

Govinda's Readers



One Step Toward Kṛṣṇa

Volume 2

The Delaney Family Library

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Karuṇā Dhāriṇī Devī Dāsī

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One Step Toward Kṛṣṇa

Volume 2

Take One Step Toward
Kṛṣṇa and He'll Take Ten
Steps Toward You!

Karuṇā Dhāriṇī Devī Dāsī

ISKCON Education of N.C., Inc.
Efland, NC

Acknowledgments

There are many devotees to thank for helping with this book. First I thank my spiritual master, Śrīla Virabāhu, for always teaching me to have the right attitude and to try to be humble, even when everything seemed to be going wrong. I want to thank my husband Jagadīśānanda Prabhu for his patience and tolerance with me despite the problems.

Thanks to Ragātmikā Devī Dāsī for introducing me to this project. Thanks to Śrī Rāma Dāsa for helping me understand how to execute it and always encouraging me that I could do it. Thanks to Ānanta Śakti Dāsa for his patience and his nice illustrations. Thanks to Rādhā Pāda Dhuli Devī Dāsī for proof-reading. Thanks to Mādhava Priya Devī Dāsī for the cover illustration. Thanks to Hṛdayānanda Mahārāja for going over the book sentence by sentence and correcting it in its tone and grammar beyond my expectations.

Thanks to Pratyatoṣa Dāsa and Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī for proof-reading and making suggestions and thanks to their son, Mādhava Dāsa, for designing and typesetting the book. I also thank them very much for publishing it.

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FIRST EDITION, 1994

Printed in the United States of America

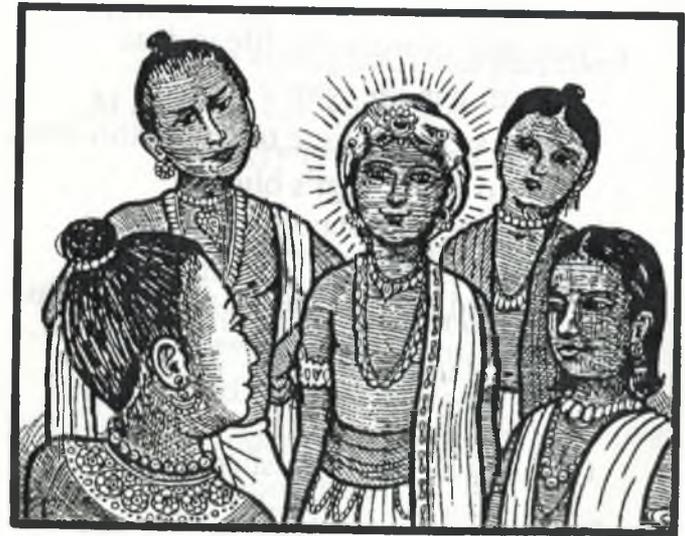
*This book is dedicated to
Śrī Śrī Rukminī-Dvārakānātha,
the little deities on the temple
altar in Los Angeles.*

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Prahlāda's Instructions to His Classmates

"At most we live a hundred years,
but half of that is spent asleep!
"We play and sport for twenty years,
'til not one day is left to keep.
"As long as we are stout and strong,
as long as we can see the goal,
"As long as we know right from wrong,
and know the master of the soul,
"Remember Kṛṣṇa gave the years
but not to chase our every whim.
"Old age and death can bring no fear
to those who practice loving Him."



The Young Man Who Tried to Save Time

One day a *yogī* took his bath
and washed his single cloth.
It quickly dried, and yet, he thought,
“This cloth is not enough!

“Why do I wait just so the sun
can dry this cloth of mine?
I think I’ll buy another one
to save a lot of time.”

“Dear *yogī*’s son,” a *sādhu* said,
“I know what’s on your mind.
Somehow you’ve got it in your head
to try to save some time.

“Just don’t forget this life is dear
to live the way it is:
You’ve so much time to chant and hear,
to feel a *yogī*’s bliss.”

The *sādhu* left and went his way,
and still the young man thought,
“It’s not so much I’d have to pay.”
So extra cloth he bought.

One day he nicely washed it out,
and left it clean to dry.
A hungry mouse soon came about
and munched it on the sly!



He thought, “I’ll get myself a cat,
to chase away the mice,
To keep those mice from getting fat
and help my cloth stay nice.”

Well, by and by a cat strolled in.
The young man was surprised
At how the cat would stare at him,
and cry loud hungry cries.

“Okay,” he thought, “A milk supply.
This cat would like milk now”
And yet he worried by and by
just who would milk his cow.

“What happened to my *yogī*’s life?
I cannot milk this cow!”
His mother said, “Please take a wife,
she’ll milk the cow for now.”

Children soon were born to him,
and so he built a house.
He sometimes thought of way back when
before there came that mouse!

One day the sādhu passing by,
came asking for the man.
“Tell me, did you give a try
to *yoga*, as you planned?”

“I have no time for all of that!”
he said, “I’ve mice to fight!
Cow’s milk I need to feed my cat,
and house, for kids and wife!

“Yes, you were right, I had enough,
that one cloth was quite fine.
Try *yoga*? Now? It’s really tough.
No time! No time! No time!”

Determination

One time there was a sparrow who laid her eggs near the ocean. She and her husband sparrow worked day after day finding straw and lint. They made a nice nest and she laid her eggs in it.

But the big ocean raised one of its watery arms and, Splash! Splash! went over the nest. The wave ran away with the sparrows children. They were still just very little, cramped inside their egg shells.

The poor mother sparrow became very upset. How

could she ever get back her little eggs? She watched as they left, far, far away into the water.

When she asked the ocean to return them, the big ocean was too busy to reply. He was knocking down someone’s sand castle. The great waves were jumping and tossing on the long, shining sands.

The big ocean finally stopped a minute to listen to the sobbing sparrow. But then he drew back all his waves and pretended not to hear.

So the little sparrow decided to dry up the ocean. She began to pick out the water with her small beak, drop by drop. She would not give up, no matter what.

A sea gull, a porpoise, and a mangy dog were all nearby. The sea gull was flying above and cackling at her. The porpoise was riding on a wave and laughing at her. The mangy dog was howling at her as he lay upon the shore.

They all laughed at her for her determination. The news that she was trying to dry up the ocean was heard everywhere.

At last Garuda, the gigantic bird carrier of Lord Viṣṇu, heard about it. He came there just to see his small sister bird. (All birds are from the same bird family.)

When he observed her, he became filled with compassion. He was very pleased to see that she would not give up. Such determination is very wonderful in the face of a very hard problem.

He decided he would help. He asked the ocean to return the little sparrows eggs at once, or else he himself

would take up the sparrows work. Garuda would dry up the ocean.

The ocean's biggest waves curled up tight and shrunk out of fear of Garuda, who is so great and powerful. He could swallow ten oceans in one gulp! With a small, gentle push one little shaking wave sent the nest filled with sparrow eggs back to the shore.

Seeing this, the other animals felt afraid. The sea gull flew away fast. The porpoise swam deep into the ocean. The mangy dog scratched on the shore. At once the little sparrow became joyful, being reunited with her children.

By determination and by the grace of Garuda, the little sparrow became very happy again.

Real Love

"I love Kṛṣṇa," said Karuna Dāsī,
then, forgetting her chores, away went she.
Out in the yard, with a skip and a leap,
Mātā was left with the *āśrama* to sweep.

"I love Kṛṣṇa," said Yamunā Dāsī,
"I love Him as much as anybody."
Then she whined and pouted for half of the day,
'til her mātā was glad when she went to play.

"I love Kṛṣṇa," little Keśava said.
"Today I'll remember to make my bed.
And clean Kṛṣṇa's altar, make it look neat,
The whole *āśrama*, Mātā, I plan to sweep."

Then gently he dusted the fine dark wood,
he carefully cleaned where the deities stood.
Just as he promised, he took up the broom,
he sang as he swept and finished each room.

"I do love Kṛṣṇa," the three of them said,
when nighttime came and they all went to bed.
Now how do you think that their dear mātā guessed
which of them tried to love Kṛṣṇa the best?

What Cindy Learned

Once there was a girl named Cindy who lived thirty-two miles from the temple. She couldn't go to gurukula because it took her family a whole hour to get to the temple from their house.

So she was able to visit the temple just on Sunday for the Sunday feast. She really loved going to the Sunday love feast with her pitā. Cindy had a playmate at the temple named Vṛṇḍa Dāsī. During the feast Cindy would usually go to Vṛṇḍa's house and they would talk and play together.

Vṛṇḍa had deities of Lord Nṛsimhadeva and Prahlad. They were on a shelf in her room with a special little spotlight on Them. Their jewels and necklaces shined with many different colors and They even had little black wigs. Cindy really liked the way They were dressed.

"Maybe someday I can dress the deities I have at home as nice as this," Cindy said to Vṛṇḍa.

"Yeah, but you don't have as much clothing as I have,"

said Vṛṇḍa.

“Where did you get all these outfits for your deities?” Cindy asked, looking at the different clothes Vṛṇḍa was showing to her.

“My mātā buys them for me from the temple store,” Vṛṇḍa answered.

“Do you have extra?” Cindy asked all of a sudden.

“Extra? These clothes belong to my deities. I’m not giving them away. You have to get your mātā to buy you some.”

Cindy felt a embarrassed. She guessed that she had asked the wrong thing.

“You can’t just take the clothes that my Nṛsimhadeva wears and put them on yours!” Vṛṇḍa Dāsī laughed.

Cindy thought of her deities, which were so plain. Tears sprang into the corners of her eyes and she could not speak out loud. She could only think of how her deities had no nice jewels, no nice necklaces, no spotlight shining on Them, and only one outfit that They wore every day.



Vṛṇḍa’s mātā came in. She had overheard the conversation between Vṛṇḍa and Cindy.

“Vṛṇḍa!” her mātā said, “How dare you make Cindy feel so bad! She could use a nice outfit for her deities, too. Now just pick one nice dress for Cindy to take home to her deities.”

Vṛṇḍa picked up one dress out of the box, and, wrinkling her nose, stubbornly handed it over to Cindy. “Thank you,” Cindy squeaked, as she held back her tears. After that night, she decided she was too embarrassed to play at Vṛṇḍa’s house again.

Cindy began sewing copies of the clothes Vṛṇḍa had given to her. She made a dark pink pair of pants with little light pink sequins to offer to Lord Nṛsimhadeva and a dhoti for Prahlad out of dark green silk.

Cindy stitched at it here and there to make it fit nicely. She held it up for Lord Nṛsimhadeva to see and prayed as she put it on Him. She prayed that He would accept the clothing and enjoy wearing it even though it was not as nice as some other clothing she had seen.

She also prayed she would become a good devotee even though she could not live at the temple or go to the gurukula.

Mr. Lenox Finds Help

Mr. Lenox flew on a jet one morning to the airport where Gaurāṅga Dāsa worked. He got off and waited for his large suitcase.

The jet opened from the belly and the workers unloaded its cargo. The suitcases were placed on many moving belts.

Everyone picked out their bags, but Mr. Lenox stood waiting for forty-five minutes. He could not find his suitcase on the moving belt.

Then a stranger walked up to him with a *Bhagavad-gītā* in his hand. It was Gaurāṅga.

Gaurāṅga tried to show Mr. Lenox the book, but Mr. Lenox said, "I'm very busy, I can't find my suitcase." Gaurāṅga offered to help, but Mr. Lenox said, "No thanks! I don't need your help." So Gaurāṅga left him alone.

Mr. Lenox was a very busy business man. His stomach was a bit sick from the airplane ride. Mr. Lenox sat down on a nearby bench. His face turned white. He felt nervous. He was afraid he would be late to a big meeting that day.

Gaurāṅga Dāsa sighed when he saw Mr. Lenox sitting there, looking pale. "How will he ever know about You, Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna?" he wondered, looking at the picture on the front of the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Gaurāṅga went to the bag office. In the office the lady told him that the missing suitcase was on a different conveyor belt. Gaurāṅga came back to Mr. Lenox and told him what she had said.

"What a mess! What a way to run an airport!" Mr. Lenox yelled out loud.

Gaurāṅga found a group of suitcases and looked at them carefully. He grabbed the big one that said, "Joseph

Lenox," and brought it to the man.

Mr. Lenox and Gaurāṅga spoke as follows:

Mr.

Lenox: Why, thank you, young man. You found my suitcase for me so nicely. Now, what can I give you for your trouble?

Gaurāṅga: No trouble. Just take this book with you called *Bhagavad-gītā*. Please.

Mr. Lenox: You want nothing? Good for you! Few people ever say that. But what are you doing in the airport?

Gaurāṅga: I am passing out these books for my spiritual master.

Mr. Lenox: You like this work?

Gaurāṅga: Yes, very much.

Mr. Lenox: But wouldn't you rather be working to earn a lot of money? For instance, you could work for me in my business. You look like you have a good head on your shoulders.



Gaurāṅga: This is interesting work, and as for money, the temple gives me what I need to live.

Mr. Lenox: You seem like some sort of monk. Why don't you have a job?

Gaurāṅga: I work for Śrīla Prabhupāda. This is his picture. (He points to a picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda in the *Bhagavad-gītā*.)

Mr. Lenox: Can I buy you some lunch?

Gaurāṅga: No, I brought a banana.

Mr. Lenox: You must be kidding. What about a steak? I'll buy you one.

Gaurāṅga: (coughing) Steak! Sir, at the temple, where I live, they are cooking a big feast for Kṛṣṇa today. I don't eat meat.

Mr. Lenox: Well who's Kṛṣṇa, anyway? Just because He doesn't eat meat doesn't mean you can't. Come with me and try eating what I eat.

Gaurāṅga: Kṛṣṇa and I—both of us don't eat meat.

Mr. Lenox: Hmmm. . . My doctor told me to stop eating meat. Tell me, if I give you a hundred dollars for this book, what would you do with it?

Gaurāṅga: I'd turn it into the temple.

Mr. Lenox: No, no, no. For you, I mean. What would you buy for yourself?

Gaurāṅga: It's not my book. It's my spiritual master's book. The money I get for it goes to his temple.

Mr. Lenox: Well, I don't believe in God. Who's that? (He points to the picture on the cover of the *Gītā*.)

Gaurāṅga: That's Lord Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. They are....

Mr. Lenox: Let me have that book. If they're friends of a nice kid like you, then here, take a hundred dollars and let me read about them. (He hands Gaurāṅga a hundred dollar bill.) I'm in a hurry. So long.

Little Ānanda

Little Ānanda sits in the sun,
Safe on the porch, and the little drops run
From the icicles under the eaves, so fast.
The bright spring sun shines warm at last;
And glad is little Ānanda.

Wearing a dress of yellow and white,
Holding a plate from the feast last night,
From a half-eaten plate which was filled to the brim
She holds up the flowers she left on the rim:
“*Prasād*,” says little Ānanda.

Up comes a quiet gray hungry cat,
Quiet until she meows, “What's that?”
Dear Ānanda feeds her, but she wants the rest
Until a cow on a stroll strolls right up the steps:
“*Haribol!*” cries little Ānanda.

There's a big *puri* meant for the cow.
The cow drops crumbs so the doves come now.
They're quick to fly down, more quick to retreat
With snowy white wings and funny pink feet.
“Welcome!” says little Ānanda.

Waiting so long stand sparrow and crow,
Cooling their feet in the quick melting snow.
“Won’t you come on the porch?” she cries.
But they are too bashful and stay outside.
“Take *prasād!*” cries little Ānanda.

So the last she threw them, and knelt on the mat,
With doves, and cow, and the noisy cat.
Her *mātā* came to the open house door,
“Dear child, wait, and I’ll bring you some more,
My blissful little Ānanda.”

Not meant for slaughter, cow or sweet doves.
All the things God made, Ānanda loves.
“People really kill them? Can it be true?
People sure need to eat *prasādam*, too!”
So sees wise little Ānanda.

The Beaver

Let’s learn about the beaver. If he could talk, he’d have
a useful tale to tell us!



Beavers are found chiefly in North America. They are about three and a half feet long, including their flat, paddle-shaped tail, which is a whole foot in length.

The long, shining hair on a beaver’s back is chestnut colored, while the fine, soft fur that covers most of it is grayish brown. They swim very easily, but are not so good at walking.

Just as we do, beavers make houses to live in. They look like little huts placed close together, in a little town. They build their huts on the banks of rivers or lakes.

When they build on the bank of a moving stream, they make a dam, much like we humans do, to keep the water at the level they wish. In that way water won’t cover their homes. Beavers construct their dams so neatly they look more like the work of man than of dumb little beasts.

The soft chestnut colored fur of the beaver is rare and worth a lot of money. Helpless little beavers in the early days of North America were considered a great catch.

Trappers would use spring traps with sharp steel blades to catch their prey. As a result, the number of beavers living in the country became less and less. After a while so many were killed that it was hard to find a little town of beavers.

Trappers and American Indians paid their karma by fighting over the furs and even killing each other.

Beavers are certainly clever and interesting little creatures. A Kṛṣṇa conscious devotee will love the beaver the way he is. He will let him live his little beaver life with his coat on. A devotee is a sensitive soul who will not even harm an ant.

The Five Blind Men and the Elephant

There was, in fact, an elephant,
five blind men couldn't see.
So with their hands they tried to hunt
to find out what was he.

One blind man caught in hand a foot,
and feeling it, replied,
"Why, this old tree must have deep roots,
it's trunk is rather wide."

"What's called the trunk," another said,
"is not what you suppose!
I've got it right here in my hand,
and it's a garden hose."

The third man took in hand the tusk,
and said, "It seems to me,
This toothy creature's body must
be made of ivory."

"This huge fat thing should learn to dress,"
said one who felt his side.

"His coat is just a wrinkled mess.
He wears some type of hide!"

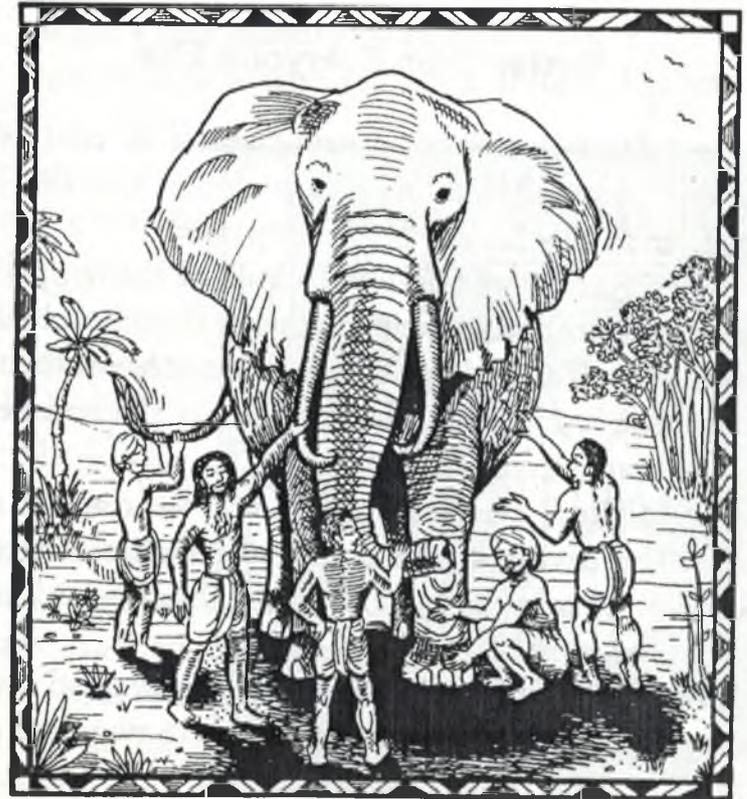
"The tail is like a cow," one said.
"So now I think I know.

This big guy is an overfed,
tremendous buffalo!"

Now thoughts came to the pachyderm:
"I'm so misunderstood!
These blind men don't know what I am.
Oh, if they only would."

A sage walked by and heard a cry,
"Please help me if you can!"
"Please tell them I'm an elephant!"
he asked the saintly man.

"You say you are an elephant,"
he said, "But it's not true.



One tail, two tusks, four feet, one trunk—
cannot be all that's you."

"You five men took this elephant
to be each different part.

And elephant: you fell for it!
Don't you know who you are?"

"Remember, if you want good sight—
you must look carefully.

None of you will get it right
until the soul you see."

Better Than Everyone Else

Rasa Dāsī always got a new sweater or coat every winter. She usually had nice, new clothes to wear. Her pitā liked to buy her the best of everything.

When Rasa would go to gurukula or the temple she would look around sometimes at what the other children had to wear. If a child that she saw did not have nice, new clothes she would feel a little glad that she had better clothes than everyone else.

One night at evening *ārati* she was wearing her new coat. "The devotees who don't have such nice clothes must not be very happy," she thought, as she looked around the room.

Five children she had never seen before walked in with their parents to see the *ārati*. There were two little girls and three little boys. One of the little boys was just a

toddler.

"This is amazing," thought Rasa Dāsī. "I've never seen anyone look so shabby in my whole life! They must be poor."

The family was not so poor. They had come from the farm where they lived, far out in the country. They just weren't in the city very much to buy much clothing.

"Do you live here?" one of the girls asked Rasa Dāsī.

"Yes, a block away," said Rasa. "Do you like the temple?"

"I think it's just beautiful. This is my first time," said the new girl.

"What's your name?" asked Rasa Dāsī.

"My name is Marjie. I'm not a devotee. I'm learning to be a devotee. My mom is not a devotee, either. But we have devotee friends who are helping us."

Marjie's little brother ran up between the two of them as they talked and blurted out, "She has an owie!"



“That’s not an owie,” said Rasa, understanding that he was pointing at the little red bindi that she had put on her forehead. “It’s a bindi. It’s a decoration that my mother wears.”

“Oh, I see. Tommy is very scared of owies,” said Marjie. “Can you tell me what this book is about?” she asked, holding out the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Marjie and Rasa talked for a while and then they all played together. Rasa paid no attention to their shabby clothes, and just went on playing as though she were not dressed any differently. They had a lot of fun, and Rasa was surprised at how sweet and gentle these new friends were.

It was getting late, so Rasa had to say good-bye to the nice family and go. When she got home she took off her new coat and hung it on a hanger. She thought of Marjie and Tommy and the old sweaters they had been wearing.

Suddenly her new coat seemed different to Rasa Dāsī. It just didn’t seem as important as when she had put it on earlier that evening. Certainly it was still a very nice coat and very warm, too. She thought, “If I could just like going to the temple and singing to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as much as I like this coat, I would always be happy.”

Ashoka and Shyama

Ashoka was a small boy who lived just a few blocks from the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple with his mātā and pitā. He had to spend a lot of time alone at his house while his

parents were at work at their restaurant. So, to protect Ashoka, his parents gave him a dog who he named Shyama.

Ashoka was given all kinds of food to eat which his parents would bring home from the restaurant, but he would have to pick through it carefully so as not to accidentally eat any meat. And the rest could be for Shyama. Shyama would eat almost anything that Ashoka didn’t want.

Ashoka was a vegetarian but his parents were not. Ashoka sometimes tried to make his own food and offer it on a little altar he set up in an empty kitchen cupboard. His parents were from India but they had fallen from the proper way. Ashoka tried his best to offer nice foods to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the way he had seen his grandfather do it back in India.

One day, while Ashoka and Shyama were alone at the house, Shyama began to bark very loudly. Shyama had black, silky hair, and he was a very gentle dog, but he barked very loudly to protect Ashoka’s backyard.

Some of the neighbors didn’t like the barking because it was so noisy. One neighbor in particular began to feel very hateful toward poor Shyama and he threw heavy rocks at him!

Ashoka would always tell Shyama to be quiet but he wouldn’t.

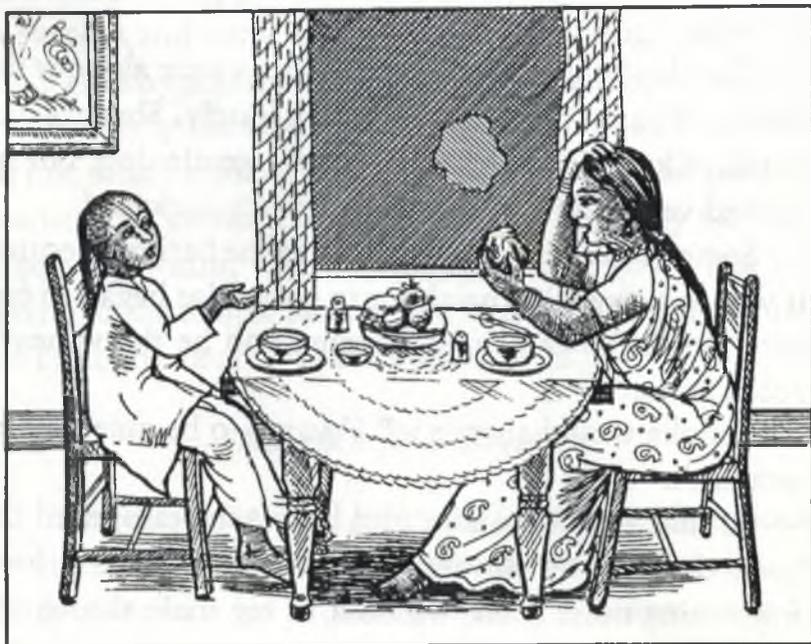
So that a rock wouldn’t hit him, Ashoka opened the back door to let Shyama in. Suddenly came a loud frightening noise at the window. A big rock, thrown by

the neighbor, had hit the screen window near the dining room table. It tore a hole so big in the screen you could fit a fist through it!

Because Ashoka was just a boy, he was very afraid and didn't know what to do. But he locked the doors and sat down with Shyama to tell him, "Shyama, please don't bark so loud. Someone is so mean that he wants to hurt you. Shyama, let me see your paw."

The paw Shyama held up was cut and bleeding a little from being hit by a rock. Ashoka found a clean white cloth and wrapped it around his dog's paw. "How could someone throw rocks at you, my Shyama?" he asked.

Ashoka's parents got home about that time and he showed his pitā the large rock that had flown into the



house, ripping a hole in the screen window. His mātā gave him a take out container from their restaurant for his dinner, and Ashoka thought, "I must give this to poor Shyama, He must be hungry."

"Don't think meat will hurt you," said Ashoka's mother as she put it on her son's plate at the dinner table, and went to take her shower.

"Well it hurt the animal that was killed," thought Ashoka. Then he turned and noticed the damaged screen and Shyama, sitting just outside the window with his bandaged paw.

Ashoka forced his fist through the hole in the screen and dropped the animal foodstuff down to his black dog, who ate it up, as animals will do.

But still the problem was not solved. "Why do my parents bring me meat?" Ashoka wondered. "The children at the temple would never be told to eat meat. Why do I have this on my plate?"

Just then Ashoka's mātā, tired from her day at work, came from her shower to sit and talk with Ashoka while he ate. "Did you do your homework?" she asked, and then she noticed the hole torn in the screen by the big rock thrown at Shyama.

"I didn't finish. Mātā, I don't want to lie to you. I gave all the meat to Shyama. I remember what grandpa said, not to hurt the animals, so I cannot eat the meat you bring."

But then she saw a rock on the table and forgot what they were talking about.

The Wrist-Watch

“How could this rock come through the screen?” she asked, holding up the rock. Ashoka had left it on the table when he showed it to his pitā. “The people who threw it were very strong.” answered Ashoka.

“How could they do that to poor Shyama?” she asked, and she felt a little scared of the neighbors.

“Mātā, no one should hurt animals. Not Shyama, not any animals,” Ashoka insisted. Ashoka’s mātā thought about the food she brought him for his dinner, and felt sad.

“You’re right, Ashoka. This is very bad that they would try to hurt Shyama with a rock.”

“I don’t want to eat meat like they do,” said Ashoka.

“Please forgive me,” she said, feeling sorry for her poor son. “Please forgive me. From now on I won’t bring you any more meat. Only the *dāl*, *subji*, and rice, and whatever else you want. I will make *samosas*. I am sorry, I have so little time. But I will make you something nice.” She hugged him tightly.

“Oh, thank you, Mātā. I just can’t stand to see meat anymore. And I hate even the smell of it. It is not fresh or good. And Mātā, could I just ask that Shyama be allowed to come in the house while you and Pitā are not here so that he won’t be hurt again?”

“Yes, that will be all right,” she said, smiling at her kind-hearted son. She was reminded of the good qualities of Ashoka’s grandfather back in India, who was a genuine Vaiṣṇava.

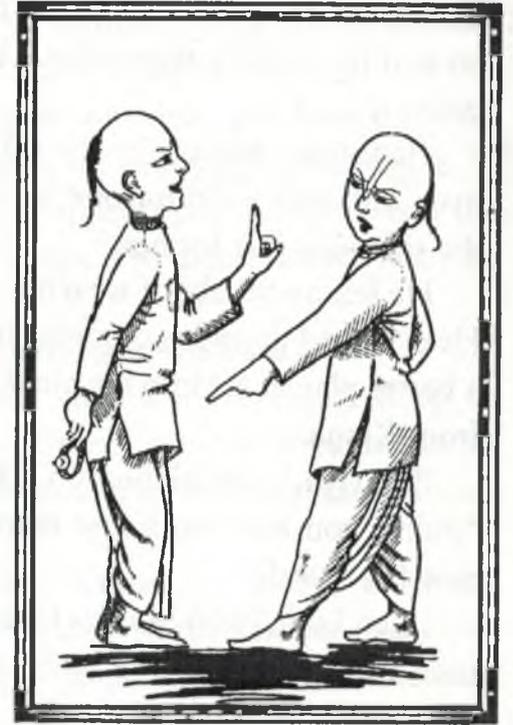
There was once a boy named Hanumān Dāsa. The kids called him Hanumān-nothing-to-do Dāsa. That’s because he didn’t like to do much.

After class Hanumān Dāsa sat outside on the temple steps. The door swung open and he saw Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda on Their altar looking out at him. He paid his obeisances. He liked Them, but he wished he could understand why everyone else liked Them so much more.

He never thought about doing anything to serve Them. It just didn’t matter to Hanumān-nothing-to-do Dāsa.

Hanumān walked into the *pūjarī* room and sat on one of the wooden folding chairs. He watched two devotees making garlands. On Sundays he looked up at the clock once in a while. He did not wish to miss the Sunday feast.

One bright, spring, Monday morning, as Hanumān was walking to gurukula, he



saw something on the sidewalk outside his classroom. "It's mine," he said, picking up the black wristwatch. He turned the prize over and over again in his hands to see it from all sides.

"I bet I know who owns it," said Matsya Dāsa, looking at it with a sharp eye.

"I bet you don't," Hanumān said. "It isn't the teacher's."

"I know. The teacher's is on his wrist," said Matsya. It was a very costly, special watch.

Class began. Hanumān put the watch on for half an hour. He took it off and put it in his desk. He put it in his pocket. He put it in his book bag. He let Matsya Dāsa wear it for a while after school, but Matsya gave it right back.

Hanumān nothing-to-do Dāsa tried that watch on over and over again for one week. Did Kṛṣṇa leave it on the sidewalk just for him?

He felt awful about wearing a watch that wasn't his. He even had thoughts of giving it away or burning it. But a better plan came into his mind, and he knew it must be from Kṛṣṇa.

"Matsya," said Hanumān Dāsa one day after school, "didn't you say you knew who who owned the wrist-watch I found?"

"Yes, I did," said Matsya Dāsa. "It looked like Mitravinda's father's watch." Matsya ran off to play, without another thought of the watch.

Hanumān nothing-to-do Dāsa leaped into action. He

ran to Mitravinda's house.

"Is this yours?" he cried, trying to catch his breath.

"It is!" cried Mitra's father. "I lost it a week or so ago."

"I found it a week ago. I have not felt right ever since. Here, please take it. I have to run."

"I'm glad you brought it back. You see, I need it for my service. I need to wear this watch when I cook for Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda. I need a watch to know exactly when the temple *kīrtanas* will start... I need a watch to know when to walk Mitra to school... I need my watch to know when to start and finish offering *ārati*..."

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry if I made you late," cried Hanumān.

"Don't feel so bad, Hanumān," laughed the devotee man. "I bought a new watch three days after I lost this one. You like it so much, so why don't you keep this one? And thank you very much for bringing it back to me."

Hanumān's mouth dropped open. Now he had the same nice watch for keeps. He didn't know what he would do.

"But..." Hanumān nothing-to-do Dāsa cried.

"No buts, Hanumān *service-to-do* Dāsa! Keep it. Remember, a moment of the time God gives us cannot be purchased for all the gold in this world," said Mitra's father.

In class the next day Hanumān finished his work early. He looked at the watch Mitra's father had given him. "I have ten minutes," he thought. "I'll do something extra."

After school when he sat in front of the temple he noticed by the watch that it was time for *ārati*. No one was singing to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, and Hanumān knew it wasn't right.

He stood up, walked into the temple, picked up a *myṛdāṅga*, and sang to Their Lordships. Smiling and graceful, Śrī Govinda watched him. Hanumān-service-to-do Dāsa felt his heart become very soft.

He went in the *pūjarī* room and looked at his watch. Such a special watch! It was a magic present from Mitravinda's father and also from Rādhā-Govinda!

There were thirty minutes left before the Sunday feast. He could feel some old flower petals under his feet. Hanumān swept Rādhā-Govinda's *pūjarī* room floor.

Hanumān wrote a poem about a thief. He gave the poem to Mitravinda's father. Mitra's father laughed and laughed. You may laugh too when you read it:

Hanumān's Poem About a Thief

Once there was a tricky thief
who rode upon a train,
Thinking with much guilt and grief:
"I will not steal again."

"Men who ride this train have wealth,"
the thief thought, with a sigh,
"But I must control myself;
I shall not steal and lie."

Sunset came; their bags he eyed;
the good men fell asleep.
Opening each he looked inside;
Then he began to weep.

"I don't want to steal," cried he,
"Oh mind, you're not my freind!
You've always been my enemy.
You'll be my bitter end!"

"I'll beg Kṛṣṇa's holy name
to help me win this fight.
Oh, wild mind, you shall be tamed,
if I must chant all night!"

Morning came and all the men
woke up and looked around.
"Who's the thief?" they shouted then.
Their bags could not be found.

"Gentlemen," the thief began,
"allow me to explain.
There is a thief, a sinful man,
and he's the one to blame.

"All he took was just a look.
Your bags got switched around.
He's become a saintly crook.
Your things are safe and sound.

"Armed with Kṛṣṇa's holy name,
I fought the thief all night.

This morning I don't feel the same.
I think I won the fight."

All the Kṛṣṇa conscious men
could not help but smile.
They began a *kīrtana* then
and danced from isle to isle.

The Crown of Violets

"Will you come with us?" cried several little girls to their friend, Rādhā-priya Dāsī. "We are going to the lake today. You come, too!"

"I'd really like to go, but today is Ekādaśī, and I told my grandmother I would bathe and dress the deities she has given me. I said I'd do it every Ekādaśī," answered Rādhā-priya Dāsī.

"You must be kidding! What a bore to stay home on the first day of school break. Rādhā-priya's grandmother is too strict!"

Rādhā-priya heard this remark as the girls ran off. As she mixed the tilaka and strained lemon juice together for the bathing, she felt very bad. She thought of how nice it would be to run and play at the lake and go swimming on such a warm day.

Soon she said to herself, "My deities can wait until next Ekādaśī, can't they? What harm could there be in skipping one? We bathe Them every Ekādaśī so They still look clean enough."

So she poured the tilaka and lemon juice down the

sink, washed the bathing bowls and dried them, and got the deities towels a little wet so it looked as though she had used them. When her grandmother walked in the room she told her that she had just finished Their worship.

"I dressed Them in exactly the same outfit that you did last Ekādaśī," Rādhā-priya told her, lighting a stick of incense and offering it very quickly to the beautiful deities.

"So you have," said her grandmother, laying great stress on each word. "You have dressed Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa exactly as I would have dressed Them; and, since you have done it so well, please go off to the lake with the other girls to play."

Rādhā-priya's cheeks felt hot and red and she didn't say a word of good-bye but just grabbed her towel and ran out the door in a big hurry.

"Why, here's Rādhā-priya!" the girls cried when she dove into the van that was taking them all to the lake. "But what is the matter? Why have you left your dear grandma?" they teased.

"There is *nothing* the matter." As Rādhā-priya said these words, she felt like she was trying to convince herself, too. She had acted a lie. Kṛṣṇa did not get a bath.

"If Grandma knew, oh, she would never trust me again," Rādhā thought.

When the little party arrived at the lake, they got out of the van and dashed through the wide, flowery woods to the shore. Rādhā-priya followed them but she felt like

just moping about, thinking how maybe she should at least just call home and be truthful with her grandmother.

After a while a little girl named Lakṣmī Dāsī cried out, “Let us make a crown of violets and place it on the head of the best girl here.”

“It will be easy to make the crown, but not so easy to decide who is to wear it,” replied Jānakī Dāsī.

“Why, Rādhā-priya is to wear it, of course,” said Lakṣmī. “Isn’t she the one that everyone says is the best girl in school and the most obedient at home?”

“Yes, yes; the crown shall be for Rādhā-priya Dāsī,” cried the other girls, and they began to gather a bunch of violets and make the crown. It was soon finished, and very pretty.

“Now Rādhā-priya,” said Lakṣmī, “put it on in a very gorgeous way, for you are to be our queen.” As these words were spoken, the crown was placed on her head. In a moment Rādhā-priya snatched it off and threw it on the ground, saying, “No crown for me. I don’t want it.”

The girls all looked at her with surprise. “I tricked my grandmother by telling her I had bathed my deities when I actually didn’t do a thing for them.”

“Ha! Are you in *māyā*! Ha, Ha!” laughed Lakṣmī Dāsī, teasing her all the more. Tears ran down Rādhā-priya’s cheeks. “It must be *māyā* to lie about deities,” she thought.

All the little girls went to the water to go swimming and left Rādhā-priya by herself. Only Jānakī remained with her. Jānakī gathered a big cluster of violets from all

around them. “Let’s make another crown,” she said, “only this time it will be for your grandmother’s deities which she gave to you.”

Rādhā-priya began to feel enlivened again by hearing Jānakī’s words. The two of them made a very fine little flower crown and two delicate little garlands for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

When they all got home Rādhā-priya ran into the *āśrama* and paid her obeisances to her grandmother, who was a very old, experienced devotee. “Grandma,” she said, feeling bad, “I didn’t want to miss out on going to the lake; so I didn’t tell you the truth.”

“Rādhā-priya,” her grandmother said, “I knew that, but I let you go, knowing how much you love to swim in the lake. I am glad you have been truthful with me.”

Rādhā-priya looked at the beautiful oak wood altar and to her surprise the deities were effulgent, all freshly bathed and dressed with new clothes, just precisely as her grandmother would do it.

“Oh, but you have done it all yourself, when I promised I would always do it,” she cried. Then Rādhā-priya, wondering if the little violet crown and garlands could be offered to Them, held them up for her grandma to see.

Rādhā-priya’s grandmother received them from her hands and examined the flowers carefully. Her eyes narrowed and she smiled. “These are perfect for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa,” she said.

How Govinda Dāsa Got Out of the Well

Govinda Dāsa's aunt sent him a little writing book for a birthday present. There was a place in the book for a pencil. Govinda Dāsa liked this little book very much and always kept it in his pocket.

One Saturday when there was no school, Govinda left the gurukula property where he lived and walked to the *gośala* where the cows are taken care of. There he found Copper, a little brown dog who lived with the cows and guarded them.

Together Govinda and Copper liked to go exploring, so they wandered from one field to the next. Govinda brought his little book and his measuring tape for a certain purpose he had in mind.

When Govinda Dāsa and Copper reached a field which was overgrown with flowering vines and old trees, they came to a deserted well.

Actually, it had never been useful as a well. It was only half-way dug into the ground and no water had ever come from that hole. But all the gurukula boys liked to go there and yell down into it or throw rocks to try to see how deep it was.

Govinda attached a rock onto the end of his measuring tape with some wire. He lowered the end with the rock attached to the bottom of the well. Then he would be able to write down in his notepad how deep the well was and show the boys at the *āśrama*.

Soon, the strong, bright sun began to go down. At the

āśrama, the devotees began to wonder, "Where is Govinda?"

They waited an hour and still he did not come back. They went to tell their *āśrama* teacher, who went with the other teachers, calling, "Govinda! Govinda!" They hunted all night.

Where was Govinda Dāsa? Well, while everyone was filled with anxiety, Govinda was feeling just as bad, if not worse. For when he had been leaning over to lower his measuring tape down into the well, the loose earth crumbled under his weight and he fell into the deep hole.

The earth had been covered by long grasses, so Govinda couldn't tell it was dangerous. Although he tried very hard to climb out, the soft earth on the walls of the hole just gave way under his grasp and put dust in his face.

After some time, Copper began to bark and bark at Govinda because he wanted him to come out of the hole and go home. He whined and ran around and around the hole until he, too, with his weight on a weak place, slid down into it.

As it grew dark and cold outside, Govinda cried. His crying grew into chanting and singing the Lord's holy names. Govinda was lucky, for he had always loved to sing *bhajan*s. He could remember a few of them at this time when he was so afraid. It had become dark.

"Kṛṣṇa's name is very nice," he thought to himself, though he was afraid. "I have never sung His name so

carefully as I am now.”

Govinda became exhausted. The two friends slept together, side by side, cramped in the hole. But at first crack of dawn, Govinda finally knew what to do. He wrote a letter to his teachers and with a piece of wire from off the measuring tape, attached the letter to Copper’s collar. He made it so it could be easily seen. Then he picked up the little dog and with all his strength flung him as far as possible so he cleared the opening of the hole. “Go home, Copper!” Govinda yelled. Copper was very hungry so he had no problem running home.

When Copper came running into the *goshala* everyone saw the big white paper around his collar. How glad they all were to read the letter from Govinda! Govinda’s teachers ran to the old deserted well and with the help of some heavy rope, hoisted him out. After that, several men brought shovels and filled the hole so the same accident would not happen again.

Back at the gurukula they fed Govinda a nice breakfast of scrambled curd, puris, vegetable soup and sweet rice, all offered to the *āśrama* deities. Govinda felt like he was starved, although it really hadn’t been that long since he had eaten. He ate very quickly, stopping only to explain to everyone how much he loved the holy name of Kṛṣṇa when he was trapped in the well.

The Soul in the Snowbird

Emily turned to page 152 in her science book. “Darwin’s Theory of Evolution,” it said. She looked at the picture of small monkeys and then apes slowly changing into men.

“Chick-a-dee-dee,” came a blast of song from the other side of the window. Emily looked up and saw a tiny bird standing and jumping in the snow.

Emily was surprised. She said, “How can he be so

loud? When the window is closed I can hear him as if he were in here.”

Her friend Susan nodded her head. “Yes, he’s amazing, isn’t he? He doesn’t even wear thick socks or boots and he’s full of life out there in the freeze...”

“Get a look at that bird...”



Emily said to someone else. Soon everyone in the class was standing by the window. They could see him clearly.

Then the teacher Mr. Newberry came back.

“You were supposed to be reading while I was gone,” he cried. “Back in your seats.”

“Chick-a-dee-dee!” came the blast of chirping. Mr. Newberry looked out the window at the bird.

“Just look at him! See him Mr. Newberry?” asked Susan.

“You kids have all seen a snowbird at least a dozen times, if you grew up in these parts. Now sit in your seats and turn to page 152.”

The kids sat down and read their books while he pulled out a big poster of the monkey picture that was in the book.

“Chick-a-dee-dee,” came the loud bird, and everyone looked out the window again.

“He’s so cute!” said Emily, but Mr. Newberry saw her talking.

“Emily! Why do you talk during class? Susan, what is so important about this bird, anyway?”

“Well, I guess it’s just that he sings so strongly,” said Susan. “You see, last night Emily and I went to the Hare Kṛṣṇa feast...”

“What? What!” all the kids cried.

“Chick-a-dee-dee,” the snowbird sang out.

“And what did you learn there?” asked the teacher.

“There’s actually a soul in this bird who sings chick-a-dee-dee,” said Emily.

“All right, Emily. Are you a soul, too? Well listen, this is a science class, and we are not here to listen to whatever pops into your head,” said Mr. Newberry. “Now, who has read the chapter I assigned?”

“Chick-a-dee-dee!” came the strong sound.

“The bird read it,” said Greg. The kids in the class looked up from their books and laughed.

Mr. Newberry looked disturbed, so Emily tried to help by saying, “You see, Mr. Newberry, they say there’s a soul in the bird’s heart, and the soul cannot die or be hurt in any way. They tell you he is part of God’s power, and that’s why he can stand in the freezing snow and sing so loudly...”

“Chick-a-dee-dee!” came the song, louder than ever.

“Like that!” Susan cried.

“Well, birds die all the time,” said the teacher.

“What they tell you at the temple, Mr. Newberry, is that when the body dies then the soul inside finds a new body. It’s just his karma that he has to be in a bird body right now,” said Emily.

“Karma,” said the teacher, “I’ve heard of that. It can make you a human, a dog or a cat. I guess it’s my karma to teach Darwin’s theory of evolution. I never really wanted to teach my students that they are just a little better than monkeys!”

“Maybe in your next life you will be a ten year old girl who goes to a Hare Kṛṣṇa feast, like Emily!” said Greg.

“That’s enough for today. Class dismissed!” said Mr. Newberry.

Rāma Dāsa Sees the Snow

Rāma Dāsa was a boy who had never seen a snow storm. He lived in a warm place where the sun always shone down on neat green rows of orange trees.

Now he had come to visit his grandmother, who lived where snow falls in winter. Rāma Dāsa stood at the window when the first snow came down.

“Oh Mātā!” he cried with joy. “Come quick and see the little white birds falling from Vaikuṅṭha.”

“They are not birds,” his mātā said, smiling.

“Then maybe swans are flying so hard they are losing all their feathers! Oh, please tell me what it is! Is it sugar? Let me taste it.” When Rāma Dāsa put the snow to his lips, he made a little jump. It was cold.

“You are just seven years old and this is the first time you’ve seen snow,” said his mother. “When Śrīla Prabhupāda first saw snow, he was seventy years old.”

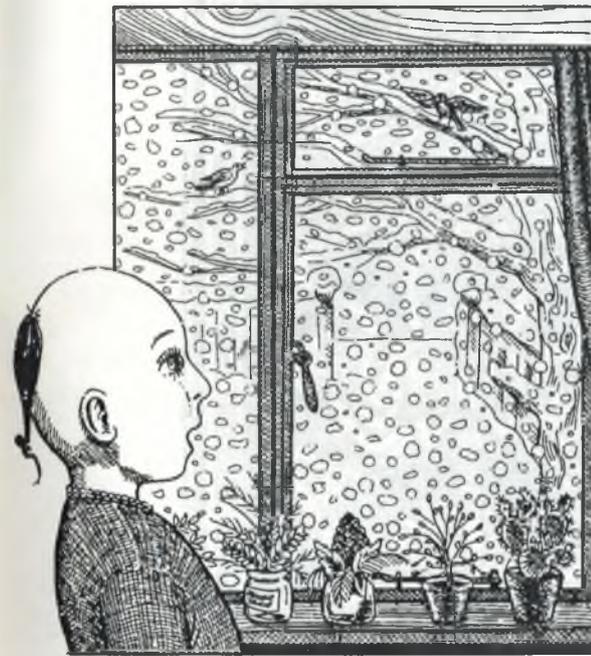
“Really Mātā? Why?” Rāma Dāsa asked.

Mātā explained, “Prabhupāda didn’t see snow in his home country. India is warm and there is little snow there. But at age seventy, he left his dear town of Vṛṇḍāvana and went to preach in America. He spent the first winter in cold New York City.”

“What is snow, Mātā? Look, it’s falling everywhere.”

“The snowflakes, Rāma Das, are little crystals of ice that fall from the clouds. Because the air is so cold, the water in the clouds falls as snow instead of rain.”

As she spoke, she picked up a nearby book.



“See, Rāma Dāsa, I’ve caught a white snowflake on this black book. Look quickly before it melts. Look through the magnifying glass and see how beautiful it is.”

Rāma Dāsa peered through the glass. There lay the white, feathery snowflake resting on its black background like a lovely star. “Twinkle, twinkle, little star!” he cried in delight. “Please show me more, Mātā.”

His mother caught several more flakes. No two were the same, so each one was a surprise to see.

The next day, Rāma Dāsa had a wonderful time playing in the snow. When he came back inside, he said, “I love snow! It’s a shower of mercy from Vaikuṅṭha, just like when Prabhupāda came to America.”

Rāma Dāsa asked his mātā a lot of questions about snow, stars, and many other things. He always wanted to learn more. On the way home in the plane, he wanted to know how all the stars and planets were made. His mātā wrote a poem just for him. It goes like this:



The Creation

“Mātāji, who made the stars
that light the midnight sky?
Who made the moon so clear and bright
which rises up so high?”

“It was Brahmā, my dear child,
who made the stars you saw.
He practiced yoga quite a while.
He heard, ‘*tapa, tapa.*’

“Then came a song from Kṛṣṇa’s world
for Lord Brahmā to sing,
While sitting on his lotus whorl,
arranging everything.”

“But, Ma, why did he sing that song
and make the stars and sky?
He made it dark the whole night long!
Ma, do you know why?”

“Creation has been made, you see,
for those souls who insist
On leaving Kṛṣṇa’s company
and trying to have what’s His.”

“The song came out of Kṛṣṇa’s flute.
It’s meant to call us home
To Kṛṣṇa’s world of blissful light
where no one feels alone.”

Grains

Few plants are more useful to man than the rice plant, the wheat plant, and the corn and bean plants. These foods are staples which means that they are the most important food that people eat. We eat at least one of them with every meal (except on Ekādaśī). Śrī Kṛṣṇa makes them very tasty and satisfying for everyone.

He is very happy to accept nice grains from us, as when we cook hot, buttered *capātīs*, fresh steaming rice and delicious *dāl* soups, which are offered with love. These keep his devotees healthy.

Our bodies need protein to remain healthy. Protein is made up of something called amino acids which are in the grains. If we combine rice, wheat, and beans in one

meal it creates a nice combination of amino acids in our stomachs.

Rice has a lot of amino acids called leucine and phenylalanine. Wheat has a lot of threonine and lysine. *Mung dal* is very high in every amino acid including methionine. If we eat a combination of these three we will get the correct mix to make the proteins our bodies need to be strong and not sick.

Don't worry. You don't have to be a scientist to mix them all together. All you have to do is eat them!

Ordinary beans can be ground up and fried into spongy little cakes, or soaked and pounded as thin as paper and fried to make poppers, also called lentil chips. Kṛṣṇa enjoys certain kinds of *dal* mashed and stuffed in pastries called *kicoris*. Lord Kṛṣṇa drinks His hearty *dal* soups with coconut or peanuts, and butter-soft healthy vegetables that melt in His lotus mouth.

As for wheat, He likes puris, chapatis, parathas, cake, cookies, and much more. There are also so many different recipes for Kṛṣṇa's rice. Rādhārānī never cooks the same thing twice for Him. Every time she cooks for Kṛṣṇa she makes something new and exciting He has never had before.

Grains throughout this material world are used to feed many millions of human beings. But what about the people who do not get any grains? There are those people who are starving while others take more than they need.

In many countries, most of the grains are used to fatten animals for slaughter. In the United States, for example, most of the grains are used to feed animals which go to the slaughter house.

Half of the land in the United States is being used to produce these grains to feed animals who will be killed. Every seven pounds of grain that are fed to an animal produces only one pound of meat. Seven pounds of grain could feed a lot of starving people.

People don't know what they are doing when they purchase meat.

One other way that grains are being misused is by making alcohol. Most liquors, especially beer, require that a lot of grain be fermented in water to produce the poisons found in alcohol.

Mother Earth, or Bhumi, enjoys giving protein and vitamins to us through her soil. Her earth holds the tender roots of staple grain plants.

At harvest time, the sight of a field of wheat with its feathery tassels of grains waving and shining in the wind and sun is a beautiful one, and not easy to forget. And it presents to us an important question: how shall we properly use Śrī Kṛṣṇa's grains?

What does Mother Earth have to say?

Mother Earth's Poem

As Mother Earth, I carry high
each heavy mountain range.
I do not grunt, or even sigh—
for me it's not a strain.

A million streams, and rivers, too,
just splash all over me.
I carry curling waves of blue,
I hold the heavy sea!

I nurse all creatures, great and small.
For me it is not toil.
I send the strength of rice and *dāl*
to mankind through my soil.

I'm baked when men make earthen pots,
I'm stomped by dancing feet.
I tolerate the parking lots,
I stay beneath your street.

I really don't mind big hotels,
or airplanes full of freight.
But when one human being tells
a lie—he's too much weight.

A liar does not show concern
for people he's around.
To get his way is all he's learned.
And ugh! That weighs me down.

Things to Remember

When you rise in the morning, remember who kept you from danger during the night. Remember who resides in your heart and whose sun shines around you, and gives you the sweet light of day.

Let Kṛṣṇa have the thanks of your heart, for His kindness and His care; and since you are His faithful devotee, depend on His protection during the wakeful hours of the day, also.

When it is time for *prasādam*, do not eat in a greedy manner. Don't make the mistake of forgetting what *prasādam* is. Eat quietly, and remember how food is Kṛṣṇa's gift. *Prasādam* is so satisfying in that way.

Kṛṣṇa is first offered all the preparations. In this way our food is first enjoyed by the Lord. Then we may honor the mercy, or *prasādam*, knowing Kṛṣṇa liked it.

Be kind and gentle in your manners; not like the howling winter storm but like the bright spring morning with the wind blowing mildly.

Don't be afraid of just being simple and honest if you have done something wrong. A complicated, tricky heart is never peaceful like a clean and simple one.

When you rise in the morning, chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. Listen carefully to Kṛṣṇa's beautiful names. No sin or nonsense can bother you if you are chanting with love.

Kṛṣṇa's name is as pure as Kṛṣṇa Himself. And Harā is merciful Rādhārānī.

If you have not served the Lord within your heart, or in some way at least remembered Him, think that it is a day lost, and be sorry for it.

Trust Kṛṣṇa. He will guide you through your teachers and parents and from inside your heart. If you take one step toward Kṛṣṇa, He'll take ten steps toward you!