

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Nārāyaṇa-kavaca Shield

This chapter describes how Indra, the King of heaven, was victorious over the soldiers of the demons, and it also describes the shield of the Viṣṇu mantra.

To take protection from this shield, one must first touch kuśa grass and wash one's mouth with ācamana-mantras. One should observe silence and then place the eight-syllable Viṣṇu mantra on the parts of his body and place the twelve-syllable mantra on his hands. The eight-syllable mantra is om̐ namo nārāyaṇāya. This mantra should be distributed all over the front and back of the body. The twelve-syllable mantra, which begins with the praṇava, om̐kāra, is om̐ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya. One syllable should be placed on each of the fingers and should be preceded by the praṇava, om̐kāra. Thereafter, one must chant om̐ viṣṇave namaḥ, which is a six-syllable mantra. One must progressively place the syllables of the mantra on the heart, the head, between the two eyebrows, on the śikhā and between the eyes, and then one should chant maḥ astrāya phaṭ and with this mantra protect himself from all directions. Nādevo devam arcayet: one who has not risen to the level of a deva cannot chant this mantra. According to this direction of the śāstra, one must think himself qualitatively nondifferent from the Supreme.

After finishing this dedication, one must offer a prayer to the eight-armed Lord Viṣṇu, who sits on the shoulders of Garuḍadeva. One also has to think of the fish incarnation, Vāmana, Kūrma, Nṛsiṃha, Varāha, Paraśurāma, Rāmacandra (the elder brother of Lakṣmaṇa), Nara-Nārāyaṇa, Dattātreya (an empowered incarnation), Kapila, Sanat-kumāra, Hayagrīva, Nārada-deva (the incarnation of a devotee), Dhanvantari, R̥ṣabhadeva, Yajña, Balarāma, Vyāsadeva, Buddhadeva and Keśava. One should also think of Govinda, the master of Vṛndāvana, and one should think of Nārāyaṇa, the master of the spiritual sky. One should think of Madhusūdana, Tridhāmā, Mādhava, Hṛṣīkeśa, Padmanābha, Janārdana, Dāmodara and Viśveśvara, as well as the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa Himself. After offering prayers to the Lord's personal expansions known as the svāmīśa and śaktyāveśa-avatāras, one should pray to the weapons of Lord Nārāyaṇa, such as the Sudarśana, gadā, śaṅkha, khadga and bow.

After explaining this process, Śukadeva Gosvāmī told Mahārāja Parīkṣit how Viśvarūpa, the brother of Vṛtrāsura, described the glories of the Nārāyaṇa-kavaca to Indra.

Texts 1-2:

King Parīkṣit inquired from Śukadeva Gosvāmī: My lord, kindly explain the Viṣṇu mantra armor that protected King Indra and enabled him to conquer his enemies, along with their carriers, and enjoy the opulence of the three worlds. Please explain to me that Nārāyaṇa armor, by which King Indra achieved success in battle, conquering the enemies who were endeavoring to kill him.

Text 3:

Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: King Indra, the leader of the demigods, inquired about the armor known as Nārāyaṇa-kavaca from Viśvarūpa, who was engaged by the demigods as their priest. Please hear Viśvarūpa's reply with great attention.

Texts 4-6:

Viśvarūpa said: If some form of fear arrives, one should first wash his hands and legs clean and then perform ācamana by chanting this mantra: om apavitraḥ pavitra vā sarvāvasthām gato 'pi vā/ yaḥ smaret puṇḍarīkākṣam sa bahyābhyantaraḥ śuciḥ/ śrī-viṣṇu śrī-viṣṇu śrī-viṣṇu. Then one should touch kuśa grass and sit gravely and silently, facing north. When completely purified, one should touch the mantra composed of eight syllables to the eight parts of his body and touch the mantra composed of twelve syllables to his hands. Thus, in the following manner, he should bind himself with the Nārāyaṇa coat of armor. First, while chanting the mantra composed of eight syllables [om namo nārāyaṇāya], beginning with the praṇava, the syllable om, one should touch his hands to eight parts of his body, starting with the two feet and progressing systematically to the knees, thighs, abdomen, heart, chest, mouth and head. Then one should chant the mantra in reverse, beginning from the last syllable [ya], while touching the parts of his body in the reverse order. These two processes are known as utpatti-nyāsa and saṁhāra-nyāsa respectively.

Text 7:

Then one should chant the mantra composed of twelve syllables [om̐ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya]. Preceding each syllable by the om̐kāra, one should place the syllables of the mantra on the tips of his fingers, beginning with the index finger of the right hand and concluding with the index finger of the left. The four remaining syllables should be placed on the joints of the thumbs.

Texts 8-10:

One must then chant the mantra of six syllables [om̐ viṣṇave namaḥ]. One should place the syllable om̐ on his heart, the syllable vi on the top of his head, the syllable sa between his eyebrows, the syllable na on his tuft of hair [śikhā], and the syllable ve between his eyes. The chanter of the mantra should then place the syllable na on all the joints of his body and meditate on the syllable ma as being a weapon. He should thus become the perfect personification of the mantra. Thereafter, adding visarga to the final syllable ma he should chant the mantra maḥ astrāya phaṭ in all directions, beginning from the east. In this way, all directions will be bound by the protective armor of the mantra.

Text 11:

After finishing this chanting, one should think himself qualitatively one with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is full in six opulences and is worthy to be meditated upon. Then one should chant the following protective prayer to Lord Nārāyaṇa, the Nārāyaṇa-kavaca.

Text 12:

The Supreme Lord, who sits on the back of the bird Garuḍa, touching him with His lotus feet, holds eight weapons — the conchshell, disc, shield, sword, club, arrows, bow and ropes. May that Supreme Personality of Godhead protect me at all times with His eight arms. He is all-powerful because He fully possesses the eight mystic powers [aṇimā, laghimā, etc.].

Text 13:

May the Lord, who assumes the body of a great fish, protect me in the water from the fierce animals that are associates of the demigod Varuṇa. By expanding His illusory energy, the Lord assumed the form of the dwarf Vāmana. May Vāmana protect me on the land. Since the gigantic form of the Lord, Viśvarūpa, conquers the three worlds, may He protect me in the sky.

Text 14:

May Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva, who appeared as the enemy of Hiranyakaśipu, protect me in all directions. His loud laughing vibrated in all directions and caused the pregnant wives of the asuras to have miscarriages. May that Lord be kind enough to protect me in difficult places like the forest and battlefield.

Text 15:

The Supreme indestructible Lord is ascertained through the performance of ritualistic sacrifices and is therefore known as Yajñeśvara. In His incarnation as Lord Boar, He raised the planet earth from the water at the bottom of the universe and kept it on His pointed tusks. May that Lord protect me from rogues on the street. May Paraśurāma protect me on the tops of mountains, and may the elder brother of Bharata, Lord Rāmacandra, along with His brother Lakṣmaṇa, protect me in foreign countries.

Text 16:

May Lord Nārāyaṇa protect me from unnecessarily following false religious systems and falling from my duties due to madness. May the Lord in His appearance as Nara protect me from unnecessary pride. May Lord Dattātreya, the master of all mystic power, protect me from falling while performing bhakti-yoga, and may Lord Kapila, the master of all good qualities, protect me from the material bondage of fruitive activities.

Text 17:

May Sanat-kumāra protect me from lusty desires. As I begin some auspicious activity, may Lord Hayagrīva protect me from being an offender by neglecting to offer respectful obeisances to the Supreme Lord. May Devarṣi Nārada protect me from committing offenses in worshiping the Deity, and may Lord Kūrma, the tortoise, protect me from falling to the unlimited hellish planets.

Text 18:

May the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His incarnation as Dhanvantari relieve me from undesirable eatables and protect me from physical illness. May Lord Ṛṣabhadeva, who conquered His inner and outer senses, protect me from fear produced by the duality of heat and

cold. May Yajña protect me from defamation and harm from the populace, and may Lord Balarāma as Śeṣa protect me from envious serpents.

Text 19:

May the Personality of Godhead in His incarnation as Vyāsadeva protect me from all kinds of ignorance resulting from the absence of Vedic knowledge. May Lord Buddhadeva protect me from activities opposed to Vedic principles and from laziness that causes one to madly forget the Vedic principles of knowledge and ritualistic action. May Kalkideva, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who appeared as an incarnation to protect religious principles, protect me from the dirt of the Age of Kali.

Text 20:

May Lord Keśava protect me with His club in the first portion of the day, and may Govinda, who is always engaged in playing His flute, protect me in the second portion of the day. May Lord Nārāyaṇa, who is equipped with all potencies, protect me in the third part of the day, and may Lord Viṣṇu, who carries a disc to kill His enemies, protect me in the fourth part of the day.

Text 21:

May Lord Madhusūdana, who carries a bow very fearful for the demons, protect me during the fifth part of the day. In the evening, may Lord Mādhava, appearing as Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara, protect me, and in the beginning of night may Lord Hṛṣīkeśa protect me. At the dead of night [in the second and third parts of night] may Lord Padmanābha alone protect me.

Text 22:

May the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who bears the Śrīvatsa on His chest, protect me after midnight until the sky becomes pinkish. May Lord Janārdana, who carries a sword in His hand, protect me at the end of night [during the last four ghaṭikās of night]. May Lord Dāmodara protect me in the early morning, and may Lord Viśveśvara protect me during the junctions of day and night.

Text 23:

Set into motion by the Supreme Personality of Godhead and wandering in all the four directions, the disc of the Supreme Lord has sharp edges as

destructive as the fire of devastation at the end of the millennium. As a blazing fire burns dry grass to ashes with the assistance of the breeze, may that Sudarśana cakra burn our enemies to ashes.

Text 24:

O club in the hand of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, you produce sparks of fire as powerful as thunderbolts, and you are extremely dear to the Lord. I am also His servant. Therefore kindly help me pound to pieces the evil living beings known as Kuṣmāṇḍas, Vaināyakas, Yakṣas, Rākṣasas, Bhūtas and Grahas. Please pulverize them.

Text 25:

O best of conchshells, O Pāñcajanya in the hands of the Lord, you are always filled with the breath of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Therefore you create a fearful sound vibration that causes trembling in the hearts of enemies like the Rākṣasas, pramatha ghosts, Pretas, Mātās, Piśācas and brāhmaṇa ghosts with fearful eyes.

Text 26:

O king of sharp-edged swords, you are engaged by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Please cut the soldiers of my enemies to pieces. Please cut them to pieces! O shield marked with a hundred brilliant moonlike circles, please cover the eyes of the sinful enemies. Pluck out their sinful eyes.

Texts 27-28:

May the glorification of the transcendental name, form, qualities and paraphernalia of the Supreme Personality of Godhead protect us from the influence of bad planets, meteors, envious human beings, serpents, scorpions, and animals like tigers and wolves. May it protect us from ghosts and the material elements like earth, water, fire and air, and may it also protect us from lightning and our past sins. We are always afraid of these hindrances to our auspicious life. Therefore, may they all be completely destroyed by the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra.

Text 29:

Lord Garuḍa, the carrier of Lord Viṣṇu, is the most worshipable lord, for he is as powerful as the Supreme Lord Himself. He is the personified Vedas and is worshiped by selected verses. May he protect us from all

dangerous conditions, and may Lord Viṣvaksena, the Personality of Godhead, also protect us from all dangers by His holy names.

Text 30:

May the Supreme Personality of Godhead's holy names, His transcendental forms, His carriers and all the weapons decorating Him as personal associates protect our intelligence, senses, mind and life air from all dangers.

Text 31:

The subtle and gross cosmic manifestation is material, but nevertheless it is nondifferent from the Supreme Personality of Godhead because He is ultimately the cause of all causes. Cause and effect are factually one because the cause is present in the effect. Therefore the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, can destroy all our dangers by any of His potent parts.

Texts 32-33:

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, the living entities, the material energy, the spiritual energy and the entire creation are all individual substances. In the ultimate analysis, however, together they constitute the supreme one, the Personality of Godhead. Therefore those who are advanced in spiritual knowledge see unity in diversity. For such advanced persons, the Lord's bodily decorations, His name, His fame, His attributes and forms and the weapons in His hand are manifestations of the strength of His potency. According to their elevated spiritual understanding, the omniscient Lord, who manifests various forms, is present everywhere. May He always protect us everywhere from all calamities.

Text 34:

Prahlāda Mahārāja loudly chanted the holy name of Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva. May Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva, roaring for His devotee Prahlāda Mahārāja, protect us from all fear of dangers created by stalwart leaders in all directions through poison, weapons, water, fire, air and so on. May the Lord cover their influence by His own transcendental influence. May Nṛsiṃhadeva protect us in all directions and in all corners, above, below, within and without.

Text 35:

Viśvarūpa continued: O Indra, this mystic armor related to Lord Nārāyaṇa has been described by me to you. By putting on this protective covering, you will certainly be able to conquer the leaders of the demons.

Text 36:

If one employs this armor, whomever he sees with his eyes or touches with his feet is immediately freed from all the above-mentioned dangers.

Text 37:

This prayer, Nārāyaṇa-kavaca, constitutes subtle knowledge transcendently connected with Nārāyaṇa. One who employs this prayer is never disturbed or put in danger by the government, by plunderers, by evil demons or by any type of disease.

Text 38:

O King of heaven, a brāhmaṇa named Kauśika formerly used this armor when he purposely gave up his body in the desert by mystic power.

Text 39:

Surrounded by many beautiful women, Citraratha, the King of Gandharvaloka, was once passing in his airplane over the brāhmaṇa's body at the spot where the brāhmaṇa had died.

Text 40:

Suddenly Citraratha was forced to fall from the sky headfirst with his airplane. Struck with wonder, he was ordered by the great sages named the Vālikhilyas to throw the brāhmaṇa's bones in the nearby river Sarasvatī. He had to do this and bathe in the river before returning to his own abode.

Text 41:

Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: My dear Mahārāja Parīkṣit, one who employs this armor or hears about it with faith and veneration when afraid because of any conditions in the material world is immediately freed from all dangers and is worshiped by all living entities.

Text 42:

King Indra, who performed one hundred sacrifices, received this prayer of protection from Viśvarūpa. After conquering the demons, he enjoyed all the opulences of the three worlds.

