

CHAPTER THREE

Gajendra's Prayers of Surrender

In this chapter, the prayers by Gajendra, the King of the elephants, are described. It appears that the King of the elephants was formerly a human being known as Indradyumna and that he learned a prayer to the Supreme Lord. Fortunately he remembered that prayer and began to chant it to himself. First he offered his respectful obeisances to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and because of his awkward position in having been attacked by the crocodile, he expressed his inability to recite prayers nicely. Nonetheless, he tried to chant the mantra and expressed himself in appropriate words as follows.

“The Supreme Personality of Godhead is the cause of all causes, the original person from whom everything has emanated. He is the root cause of this cosmic manifestation, and the entire cosmos rests in Him, yet He is transcendental, for He does everything in relation to the material world through His external energy. He is eternally situated in the spiritual world — in *Vaikuṇṭha* or *Goloka Vṛndāvana* — where He engages in His eternal pastimes. The material world is a product of His external energy, or material nature, which works under His direction. It is thus that creation, maintenance and annihilation take place. The Lord exists at all times. This is extremely difficult for a nondevotee to understand. Although the transcendental Supreme Personality of Godhead is perceivable by everyone, only the pure devotees perceive His presence and activities. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is completely free from material birth, death, old age and disease. Indeed, if anyone in this material world takes shelter of Him, he also becomes situated in that transcendental position. For the satisfaction of the devotee (*paritrāṇāya sādhūnām*), the Lord appears and exhibits His activities. His appearance, disappearance and other pastimes are not at all material. One who knows this secret can enter the kingdom of God. In the Lord, all opposing elements are adjusted. The Lord is situated in everyone's heart. He is the controller of everything, He is the witness of all activities, and He is the original source of all living entities. Indeed, all living entities are parts of Him, for He is the origin of *Mahā-Viṣṇu*, who is the source of the living entities within this material world. The Lord can observe the activities of our senses, which can work and achieve material results because of His mercy. Although He is the original source of everything, He is untouched by any of His by-products.

In this way He is like a gold mine, which is the source of gold in ornaments and yet is different from the ornaments themselves. The Lord is worshiped by the method prescribed in the Pañcarātras. He is the source of our knowledge, and He can give us liberation. Therefore it is our duty to understand Him according to the instructions of devotees, in particular the spiritual master. Although for us the mode of goodness is covered, by following the instructions of saintly persons and the spiritual master we can be freed from material clutches.

“The self-effulgent material form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is adored by nondevotees, His impersonal form is adored by those advanced in spiritual knowledge, and His feature as the localized Supersoul is appreciated by yogīs. But His original form as a person is understood only by devotees. That Supreme Personality of Godhead is competent to dissipate the darkness of the conditioned soul through His instructions in Bhagavad-gītā. He is the ocean of transcendental qualities and can be understood only by liberated persons freed from the bodily concept of life. By His causeless mercy, the Lord can rescue the conditioned soul from the material clutches and enable him to return home, back to Godhead, to become His personal associate. Nonetheless, a pure devotee does not aspire to go back to Godhead; he is simply satisfied with executing his service in this material world. A pure devotee does not ask anything from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. His only prayer is to be freed from the material conception of life and to be engaged in the Lord’s transcendental loving service.”

In this way the King of the elephants, Gajendra, offered prayers directly to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, without mistaking Him for one of the demigods. None of the demigods came to see him, not even Brahmā or Śiva. Rather, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa, seated on Garuḍa, personally appeared before him. Gajendra, by lifting his trunk, offered obeisances to the Lord, and the Lord immediately pulled him from the water along with the crocodile who had captured his leg. Then the Lord killed the crocodile and thus rescued Gajendra.

Text 1:

Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: Thereafter, the King of the elephants, Gajendra, fixed his mind in his heart with perfect intelligence and chanted

a mantra which he had learned in his previous birth as Indradyumna and which he remembered by the grace of Kṛṣṇa.

Text 2:

The King of the elephants, Gajendra, said: I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Supreme Person, Vāsudeva [om̐ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya]. Because of Him this material body acts due to the presence of spirit, and He is therefore the root cause of everyone. He is worshipable for such exalted persons as Brahmā and Śiva, and He has entered the heart of every living being. Let me meditate upon Him.

Text 3:

The Supreme Godhead is the supreme platform on which everything rests, the ingredient by which everything has been produced, and the person who has created and is the only cause of this cosmic manifestation. Nonetheless, He is different from the cause and the result. I surrender unto Him, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is self-sufficient in everything.

Text 4:

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, by expanding His own energy, keeps this cosmic manifestation visible and again sometimes renders it invisible. He is both the supreme cause and the supreme result, the observer and the witness, in all circumstances. Thus He is transcendental to everything. May that Supreme Personality of Godhead give me protection.

Text 5:

In due course of time, when all the causative and effective manifestations of the universe, including the planets and their directors and maintainers, are annihilated, there is a situation of dense darkness. Above this darkness, however, is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. I take shelter of His lotus feet.

Text 6:

An artist onstage, being covered by attractive dresses and dancing with different movements, is not understood by his audience; similarly, the activities and features of the supreme artist cannot be understood even by the demigods or great sages, and certainly not by those who are

unintelligent like animals. Neither the demigods and sages nor the unintelligent can understand the features of the Lord, nor can they express in words His actual position. May that Supreme Personality of Godhead give me protection.

Text 7:

Renunciants and great sages who see all living beings equally, who are friendly to everyone and who flawlessly practice in the forest the vows of brahmacarya, vānaprastha and sannyāsa desire to see the all-auspicious lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. May that same Supreme Personality of Godhead be my destination.

Texts 8-9:

The Supreme Personality of Godhead has no material birth, activities, name, form, qualities or faults. To fulfill the purpose for which this material world is created and destroyed, He comes in the form of a human being like Lord Rāma or Lord Kṛṣṇa by His original internal potency. He has immense potency, and in various forms, all free from material contamination, He acts wonderfully. He is therefore the Supreme Brahman. I offer my respects to Him.

Text 10:

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the self-effulgent Supersoul, who is the witness in everyone's heart, who enlightens the individual soul and who cannot be reached by exercises of the mind, words or consciousness.

Text 11:

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is realized by pure devotees who act in the transcendental existence of bhakti-yoga. He is the bestower of uncontaminated happiness and is the master of the transcendental world. Therefore I offer my respect unto Him.

Text 12:

I offer my respectful obeisances to Lord Vāsudeva, who is all-pervading, to the Lord's fierce form as Lord Nṛsimhadeva, to the Lord's form as an animal [Lord Varāhadeva], to Lord Dattātreya, who preached impersonalism, to Lord Buddha, and to all the other incarnations. I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Lord, who has no material qualities but

who accepts the three qualities goodness, passion and ignorance within this material world. I also offer my respectful obeisances unto the impersonal Brahman effulgence.

Text 13:

I beg to offer my respectful obeisances unto You, who are the Supersoul, the superintendent of everything, and the witness of all that occurs. You are the Supreme Person, the origin of material nature and of the total material energy. You are also the owner of the material body. Therefore, You are the supreme complete. I offer my respectful obeisances unto You.

Text 14:

My Lord, You are the observer of all the objectives of the senses. Without Your mercy, there is no possibility of solving the problem of doubts. The material world is just like a shadow resembling You. Indeed, one accepts this material world as real because it gives a glimpse of Your existence.

Text 15:

My Lord, You are the cause of all causes, but You Yourself have no cause. Therefore You are the wonderful cause of everything. I offer my respectful obeisances unto You, who are the shelter of the Vedic knowledge contained in the śāstras like the Pañcarātras and Vedānta-sūtra, which are Your representations, and who are the source of the paramparā system. Because it is You who can give liberation, You are the only shelter for all transcendentalists. Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto You.

Text 16:

My Lord, as the fire in araṇi wood is covered, You and Your unlimited knowledge are covered by the material modes of nature. Your mind, however, is not attentive to the activities of the modes of nature. Those who are advanced in spiritual knowledge are not subject to the regulative principles directed in the Vedic literatures. Because such advanced souls are transcendental, You personally appear in their pure minds. Therefore I offer my respectful obeisances unto You.

Text 17:

Since an animal such as me has surrendered unto You, who are supremely liberated, certainly You will release me from this dangerous

position. Indeed, being extremely merciful, You incessantly try to deliver me. By your partial feature as Paramātmā, You are situated in the hearts of all embodied beings. You are celebrated as direct transcendental knowledge, and You are unlimited. I offer my respectful obeisances unto You, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Text 18:

My Lord, those who are completely freed from material contamination always meditate upon You within the cores of their hearts. You are extremely difficult to attain for those like me who are too attached to mental concoction, home, relatives, friends, money, servants and assistants. You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, uncontaminated by the modes of nature. You are the reservoir of all enlightenment, the supreme controller. I therefore offer my respectful obeisances unto You.

Text 19:

After worshipping the Supreme Personality of Godhead, those who are interested in the four principles of religion, economic development, sense gratification and liberation obtain from Him what they desire. What then is to be said of other benedictions? Indeed, sometimes the Lord gives a spiritual body to such ambitious worshipers. May that Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is unlimitedly merciful, bestow upon me the benediction of liberation from this present danger and from the materialistic way of life.

Texts 20-21:

Unalloyed devotees, who have no desire other than to serve the Lord, worship Him in full surrender and always hear and chant about His activities, which are most wonderful and auspicious. Thus they always merge in an ocean of transcendental bliss. Such devotees never ask the Lord for any benediction. I, however, am in danger. Thus I pray to that Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is eternally existing, who is invisible, who is the Lord of all great personalities, such as Brahmā, and who is available only by transcendental bhakti-yoga. Being extremely subtle, He is beyond the reach of my senses and transcendental to all external realization. He is unlimited, He is the original cause, and He is completely full in everything. I offer my obeisances unto Him.

Texts 22-24:

The Supreme Personality of Godhead creates His minor parts and parcels, the jīva-tattva, beginning with Lord Brahmā, the demigods and the expansions of Vedic knowledge [Sāma, Ṛg, Yajur and Atharva] and including all other living entities, moving and nonmoving, with their different names and characteristics. As the sparks of a fire or the shining rays of the sun emanate from their source and merge into it again and again, the mind, the intelligence, the senses, the gross and subtle material bodies, and the continuous transformations of the different modes of nature all emanate from the Lord and again merge into Him. He is neither demigod nor demon, neither human nor bird or beast. He is not woman, man, or neuter, nor is He an animal. He is not a material quality, a fruitive activity, a manifestation or nonmanifestation. He is the last word in the discrimination of “not this, not this,” and He is unlimited. All glories to the Supreme Personality of Godhead!

Text 25:

I do not wish to live anymore after I am released from the attack of the crocodile. What is the use of an elephant's body covered externally and internally by ignorance? I simply desire eternal liberation from the covering of ignorance. That covering is not destroyed by the influence of time.

Text 26:

Now, fully desiring release from material life, I offer my respectful obeisances unto that Supreme Person who is the creator of the universe, who is Himself the form of the universe and who is nonetheless transcendental to this cosmic manifestation. He is the supreme knower of everything in this world, the Supersoul of the universe. He is the unborn, supremely situated Lord. I offer my respectful obeisances unto Him.

Text 27:

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Supreme, the Supersoul, the master of all mystic yoga, who is seen in the core of the heart by perfect mystics when they are completely purified and freed from the reactions of fruitive activity by practicing bhakti-yoga.

Text 28:

My Lord, You are the controller of formidable strength in three kinds of energy. You appear as the reservoir of all sense pleasure and the protector

of the surrendered souls. You possess unlimited energy, but You are unapproachable by those who are unable to control their senses. I offer my respectful obeisances unto You again and again.

Text 29:

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead, by whose illusory energy the jīva, who is part and parcel of God, forgets his real identity because of the bodily concept of life. I take shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose glories are difficult to understand.

Text 30:

Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: When the King of the elephants was describing the supreme authority, without mentioning any particular person, he did not invoke the demigods, headed by Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva, Indra and Candra. Thus none of them approached him. However, because Lord Hari is the Supersoul, Puruṣottama, the Personality of Godhead, He appeared before Gajendra.

Text 31:

After understanding the awkward condition of Gajendra, who had offered his prayers, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari, who lives everywhere, appeared with the demigods, who were offering prayers to Him. Carrying His disc and other weapons, He appeared there on the back of His carrier, Garuḍa, with great speed, according to His desire. Thus He appeared before Gajendra.

Text 32:

Gajendra had been forcefully captured by the crocodile in the water and was feeling acute pain, but when he saw that Nārāyaṇa, wielding His disc, was coming in the sky on the back of Garuḍa, he immediately took a lotus flower in his trunk, and with great difficulty due to his painful condition, he uttered the following words: “O my Lord, Nārāyaṇa, master of the universe, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, I offer my respectful obeisances unto You.”

Text 33:

Thereafter, seeing Gajendra in such an aggrieved position, the unborn Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari, immediately got down from the

back of Garuḍa by His causeless mercy and pulled the King of the elephants, along with the crocodile, out of the water. Then, in the presence of all the demigods, who were looking on, the Lord severed the crocodile's mouth from its body with His disc. In this way He saved Gajendra, the King of the elephants.