In this material world, every materialist desires to achieve happiness and diminish his distress, and therefore he acts accordingly. Actually, however, one is happy as long as one does not endeavor for happiness; as soon as one begins his activities for happiness, his conditions of distress begin.

‘A living entity desires comfort for his body and makes many plans for this purpose, but actually the body is the property of others. Indeed, the perishable body embraces the living entity and then leaves him aside. Since the body itself is ultimately meant to become stool or earth, what is the meaning of the paraphernalia related to the body, such as wives, residences, wealth, children, relatives, servants, friends, kingdoms, treasuries, animals and ministers? They are also temporary. What more can be said about this?

‘All this paraphernalia is very near and dear as long as the body exists, but as soon as the body is destroyed, all things related to the body are also finished. Therefore, actually one has nothing to do with them, but because of ignorance one accepts them as valuable. Compared to the ocean of eternal happiness, they are most insignificant. What is the use of such insignificant relationships for the eternal living being? ‘My dear friends, O sons of the asuras, the living entity receives different types of bodies according to his previous fruitive activities. Thus he is seen to suffer with reference to his particular body in all conditions of life, beginning with his infusion into the womb. Please tell me, therefore, after full consideration: What is the living entity’s actual interest in fruitive activities, which result in hardship and misery? ‘The living entity, who has received his present body because of his past fruitive activity, may end the results of his actions in this life, but this does not mean that he is liberated from bondage to material bodies. The living entity receives one type of body, and by performing actions with that body he creates another. Thus he transmigrates from one body to another, through repeated birth and death, because of his gross ignorance.

‘The four principles of advancement in spiritual life—dhārma, ārtha, kāma and moksa—all depend on the disposition of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Therefore, my dear friends, follow in the footsteps of devotees. Without desire, fully depend upon the disposition of the Supreme Lord, worship Him, the Supersoul, in devotional service. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari, is the soul and the Supersoul of all living entities. Every living entity is a manifestation of His energy in terms of the living soul and the material body. Therefore the Lord is the most dear, and He is the supreme controller.

‘If a demigod, demon, human being, Yakṣa, Gandharva or anyone within this universe renders service to the lotus feet of Mukuṇḍa, who can deliver liberation, he is actually situated in the most auspicious condition of life, exactly like us [the mahājanas, headed by Prahāda Mahārāja].

‘My dear friends, O sons of the demons, you cannot please the Supreme Personality of Godhead by becoming perfect brāhmaṇas, demigods or great saints or by becoming perfectly good in etiquette or vast learning. None of these qualifications can awaken the pleasure of the Lord. Nor by charity, austerity, sacrifice, cleanliness or vows can one satisfy the Lord. The Lord is pleased only if one has unflinching, unalloyed devotion to Him. Without sincere devotional service, everything is simply a show.

‘My dear friends, O sons of the demons, in the same favorable way that one sees himself and takes care of himself, take to devotional service to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is present everywhere as the Supersoul of all living entities. O my friends, O sons of demons, everyone, including you (the Yakṣas and Rakṣāsas), the unintelligent women, sudras

and cowherd men, the birds, the lower animals and the sinful living entities, can revive his original, eternal spiritual life and exist forever simply by accepting the principles of bhakti-yoga.

‘In this material world, to render service to the lotus feet of Govinda, the cause of all causes, and to see Him everywhere, is the only goal of life. This much alone is the ultimate goal of human life, as explained by all the revealed scriptures.’

Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva Slays the King of the Demons

Nārada Muni continued: All the sons of the demons appreciated the transcendental instructions of Prahlāda Mahārāja and took them very seriously. They rejected the materialistic instructions given by their teachers, Śaṅḍa and Amarka. When Śaṅḍa and Amarka, the sons of Śukrācārya, observed that all the students, the sons of the demons, were becoming advanced in Kṛṣṇa consciousness because of the association of Prahlāda Mahārāja, they were afraid. They approached the King of the demons and described the situation as it was.

When Hiraṇyakaśipu understood the entire situation, he was extremely angry, so much so that his body trembled. Thus he finally decided to kill his son Prahlāda. Hiraṇyakaśipu was by nature very cruel, and feeling insulted, he began hissing like a snake trampled upon by someone’s foot. His son Prahlāda was peaceful, mild and gentle, his senses were under control, and he stood before Hiraṇyakaśipu with folded hands. According to Prahlāda’s age and behavior, he was not to be chastised. Yet with staring, crooked eyes, Hiraṇyakaśipu rebuked him with the following harsh words.

Hiraṇyakaśipu said: ‘O most impudent, most unintelligent disruptor of the family, O lowest of mankind, you have violated my power to rule you, and therefore you are an obstinate fool. Today I shall send you to the place of Yamarāja. My son Prahlāda, you rascal, you know that when I am angry all the planets of the three worlds tremble, along with their chief rulers. By whose power has a rascal like you become so impudent that you appear fearless and overstep my power to rule you?’

Prahlāda Mahārāja said: ‘My dear King, the source of my strength, of which you are asking, is also the source of yours. Indeed, the original source of all kinds of strength is one. He is not only your strength or mine, but the only strength for everyone. Without Him, no one can get any strength. Whether moving or not moving, superior or inferior, everyone, including Lord Brahmā, is controlled by the strength of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

‘The Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the supreme controller and time factor, is the power of the senses, the power of the mind, the power of the body, and the vital force of the senses. His influence is unlimited. He is the best of all living entities, the controller of the three modes of material nature. By His own power, He creates this cosmic manifestation, maintains it and annihilates it also.’

Prahlāda Mahārāja continued: ‘My dear father, please give up your demoniac mentality. Do not discriminate in your heart between enemies and friends; make your mind equipoised toward everyone. Except for the uncontrolled and misguided mind, there is no enemy within this world. When one sees everyone on the platform of equality, one then comes to the position of worshiping the Lord perfectly.

‘In former times there were many fools like you who did not conquer the six enemies that steal away the wealth of the body. These fools were very proud, thinking, “I have conquered all enemies in all the ten directions.” But if a person is victorious over the six enemies and is

equipoised toward all living entities, for him there are no enemies. Enemies are merely imagined by one in ignorance.’

Hiraṇyakaśipu replied: ‘You rascal, you are trying to minimize my value, as if you were better than me at controlling the senses. This is over-intelligent. I can therefore understand that you desire to die at my hands, for this kind of nonsensical talk is indulged in by those about to die.

‘O most unfortunate Prahlāda, you have always described a supreme being other than me, a supreme being who is above everything, who is the controller of everyone, and who is all-pervading. But where is He? If He is everywhere, then why is He not present before me in this pillar?’

‘Because you are speaking so much nonsense, I shall now sever your head from your body. Now let me see your most worshipable God come to protect you. I want to see it.’ Being obsessed with anger, Hiraṇyakaśipu, who was very great in bodily strength, thus chastised his exalted devotee-son Prahlāda with harsh words. Cursing him again and again, Hiraṇyakaśipu took up his sword, got up from his royal throne, and with great anger struck his fist against the column.

Then from within the pillar came a fearful sound, which appeared to crack the covering of the universe. O my dear Yudhiṣṭhira, this sound reached even the abodes of the demigods like Lord Brahmā, and when the demigods heard it, they thought, “Oh, now our planets are being destroyed!” While showing his extraordinary prowess, Hiraṇyakaśipu, who desired to kill his own son, heard that wonderful, tumultuous sound, which had never before been heard. Upon hearing the sound, the other leaders of the demons were afraid. None of them could find the origin of that sound in the assembly.

To prove that the statement of His servant Prahlāda Mahārāja was substantial—in other words, to prove that the Supreme Lord is present everywhere, even within the pillar of an assembly hall—the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari, exhibited a wonderful form never before seen. The form was neither that of a man nor that of a lion. Thus the Lord appeared in His wonderful form in the assembly hall. While Hiraṇyakaśipu looked all around to find the source of the sound, that wonderful form of the Lord, which could not be ascertained to be either a man or a lion, emerged from the pillar. In amazement, Hiraṇyakaśipu wondered, ‘What is this creature that is half-man and half-lion?’

Hiraṇyakaśipu studied the form of the Lord, trying to decide who the form of Nṛsiṃhadeva standing before him was. The Lord’s form was extremely fearsome because of His angry eyes, which resembled molten gold; His shining mane, which expanded the dimensions of His fearful face; His deadly teeth; and His razor-sharp tongue, which moved about like a dueling sword. His ears were erect and motionless, and His nostrils and gaping mouth appeared like caves of a mountain. His jaws parted fearfully, and His entire body touched the sky. His neck was very short and thick, His chest broad, His waist thin, and the hairs on His body as white as the rays of the moon. His arms, which resembled flanks of soldiers, spread in all directions as He killed the demons, rogues and atheists with His conchshell, disc, club, lotus and other natural weapons.

Hiraṇyakaśipu murmured to himself, ‘Lord Viṣṇu, who possesses great mystic power, has made this plan to kill me, but what is the use of such an attempt? Who can fight with me?’ Thinking like this and taking up his club, Hiraṇyakaśipu attacked the Lord like an elephant. Just as a small insect falls forcefully into a fire and the insignificant creature becomes invisible, when Hiraṇyakaśipu attacked the Lord, who was full of effulgence, Hiraṇyakaśipu became invisible. This is not at all astonishing, for the Lord is always situated in pure goodness. Formerly, during

creation, He entered the dark universe and illuminated it by His spiritual effulgence.

Thereafter, the great demon Hiranyakaṣipu, who was extremely angry, swiftly attacked Nṛsimhadeva with his club and began to beat Him. Lord Nṛsimhadeva, however, captured the great demon, along with his club, just as Garūḍa might capture a great snake. O Yudhiṣṭhira, O great son of Bhārata, when Lord Nṛsimhadeva gave Hiranyakaṣipu a chance to slip from His hand, just as Garūḍa sometimes plays with a snake and lets it slip from his mouth, the demigods, who had lost their abodes and who were hiding behind the clouds for fear of the demon, did not consider that incident very good. Indeed, they were perturbed. When Hiranyakaṣipu was freed from the hands of Nṛsimhadeva, he falsely thought that the Lord was afraid of his prowess. Therefore, after taking a little rest from the fight, he took up his sword and shield and again attacked the Lord with great force.

Making a loud, shrill sound of laughter, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa, who is extremely strong and powerful, captured Hiranyakaṣipu, who was protecting himself with his sword and shield, leaving no gaps open. With the speed of a hawk, Hiranyakaṣipu moved sometimes in the sky and sometimes on the earth, his eyes closed because of fear of Nṛsimhadeva's laughter.

As a snake captures a mouse or Garūḍa captures a very venomous snake, Lord Nṛsimhadeva captured Hiranyakaṣipu, who could not be pierced even by the thunderbolt of King Indra. As Hiranyakaṣipu moved his limbs here, there and all around, very much afflicted at being captured, Lord Nṛsimhadeva placed the demon on His lap, supporting him with His thighs, and in the doorway of the assembly hall the Lord very easily tore the demon to pieces with the nails of His hand. Lord Nṛsimhadeva's mouth and mane were sprinkled with drops of blood, and His fierce eyes, full of anger, were impossible to look at. Licking the edge of His mouth with His tongue, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nṛsimhadeva, decorated with a garland of intestines taken from Hiranyakaṣipu's abdomen, resembled a lion that has just killed an elephant.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, who had many, many arms, first uprooted Hiranyakaṣipu's heart and then threw him aside and turned toward the demon's soldiers. These soldiers had come in thousands to fight with Him with raised weapons and were very faithful followers of Hiranyakaṣipu, but Lord Nṛsimhadeva killed all of them merely with the ends of His nails.

The hair on Nṛsimhadeva's head shook the clouds and scattered them here and there, His glaring eyes stole the effulgence of the luminaries in the sky, and His breathing agitated the seas and oceans. Because of His roaring, all the elephants in the world began to cry in fear. Airplanes were thrown into outer space and the upper planetary system by the hair on Nṛsimhadeva's head. Because of the pressure of the Lord's lotus feet, the earth appeared to slip from its position, and all the hills and mountains sprang up due to His intolerable force. Because of the Lord's bodily effulgence, both the sky and all directions diminished in their natural illumination.

Manifesting a full effulgence and a fearsome countenance, Lord Nṛsimha, being very angry and finding no contestant to face His power and opulence, then sat down in the assembly hall on the excellent throne of the king. Because of fear and obedience, no one could come forward to serve the Lord directly. Hiranyakaṣipu had been exactly like a fever of meningitis in the head of the three worlds. Thus when the wives of the demigods in the heavenly planets saw that the great demon had been killed by the personal hands of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, their faces blossomed in great joy. The wives of the demigods again and again showered flowers

from heaven upon Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva like rain.

At that time, the airplanes of the demigods, who desired to see the activities of the Supreme Lord, Nārāyaṇa, crowded the sky. The demigods began beating drums and kettledrums, and upon hearing them the angelic women began to dance, while the chiefs of the Gaṇḍhārvas sang sweetly.

My dear King Yudhiṣṭhira, the demigods then approached the Lord. They were headed by Lord Brahmā, King Indra and Lord Śiva, and included great saintly persons and the residents of Piṭṛloka, Siddhaloka, Vidyādhara-loka and Nagaloka, the planet of the snakes. The Manus approached, and so did the chiefs of various other planets. The Apsāra angelic dancers approached, as did the Gaṇḍhārvas, the Cāraṇas, the Yakṣas, the inhabitants of Kinnāraloka, the Vetālas, the inhabitants of Kimpuruṣa-loka, and the personal servants of Viṣṇu like Sunanda and Kumuda. All of them came near the Lord, who glowed with intense light. They individually offered their obeisances and prayers, their hands folded at their heads.

Lord Brahmā prayed: ‘My Lord, You are unlimited, and You possess unending potencies. No one can estimate or calculate Your prowess and wonderful influence, for Your actions are never polluted by the material energy. Through the material qualities, You very easily create the universe, maintain it and again annihilate it, yet You remain the same, without deterioration. I therefore offer my respectful obeisances unto You.’

Lord Śiva said: ‘The end of the millennium is the time for Your anger. Now that this insignificant demon Hiraṇyakaśipu has been killed, O my Lord, who are naturally affectionate to Your devotee, kindly protect his son Prahlāda Mahārāja, who is standing nearby as Your fully surrendered devotee.’

King Indra said: ‘O Supreme Lord, You are our deliverer and protector. Our shares of sacrifices, which are actually Yours, have been recovered from the demon by You. Because the demoniac king Hiraṇyakaśipu was most fearsome, our hearts, which are Your permanent abode, were all overtaken by him. Now, by Your presence, the gloom and darkness in our hearts have been dissipated. O Lord, for those who always engage in Your service, which is more exalted than liberation, all material opulence is insignificant. They do not even care for liberation, not to speak of the benefits of kāma, ārtha and dhārma.’

All the saintly persons present offered their prayers in this way: ‘O Lord, O supreme maintainer of those sheltered at Your lotus feet, O original Personality of Godhead, the process of austerity and penance, in which You instructed us before, is the spiritual power of Your very self. It is by austerity that You create the material world, which lies dormant within You. This austerity was almost stopped by the activities of this demon, but now, by Yourself appearing in the form of Nṛsiṃhadeva, which is meant just to give us protection, and by killing this demon, You have again approved the process of austerity.’ The inhabitants of Piṭṛloka prayed: ‘Let us offer our respectful obeisances unto Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva, the maintainer of the religious principles of the universe. He has killed Hiraṇyakaśipu, the demon who by force enjoyed all the offerings of the śraddhā ceremonies performed by our sons and grandsons on the anniversaries of our death and who drank the water with sesame seeds offered in holy places of pilgrimage. By killing this demon, O Lord, You have taken back all this stolen property from his abdomen by piercing it with Your nails. We therefore wish to offer our respectful obeisances unto You.’

The inhabitants of Siddhaloka prayed: ‘O Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva, because we belong to Siddhaloka, we automatically achieve perfection in all eight kinds of mystic power. Yet Hiraṇyakaśipu was so dishonest that by the strength of his power and austerity, he took away

our powers. Thus he became very proud of his mystic strength. Now, because this rogue has been killed by Your nails, we offer our respectful obeisances unto You.’

The inhabitants of Vidyādhara-loka prayed: ‘Our acquired power to appear and disappear in various ways according to varieties of meditation was banned by that foolish Hiraṇyakaśipu because of his pride in his superior bodily strength and his ability to conquer others. Now the Supreme Personality of Godhead has killed him just as if the demon were an animal. Unto that supreme pastime form of Lord Nṛsimhadeva, we eternally offer our respectful obeisances.’ The inhabitants of Nagaloka said: ‘The most sinful Hiraṇyakaśipu took away all the jewels on our hoods and all our beautiful wives. Now, since his chest has been pierced by Your nails, You are the source of all pleasure to our wives. Thus we together offer our respectful obeisances unto You.’

All the Manus offered their prayers as follows: ‘As Your order carriers, O Lord, we, the Manus, are the law-givers for human society, but because of the temporary supremacy of this great demon, Hiraṇyakaśipu, our laws for maintaining varṇāśramadhārma were destroyed. O Lord, now that You have killed this great demon, we are in our normal condition. Kindly order us, Your eternal servants, what to do now.’

The prajāpatis offered their prayers as follows: ‘O Supreme Lord, Lord of even Brahmā and Śiva, we, the prajāpatis, were created by You to execute Your orders, but we were forbidden by Hiraṇyakaśipu to create any more good progeny. Now the demon is lying dead before us, his chest pierced by You. Let us therefore offer our respectful obeisances unto You, whose incarnation in this form of pure goodness is meant for the welfare of the entire universe.’

The inhabitants of Gandharvaloka prayed: ‘Your Lordship, we ever engage in Your service by dancing and singing in dramatic performances, but this Hiraṇyakaśipu, by the influence of his bodily strength and valor, brought us under his subjugation. Now Your Lordship has brought him to this low condition. What benefit can result from the activities of such an upstart as Hiraṇyakaśipu?’

The inhabitants of the Cāraṇa planet said: ‘O Lord, because You have destroyed the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu, who was always a stake in the hearts of all honest men, we are now relieved, and we eternally take shelter of Your lotus feet, which award the conditioned soul liberation from materialistic contamination.’

The inhabitants of Yakṣaloka prayed: ‘O controller of the twenty-four elements, we are considered the best servants of Your Lordship because of rendering services pleasing to You, yet we engaged as palanquin carriers by the order of Hiraṇyakaśipu, the son of Diti. O Lord in the form of Nṛsimhadeva, You know how this demon gave trouble to everyone, but now You have killed him, and his body is mixing with the five material elements.’

The inhabitants of Kimpuruṣa-loka said: ‘We are insignificant living entities, and You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the supreme controller. Therefore how can we offer suitable prayers unto You? When this demon was condemned by devotees because they were disgusted with him, he was then killed by You.’

The inhabitants of Vaitalikā-loka said: ‘Dear Lord, because of chanting Your spotless glories in great assemblies and arenas of sacrifice, we were accustomed to great respect from everyone. This demon, however, usurped that position. Now, to our great fortune, You have killed this great demon, exactly as one cures a chronic disease.’

The Kinnāras said: ‘O supreme controller, we are ever-existing servants of Your Lordship, but

instead of rendering service to You, we were engaged by this demon in his service, constantly and without remuneration. This sinful man has now been killed by You. Therefore, O Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva, our master, we offer our respectful obeisances unto You. Please continue to be our patron.’

The associates of Lord Viṣṇu in Vaikuṅṭha offered this prayer: ‘O Lord, our supreme giver of shelter, today we have seen Your wonderful form as Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva, meant for the good fortune of all the world. O Lord, we can understand that Hiraṇyakaśipu was the same Jāya who engaged in Your service but was cursed by brāhmaṇas and who thus received the body of a demon. We understand that his having now been killed is Your special mercy upon him.’

Prahlāda Pacifies Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva with Prayers

The great saint Nārada Muni continued: The demigods, headed by Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva and other great demigods, dared not come forward before the Lord, who at that time was extremely angry. The goddess of fortune, Lakṣmīji, was requested to go before the Lord by all the demigods present, but because of fear she could not do so. Even she had never seen such a wonderful and extraordinary form of the Lord, and thus she could not approach Him.

Thereafter Lord Brahmā requested Prahlāda Mahārāja, who was standing very near him: ‘My dear son, Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva is extremely angry at your demoniac father. Please go forward and appease the Lord.’

Nārada Muni continued: O King, although the exalted devotee Prahlāda Mahārāja was only a little boy, he accepted Lord Brahmā’s words. He gradually proceeded toward Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva and fell down to offer his respectful obeisances with folded hands. When Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva saw the small boy Prahlāda Mahārāja prostrated at the soles of His lotus feet, He became most ecstatic in affection toward His devotee. Raising Prahlāda, the Lord placed His lotus hand upon the boy’s head because His hand is always ready to create fearlessness in all of His devotees.

By the touch of Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva’s hand on Prahlāda Mahārāja’s head, Prahlāda was completely freed of all material contaminations and desires, as if he had been thoroughly cleansed. Therefore he at once became transcendently situated, and all the symptoms of ecstasy became manifest in his body. His heart filled with love, and his eyes with tears, and thus he was able to completely capture the lotus feet of the Lord within the core of his heart. Prahlāda Mahārāja fixed his mind and sight upon Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva with full attention in complete trance. With a fixed mind, he began to offer prayers in love with a faltering voice.

Prahlāda Mahārāja prayed: ‘How is it possible for me, who have been born in a family of asuras, to offer suitable prayers to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead? Even until now, all the demigods, headed by Lord Brahmā, and all the saintly persons, could not satisfy the Lord by streams of excellent words, although such persons are very qualified, being in the mode of goodness. Then what is to be said of me? I am not at all qualified.’

Prahlāda Mahārāja continued: ‘One may possess wealth, an aristocratic family, beauty, austerity, education, sensory expertise, luster, influence, physical strength, diligence, intelligence and mystic yogic power, but I think that even by all these qualifications one cannot satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead. However, one can satisfy the Lord simply by devotional service. Gajendra did this, and thus the Lord was satisfied with him.

‘If a brāhmaṇa has all twelve of the brahminical qualifications [as they are stated in the book

called Sanat-sujata] but is not a devotee and is averse to the lotus feet of the Lord, he is certainly lower than a devotee who is a dog-eater but who has dedicated everything—mind, words, activities, wealth and life—to the Supreme Lord. Such a devotee is better than such a brāhmaṇa because the devotee can purify his whole family, whereas the so-called brāhmaṇa in a position of false prestige cannot purify even himself.

‘The Supreme Lord, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is always fully satisfied in Himself. Therefore when something is offered to Him, the offering, by the Lord’s mercy, is for the benefit of the devotee, for the Lord does not need service from anyone. To give an example, if one’s face is decorated, the reflection of one’s face in a mirror is also seen to be decorated. Therefore, although I was born in a demoniac family, I may without a doubt offer prayers to the Lord with full endeavor, as far as my intelligence allows. Anyone who has been forced by ignorance to enter the material world may be purified of material life if he offers prayers to the Lord and hears the Lord’s glories.

‘O my Lord, all the demigods headed by Lord Brahmā, are sincere servants of Your Lordship, and are situated in a transcendental position. Therefore they are not like us [Prahāda and his father, the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu]. Your appearance in this fearsome form is Your pastime for Your own pleasure. Such an incarnation is always meant for the protection and improvement of the universe.

‘My Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva, please, therefore, cease Your anger now that my father, the great demon Hiraṇyakaśipu, has been killed. Since even saintly persons take pleasure in the killing of a scorpion or a snake, all the worlds have achieved great satisfaction because of the death of this demon. Now they are confident of their happiness, and they will always remember Your auspicious incarnation in order to be free from fear.

‘My Lord, who are never conquered by anyone, I am certainly not afraid of Your ferocious mouth and tongue, Your eyes bright like the sun or Your frowning eyebrows. I do not fear Your sharp, pinching teeth, Your garland of intestines, Your mane soaked with blood, or Your high, wedgelike ears. Nor do I fear Your tumultuous roaring, which makes elephants flee to distant places, or Your nails, which are meant to kill Your enemies.

‘O most powerful, insurmountable Lord, who are kind to the fallen souls, I have been put into the association of demons as a result of my activities, and therefore I am very much afraid of my condition of life within this material world. When will that moment come when You will call me to the shelter of Your lotus feet, which are the ultimate goal for liberation from conditional life?

‘O great one, O Supreme Lord, because of combination with pleasing and displeasing circumstances and because of separation from them, one is placed in a most regrettable position, within heavenly or hellish planets, as if burning in a fire of lamentation. Although there are many remedies by which to get out of miserable life, any such remedies in the material world are more miserable than the miseries themselves. Therefore I think that the only remedy is to engage in Your service. Kindly instruct me in such service.

‘O my Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva, by engaging in Your transcendental loving service in the association of devotees who are liberated souls [hamsas], I shall become completely uncontaminated by the association of the three modes of material nature and be able to chant the glories of Your Lordship, who are so dear to me. I shall chant Your glories, following exactly in the footsteps of Lord Brahmā and his disciplic succession. In this way I shall undoubtedly be able to cross the ocean of nescience.

‘My Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva, O Supreme, because of a bodily conception of life, embodied souls

neglected and not cared for by You cannot do anything for their betterment. Whatever remedies they accept, although perhaps temporarily beneficial, are certainly impermanent. For example, a father and mother cannot protect their child, a physician and medicine cannot relieve a suffering patient, and a boat on the ocean cannot protect a drowning man.

‘My dear Lord, everyone in this material world is under the modes of material nature, being influenced by goodness, passion and ignorance. Everyone—from the greatest personality, Lord Brahmā, down to the small ant—works under the influence of these modes. Therefore everyone in this material world is influenced by Your energy. The cause for which they work, the place where they work, the time when they work, the matter due to which they work, the goal of life they have considered final, and the process for obtaining this goal—all are nothing but manifestations of Your energy. Indeed, since the energy and energetic are identical, all of them are but manifestations of You.

‘O Lord, O eternal Supreme Being, by expanding Your plenary portion You have created the subtle bodies of the living entities through the agency of Your external energy, which is agitated by time. Thus the mind entraps the living entity in unlimited varieties of desires to be fulfilled by the Vedic directions of karma-kāṇḍa [fruitive activity] and the sixteen elements. Who can get free from this entanglement unless he takes shelter at Your lotus feet?

‘My dear Lord, O supreme great, You have created this material world of sixteen constituents, but You are transcendental to their material qualities. In other words, these material qualities are under Your full control, and You are never conquered by them. Therefore the time element is Your representation. My Lord, O Supreme, no one can conquer You. As for me, however, I am being crushed by the wheel of time, and therefore I surrender fully unto You. Now kindly take me under the protection of Your lotus feet.

‘My dear Lord, people in general want to be elevated to the higher planetary systems for a long duration of life, opulence and enjoyment, but I have seen all of these through the activities of my father. When my father was angry and he laughed sarcastically at the demigods, they were immediately vanquished simply by seeing the movements of his eyebrows. Yet my father, who was so powerful, has now been vanquished by You within a moment.

‘My dear Lord, now I have complete experience concerning the worldly opulence, mystic power, longevity and other material pleasures enjoyed by all living entities, from Lord Brahmā down to the ant. As powerful time, You destroy them all. Therefore, because of my experience, I do not wish to possess them. My dear Lord, I request You to place me in touch with Your pure devotee and let me serve him as a sincere servant.

‘In this material world, every living entity desires some future happiness, which is exactly like a mirage in the desert. Where is water in the desert, or, in other words, where is happiness in this material world? As for this body, what is its value? It is merely a source of various diseases. The so-called philosophers, scientists and politicians know this very well, but nonetheless they aspire for temporary happiness. Happiness is very difficult to obtain, but because they are unable to control their senses, they run after the so-called happiness of the material world and never come to the right conclusion.

‘O my Lord, O Supreme, because I was born in a family full of the hellish material qualities of passion and ignorance, what is my position? And what is to be said of Your causeless mercy, which was never offered even to Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva or the goddess of fortune, Lakṣmī? You never put Your lotus hand upon their heads, but You have put it upon mine.

‘Unlike an ordinary living entity, my Lord, You do not discriminate between friends and

enemies, the favorable and the unfavorable, because for You there is no conception of higher and lower. Nonetheless, You offer Your benedictions according to the level of one's service, exactly as a desire tree delivers fruits according to one's desires and makes no distinction between the lower and the higher.

'My dear Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, because of my association with material desires, one after another, I was gradually falling into a blind well full of snakes, following the general populace. But Your servant Nārada Muni kindly accepted me as his disciple and instructed me how to achieve this transcendental position. Therefore, my first duty is to serve him. How could I leave his service?

'My Lord, O unlimited reservoir of transcendental qualities, You have killed my father, Hiranyakasipu, and saved me from his sword. He had said very angrily, "If there is any supreme controller other than me, let Him save you. I shall now sever your head from your body." Therefore I think that both in saving me and in killing him, You have acted just to prove true the words of Your devotee. There is no other cause.

'My dear Lord, You alone manifest Yourself as the entire cosmic manifestation, for You existed before the creation, You exist after the annihilation, and You are the maintainer between the beginning and the end. All this is done by Your external energy through actions and reactions of the three modes of material nature. Therefore whatever exists—externally and internally—is You alone.

'My dear Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, the entire cosmic creation is caused by You, and the cosmic manifestation is an effect of Your energy. Although the entire cosmos is but You alone, You keep Yourself aloof from it. The conception of "mine and yours," is certainly a type of illusion [māyā] because everything is an emanation from You and is therefore not different from You. Indeed, the cosmic manifestation is nondifferent from You, and the annihilation is also caused by You. This relationship between Your Lordship and the cosmos is illustrated by the example of the seed and the tree, or the subtle cause and the gross manifestation.

'O my Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, after the annihilation the creative energy is kept in You, who appear to sleep with half-closed eyes. Actually, however, You do not sleep like an ordinary human being, for You are always in a transcendental stage, beyond the creation of the material world, and You always feel transcendental bliss. As Karaṇodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, You thus remain in Your transcendental status, not touching material objects. Although You appear to sleep, this sleeping is distinct from sleeping in ignorance.

'This cosmic manifestation, the material world, is also Your body. This total lump of matter is agitated by Your potent energy known as kāla-śakti, and thus the three modes of material nature are manifested. You awaken from the bed of ananta-śeṣa, and from Your navel a small transcendental seed is generated. It is from this seed that the lotus flower of the gigantic universe is manifested, exactly as a banyan tree grows from a small seed.

'From that great lotus flower, Brahmā was generated, but Brahmā certainly could see nothing but the lotus. Therefore, thinking You to be outside, Lord Brahmā dove into the water and attempted to find the source of the lotus for one hundred years. He could find no trace of You, however, for when a seed fructifies, the original seed cannot be seen.

'Lord Brahmā, who is celebrated as ātma-yonī, having been born without a mother, was struck with wonder. Thus he took shelter of the lotus flower, and when he had been purified after undergoing severe austerities for many hundreds of years, he could see that the cause of all

causes, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, was spread throughout his own body and senses, just as aroma, although very subtle, is perceived in the earth.

‘Lord Brahmā could then see You possessing thousands and thousands of faces, feet, heads, hands, thighs, noses, ears and eyes. You were very nicely dressed, being decorated and bedecked with varieties of ornaments and weapons. Seeing You in the form of Lord Viṣṇu, Your symptoms and form being transcendental, Your legs extending from the lower planets, Lord Brahmā achieved transcendental bliss.

‘My dear Lord, when You appeared as Hayagriva, with the head of a horse, You killed two demons known as Madhu and Kaitabha, who were full of the modes of passion and ignorance. Then You delivered the Vedic knowledge to Lord Brahmā. For this reason, all the great saints accept Your forms as transcendental, untinged by material qualities.

‘In this way, my Lord, You appear in various incarnations as a human being, an animal, a great saint, a demigod, a fish or a tortoise, thus maintaining the entire creation in different planetary systems and killing the demoniac principles. According to the age, O my Lord, You protect the principles of religion. In the age of Kali, however, You do not assert Yourself as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and therefore You are known as Triyuga, or the Lord who appears in three yugas.

‘My dear Lord of the Vaikuṅṭha planets, where there is no anxiety, my mind is extremely sinful and lusty, being sometimes so-called happy and sometimes so-called distressed. My mind is full of lamentation and fear, and it always seeks more and more money. Thus it has become most polluted and is never satisfied in topics concerning You. I am therefore most fallen and poor. In such a status of life, how shall I be able to discuss Your activities?

‘My dear Lord, O infallible one, my position is like that of a person who has many wives, all trying to attract him in their own way. For example, the tongue is attracted to palatable dishes, the genitals to sex with an attractive woman, and the sense of touch to contact with soft things. The belly, although filled, still wants to eat more, and the ear, not attempting to hear about You, is generally attracted to cinema songs. The sense of smell is attracted to yet another side, the restless eyes are attracted to scenes of sense gratification, and the active senses are attracted elsewhere. In this way I am certainly embarrassed.

‘My dear Lord, You are always transcendently situated on the other side of the river of death, but because of the reactions of our own activities, we are suffering on this side. Indeed, we have fallen into this river and are repeatedly suffering the pains of birth and death and eating horrible things. Now kindly look upon us—not only upon me but also upon all others who are suffering—and by Your causeless mercy and compassion, deliver us and maintain us.

‘O my Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, original spiritual master of the entire world, what is the difficulty for You, who manage the affairs of the universe, in delivering the fallen souls engaged in Your devotional service? You are the friend of all suffering humanity, and for great personalities it is necessary to show mercy to the foolish. Therefore I think that You will show Your causeless mercy to persons like us, who engage in Your service.

‘O best of the great personalities, I am not at all afraid of material existence, for wherever I stay I am fully absorbed in thoughts of Your glories and activities. My concern is only for the fools and rascals who are making elaborate plans for material happiness and maintaining their families, societies and countries. I am simply concerned with love for them.

‘My dear Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva, I see that there are many saintly persons indeed, but they are

interested only in their own deliverance. Not caring for the big cities and towns, they go to the Himalayas or the forest to meditate with vows of silence [mauṇa-vrata]. They are not interested in delivering others. As for me, however, I do not wish to be liberated alone, leaving aside all these poor fools and rascals. I know that without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, without taking shelter of Your lotus feet, one cannot be happy. Therefore I wish to bring them back to shelter at Your lotus feet.

‘Sex life is compared to the rubbing of two hands to relieve an itch. Gṛhamedhīs, so-called gṛhāsthas who have no spiritual knowledge, think that this itching is the greatest platform of happiness, although actually it is a source of distress. The kṛpanas, the fools who are just the opposite of brāhmaṇas, are not satisfied by repeated sensuous enjoyment. Those who are dhīra, however, who are sober and who tolerate this itching, are not subjected to the sufferings of fools and rascals.

‘O Supreme Personality of Godhead, there are ten prescribed methods on the path to liberation—to remain silent, not to speak to anyone, to observe vows, to amass all kinds of Vedic knowledge, to undergo austerities, to study the Vedas and other Vedic literatures, to execute the duties of varṇāśramadhārma, to explain the śāstras, to stay in a solitary place, to chant mantras silently, and to be absorbed in trance. These different methods for liberation are generally only a professional practice and means of livelihood for those who have not conquered their senses. Because such persons are falsely proud, these procedures may not be successful.

‘By authorized Vedic knowledge one can see that the forms of cause and effect in the cosmic manifestation belong to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, for the cosmic manifestation is His energy. Both cause and effect are nothing but energies of the Lord. Therefore, O my Lord, just as a wise man, by considering cause and effect, can see how fire pervades wood, those engaged in devotional service understand how You are both the cause and effect.

‘O Supreme Lord, You are actually the air, the earth, fire, sky and water. You are the objects of sense perception, the life airs, the five senses, the mind, consciousness and false ego. Indeed, You are everything, subtle and gross. The material elements and anything expressed, either by the words or by the mind, are nothing but You.

‘Neither the three modes of material nature [sattva-guna, rajoguna and tamo-guna], nor the predominating deities controlling these three modes, nor the five gross elements, nor the mind, nor the demigods nor the human beings can understand Your Lordship, for they are all subjected to birth and annihilation. Considering this, the spiritually advanced have taken to devotional service. Such wise men hardly bother with Vedic study. Instead, they engage themselves in practical devotional service.

‘Therefore, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, the best of all persons to whom prayers are offered, I offer my respectful obeisances unto You because without rendering six kinds of devotional service unto You—offering prayers, dedicating all the results of activities, worshiping You, working on Your behalf, always remembering Your lotus feet and hearing about Your glories—who can achieve that which is meant for the paramahaṁsas?’

The great saint Nārada said: Thus the devotee Prahlāda Mahārāja pacified Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva with prayers offered from the transcendental platform. The Lord gave up His anger, and being very kind to Prahlāda, who was offering prostrated obeisances, He spoke as follows.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: ‘My dear Prahlāda, most gentle one, best of the family of the asuras, all good fortune unto you. I am very much pleased with you. It is My

pastime to fulfill the desires of all living beings, and therefore you may ask from Me any benediction that you desire to be fulfilled. My dear Prahlāda, may you live a long time. One cannot appreciate or understand Me without pleasing Me, but one who has seen or pleased Me has nothing more for which to lament for his own satisfaction.

‘My dear Prahlāda, you are very fortunate. Please know from Me that those who are very wise and highly elevated try to please Me in all different modes of mellows, for I am the only person who can fulfill all the desires of everyone.’

Nārada Muni said: Prahlāda Mahārāja was the best person in the family of asuras, who always aspire for material happiness. Nonetheless, although allured by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who offered him all benedictions for material happiness, because of his unalloyed Kṛṣṇa consciousness he did not want to take any material benefit for sense gratification.

Prahlāda, the Best Among Exalted Devotees

The saint Nārada Muni continued: Although Prahlāda Mahārāja was only a boy, when he heard the benedictions offered by Lord Nṛsimhadeva he considered them impediments on the path of devotional service. Thus he smiled very mildly and spoke as follows.

Prahlāda Mahārāja said: ‘My dear Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, because I was born in an atheistic family I am naturally attached to material enjoyment. Therefore, kindly do not tempt me with these illusions. I am very much afraid of material conditions, and I desire to be liberated from materialistic life. It is for this reason that I have taken shelter of Your lotus feet.

‘O my worshipable Lord, because the seed of lusty desires, which is the root cause of material existence, is within the core of everyone’s heart, You have sent me to this material world to exhibit the symptoms of a pure devotee. Otherwise, O my Lord, O supreme instructor of the entire world, You are so kind to Your devotee that You could not induce him to do something unbeneficial for him. On the other hand, one who desires some material benefit in exchange for devotional service cannot be Your pure devotee. Indeed, he is no better than a merchant who wants profit in exchange for service.

‘A servant who desires material profits from his master is certainly not a qualified servant or pure devotee. Similarly, a master who bestows benedictions upon his servant because of a desire to maintain a prestigious position as master is also not a pure master. O my Lord, I am Your unmotivated servant, and You are my eternal master. There is no need of our being anything other than master and servant. You are naturally my master, and I am naturally Your servant. We have no other relationship.

‘O my Lord, best of the givers of benediction, if You at all want to bestow a desirable benediction upon me, then I pray from Your Lordship that within the core of my heart there be no material desires. O my Lord, because of lusty desires from the very beginning of one’s birth, the functions of one’s senses, mind, life, body, religion, patience, intelligence, shyness, opulence, strength, memory and truthfulness are vanquished.

‘O my Lord, when a human being is able to give up all the material desires in his mind, he becomes eligible to possess wealth and opulence like Yours. O my Lord, full of six opulences, O Supreme Person! O Supreme Soul, killer of all miseries! O Supreme Person in the form of a wonderful half-lion half-man, let me offer my respectful obeisances unto You.’

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: ‘My dear Prahlāda, a devotee like you never desires

any kind of material opulences, either in this life or in the next. Nonetheless, I order you to enjoy the opulences of the demons in this material world, acting as their king until the end of the duration of time occupied by Manu. It does not matter that you are in the material world. You should always, continuously, hear the instructions and messages given by Me and always be absorbed in thought of Me, for I am the Supersoul existing in the core of everyone's heart. Therefore, give up fruitive activities and worship Me.

‘My dear Prahāda, while you are in this material world you will exhaust all the reactions of pious activity by feeling happiness, and by acting piously you will neutralize impious activity. Because of the powerful time factor, you will give up your body, but the glories of your activities will be sung in the upper planetary systems, and being fully freed from all bondage, you will return home, back to Godhead. One who always remembers your activities and My activities also, and who chants the prayers you have offered, becomes free, in due course of time, from the reactions of material activities.’

Prahāda Mahārāja said: ‘O Supreme Lord, because You are so merciful to the fallen souls, I ask You for only one benediction. I know that my father, at the time of his death, had already been purified by Your glance upon him, but because of his ignorance of Your beautiful power and supremacy, he was unnecessarily angry at You, falsely thinking that You were the killer of his brother. Thus he directly blasphemed Your Lordship, the spiritual master of all living beings, and committed heavily sinful activities directed against me, Your devotee. I wish that he be excused for these sinful activities.’

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: ‘My dear Prahāda, O most pure, O great saintly person, your father has been purified, along with twenty-one forefathers in your family. Because you were born in this family, the entire dynasty has been purified. Whenever and wherever there are peaceful, equipoised devotees who are well behaved and decorated with all good qualities, that place and the dynasties there, even if condemned, are purified.

‘My dear Prahāda, King of the Daityas, because of being attached to devotional service to Me, My devotee does not distinguish between lower and higher living entities. In all respects, he is never jealous of anyone. Those who follow your example will naturally become My pure devotees. You are the best example of My devotee, and others should follow in your footsteps.

‘My dear child, your father has already been purified just by the touch of My body at the time of his death. Nonetheless, the duty of a son is to perform the śraddhā ritualistic ceremony after his father's death so that his father may be promoted to a planetary system where he may become a good citizen and devotee. After performing the ritualistic ceremonies, take charge of your father's kingdom. Sit upon the throne and do not be disturbed by materialistic activities. Please keep your mind fixed upon Me. Without transgressing the injunctions of the Vedas, as a matter of formality you may perform your particular duties.’

Sri Nārada Muni continued: ‘Thus, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead ordered, Prahāda Mahārāja performed the ritualistic ceremonies for his father. O King Yudhiṣṭhira, he was then enthroned in the kingdom of Hiraṇyakaśipu, as directed by the brāhmaṇas. Lord Brahmā, surrounded by the other demigods, was bright-faced because the Lord was pleased. Thus he offered prayers to the Lord with transcendental words.

Lord Brahmā said: ‘O Supreme Lord of all lords, proprietor of the entire universe, O benedictor of all living entities, O original person [ādi-puruṣa], because of our good fortune You have now killed this sinful demon, who was giving trouble to the entire universe. This demon, Hiraṇyakaśipu, received from me the benediction that no living being within my creation could

kill him. With this assurance and with strength derived from austerities and mystic power, he became excessively proud and transgressed all the Vedic injunctions.

‘By great fortune, Hiraṇyakaśipu’s son Prahlāda Mahārāja has now been released from death, for although he is a child, he is an exalted devotee. Now he is fully under the protection of Your lotus feet. My dear Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, You are the Supreme Soul. If one meditates upon Your transcendental body, You naturally protect him from all sources of fear, even the imminent danger of death.’

The Personality of Godhead replied: ‘My dear Lord Brahmā, O great lord born from the lotus flower, just as it is dangerous to feed milk to a snake, so it is dangerous to give benedictions to demons, who are by nature ferocious and jealous. I warn you not to give such benedictions to any demon again.’

Nārada Muni continued: O King Yudhiṣṭhira, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is not visible to an ordinary human being, spoke in this way, instructing Lord Brahmā. Then, being worshiped by Brahmā, the Lord disappeared from that place.

Prahlāda Mahārāja then worshiped and offered prayers to all the demigods, such as Brahmā, Śiva and the Prajāpatīs, who are all parts of the Lord. Thereafter, along with Śukrācārya and other great saints, Lord Brahmā, whose seat is on the lotus flower, made Prahlāda the king of all the demons and giants in the universe.

O King Yudhiṣṭhira, after all the demigods, headed by Lord Brahmā, were properly worshiped by Prahlāda Mahārāja, they offered Prahlāda their utmost benedictions and then returned to their respective abodes. Thus the two associates of Lord Viṣṇu who had become Hiraṇyakaśipu and Hiraṇyakaśipu, the sons of Diti, were both killed. By illusion they had thought that the Supreme Lord, who is situated in everyone’s heart, was their enemy.

In this narration about Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, various expansions or incarnations of the Lord have been described, and the killing of the two demons Hiraṇyakaśipu and Hiraṇyakaśipu has also been described. This narration describes the characteristics of the great and exalted devotee Prahlāda Mahārāja, his staunch devotional service, his perfect knowledge, and his perfect detachment from material contamination. It also describes the Supreme Personality of Godhead as the cause of creation, maintenance and annihilation. Prahlāda Mahārāja, in his prayers, has described the transcendental qualities of the Lord and has also described how the various abodes of the demigods and demons, regardless of how materially opulent, are destroyed by the mere direction of the Lord. The principles of religion by which one can actually understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead are called bhāgavata-dhārma. In this narration, therefore, which deals with these principles, actual transcendence is properly described.

One who hears and chants this narration about the omnipotence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu, is certainly liberated from material bondage without fail. Prahlāda Mahārāja is the best among exalted devotees. Anyone who with great attention hears this narration concerning the activities of Prahlāda Mahārāja, the killing of Hiraṇyakaśipu, and the activities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nṛsiṃhadeva, surely reaches the spiritual world, where there is no anxiety.

Nārada Muni continued: My dear Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, all of you [the Pāṇḍavas] are extremely fortunate, for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, lives in your palace just like a human being. Great saintly persons know this very well, and therefore they constantly visit this house.

The impersonal Brahmān is Kṛṣṇa Himself because Kṛṣṇa is the source of the impersonal Brahmān. He is the origin of the transcendental bliss sought by great saintly persons, yet He, the Supreme Person, is your most dear friend and constant wellwisher and is intimately related to you as the son of your maternal uncle. Indeed, He is always like your body and soul.

He is worshipable, yet He acts as your servant and sometimes as your spiritual master. Exalted persons like Lord Śiva and Lord Brahmā could not properly describe the truth of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. May the Lord, who is always worshiped as the protector of all devotees by great saints who observe vows of silence, meditation, devotional service and renunciation, be pleased with us.