

# **How to Deal with Adult Topics in the Srimad Bhagavatam**

**By Aruddha Devi Dasi**

**If the children were to go to karmi school and watch television there are two things that they would be exposed to, namely sex and violence, and we all know what that exposure can do to young, impressionable minds. Whether or not we read the Bhagavatam, all children will ask these questions. But through the Bhagavatam they see a different perspective – sex for a higher purpose, for producing God-conscious children.**

**In the Bhagavatam there are many references to sex life, but all of them recommend sex only according to religious principles - for procreation . We have many examples of personalities who produced exalted children due to proper use of sex life. For example, the progenitors such as Daksa and Kasyapa Muni produced thousands of children in order to populate the earth. The Bhagavatam does not view sex negatively; rather it shows how to use everything in Krishna's service.**

**But we also see what happens when sex is improperly used as simply a means for sense gratification. The results are very detrimental, as in the story of Diti and the birth of Hiranyakasipu. The story of Puranjana is another good example. Although in the story there are descriptions of lusty relations between man and woman, we also clearly see the results of such behavior as we keep reading the story. Puranjana and his beloved wife are both attacked by the soldiers of time (old age and death), and thus they encounter much material suffering. Narada Muni narrates this story to King Pracinarbarhi in order to teach him the importance of living according to religious principles as a grhastha.**

**So Bhagavatam gives both – the glories of good progeny through proper sex and the perils of sex life simply for sense enjoyment. Through the help of the parents, the children will understand this message very clearly. I read the entire Bhagavatam with my children, including the Puranjana and Diti stories, and through this they learned very important lessons about the nature of the world. Children will eventually pick up this information anyway just by being in the world, so it is better that they learn from the Bhagavatam rather than through television or friends. However, we should be clear**

in setting boundaries to such discussions, based on what we feel is appropriate for their age. My children understood that brahmacaris (or brahmacarinis) do not discuss the detailed aspects of sex life, and thus they knew that certain questions were off limits for them. When the children are young, their questions are simply due to curiosity, and so we can set the boundaries, by telling them, "these details are not for brahmacaris, but one day if you become a grhastha you will understand." For now they should understand the basic principle-- everyone in the material world is bound by the principle of attraction to the opposite sex, but if we use this desire in Krishna's service to raise a devotee family, it becomes the cause of our advancement. When the Bhagavatam talks about the beautiful body of a woman, we can explain how a woman's body is naturally made to nurture a child. Every woman should be seen as a mother, and thus her body should not be seen as an object of lust. With such an education, children will learn to respect all women as mothers. Although references to sense enjoyment in the Bhagavatam can sometimes be a little awkward for parents, we should remember that Bhagavatam is transcendental and therefore will always benefit our children. One day when our children grow older, we will be thankful that they learned the proper place of sex life in the service of Krishna . In this way, we are giving them a solid foundation to live a Krishna conscious grhastha (or brahmacari) life.

## **Violence in Srimad Bhagavatam**

In Srimad Bhagavatam we hear the story of Lord Nrsimhadeva killing Hiranyakashipu by pulling out his intestines with his nails. Also in the Mahabharata we have scenes of heavy fighting between the Pandavas and the Kauravas and the ruthless killing of Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna, who fought alone against many warriors. Are these violent stories appropriate for our children to hear and read?

First of all we should understand what is good and bad violence. Violence is sometimes necessary in the material world when all good arguments and reason fail. Krishna Himself declares in the Bhagavad-gita that He descends to protect the pious and annihilate the miscreants. When Krishna or his devotees such as the Pandavas kill, they are using violence to root out violence, just a one uses a thorn to take out a thorn. Srila

**Prabhupada explains in a purport (SB 3.21.50) that the potency to protect the pious and annihilate the miscreants is given by the Lord to the king for the purpose of protecting the citizens and punishing criminals.**

**Of course the king or the government must understand the proper and improper use of violence. Prabhupada gives the example of Arjuna who was thinking that all violence was adharmā and refused to fight but Krishna urged him to fight. Arjuna then followed Krishna's orders and became a follower of religious principles. Prabhupada writes that we cannot manufacture our own religious principles through mental speculation.**

**“The members of modern civilization manufacture defective religious principles through speculative concoction. This is not dharma. . . . Bhagavata-dharma comprises only that which is given by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Bhagavata-dharma is sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja: [Bg. 18.66] one must accept the authority of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and surrender to Him and whatever He says. That is dharma.” (SB 6.1.40)**

**Thus in the Mahabharata, the Pandavas uphold religious principles and are empowered by the Lord to fight on the battlefield after all peace attempts fail. They follow proper codes of conduct during the battle, such as not attacking anyone who is unarmed, not hitting below the belt, and many other such rules for ksatriyas. Children who read stories from the Srimad Bhagavatam with descriptions of violent scenes will understand that the Lord or his great devotees sometimes use violence for killing the demons and protecting the innocent.**

**By seeing the Lord act in this way, our children will understand the reality of material life, where it is impossible not to be the victim or perpetrator of violence in some form or another. In the material world, violence towards others is committed because our senses have not been satisfied and we feel frustrated or revengeful. Our children will understand that there are always negative consequences to such violence, and often Krishna Himself appears to stop it and protect his devotees. In this way, our children feel safe and confident in the Lord's protection.**

**Srila Prabhupada explains in a conversation, “The fighting here takes place because everyone wants to lord it over the material nature. So there is difference of interest. I want to be lord, you want to be lord: now there must be fight. But in the Vaikuntha world there is one Lord and all others servitors. Therefore there is peace.’**

**Children who grow up watching violent television shows or playing graphic video games will not think twice about being violent to others. In the James Bond movies, for example, there is no end to the gratuitous violence as the series goes on. On the other hand, violence in the scriptures takes place for a purpose, and once the purpose is fulfilled, the violence ends. Children who see violence being carefully and properly used in the scriptures will not display that violence in their own lives. Srimad Bhagavatam is transcendental, and so it can never have a negative effect. As for devotional movies, however, parents should judge these on an individual basis and make sure that they are written by a good script writer and the content is appropriate for children of a particular age group.**

## **Why does the Lord fight?**

**In the seventh canto of the Srimad Bhagavatam, we read how the Lord took the awesome form of a half-man half-lion, just to protect his child-devotee Prahlad. This shows the great sacrifice the Lord is willing to undertake for his devotees.**

**Srila Prabhupada says, “Nonviolence and violence, everything is there in the Absolute Truth. . . . Here we have got bad effects of violence, but when violence is performed by the Absolute, it has no bad effect, it has only good effect.” When Krishna kills, He not only protects the devotee, but liberates the demon as well. Hiranyakashipu and all the demons that the Lord killed during his Vrndavana pastimes achieved liberation.**

**Furthermore, sometimes Krishna has His devotees play the role of demons so that He can enjoy chivalrous pastimes. Srila Prabhupada explains: “Just like we sometimes see mock-fighting, because that fighting spirit is there. The father and son, the little son is fighting with the father. That is not fighting, but the mock fight. But the fighting spirit is there. You cannot deny it. Similarly, the fighting spirit is there. Sometimes that is exhibited by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And He wanted to exhibit such fighting spirit, so who will fight with Him? Ordinary living being cannot fight with the Supreme Lord. Therefore some of His devotees, some of His associates, must fight with Him.” Of course, while fulfilling this desire to fight, Krishna is also establishing dharma on earth and giving pleasure to His devotees, who appreciate His chivalrous qualities.**