

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### The Story of Piṅgalā

Lord Kṛṣṇa told Uddhava how the avadhūta brāhmaṇa explained to Mahārāja Yadu the instructions he had received from nine of his gurus, beginning with the python.

The instruction the avadhūta brāhmaṇa received from the python is that an intelligent person should cultivate a mentality of detachment and should maintain his body by accepting whatever comes of its own accord or is easily obtained. In this way, he should remain always engaged in the worship of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Even if no food is available, the person who wants to engage fully in the Lord's worship should not beg; rather, he should understand this to be the arrangement of providence, thinking, "Whatever enjoyment is destined for me will automatically come, and thus I should not uselessly waste the remaining duration of my life in worrying about such things." If he does not get any food, he should simply remain lying like the python and patiently fix his mind in meditation upon the Supreme Lord.

The instruction the avadhūta brāhmaṇa received from the ocean is that the mind of the sage who is devoted to the Personality of Godhead appears very clear and grave, just like the still ocean waters. The ocean does not overflow during the rainy season, when all the flooded rivers discharge their waters into it, nor does it dry up during the hot season, when the rivers fail to supply it. Similarly, the sage does not become elated when he achieves desirable things, nor does he become distressed in their absence.

The instruction of the moth is that just as he becomes enticed by the fire and gives up his life, the fool who cannot control his senses becomes enchanted by the forms of women decorated with gold ornaments and fine clothing. Chasing after these embodiments of the divine illusory energy of the Lord, he loses his life untimely and falls down into the most horrible hell.

There are two kinds of bees, the bumblebee and the honeybee. The instruction learned from the bumblebee is that a sage should collect only small amounts of food from many different households and thus day after day practice the occupation of mādhuкарī for maintaining his existence. A

sage should also collect the essential truths from all scriptures, be they great or insignificant. The instruction received from the second insect, the honeybee, is that a mendicant sannyāsī should not save the food he begs for the sake of having it later that night or the next day, because if he does so, then just like the greedy honeybee he will be destroyed along with his hoard.

From the elephant the avadhūta brāhmaṇa received the following instruction. Male elephants are tricked by hunters into moving toward captive female elephants, whereupon they fall into the hunters' ditch and are captured. Similarly, the man who becomes attached to the form of woman falls down into the deep well of material life and is destroyed.

The instruction received from the honey thief is that just as he steals the honey collected with great effort by the honeybee, a person in the renounced order of life has the privilege of enjoying before anyone else the food and other valuable things purchased by the hard-earned money of the householders.

The instruction from the deer is that just as he becomes confused upon hearing the song of the hunter's flute and loses his life, so also does any person who becomes attracted to mundane music and song uselessly waste his life.

The instruction learned from the fish is that because he comes under the sway of attachment to the sense of taste, he is caught on the baited fishhook and must die. Similarly, an unintelligent person who is victimized by his insatiable tongue will also end up losing his life.

There was once a prostitute named Piṅgalā in the city of Videha, and from her the avadhūta learned another lesson. One day she dressed herself in very attractive clothing and ornaments and was waiting from sunset until midnight for a customer. She waited in great anticipation, but as the time passed her mind became very uneasy. No man came to see her, and in disgust she finally became renounced, giving up her hankering for the arrival of a suitor. Thereafter she engaged herself in thinking only of the Supreme Lord, Hari, and her mind achieved the supreme platform of peace. The instruction received from her is that hopes for sense gratification are the root cause of all suffering. Therefore, only one who

has given up such hankering can fix himself in meditation upon the Personality of Godhead and achieve transcendental peace.

Text 1:

The saintly brāhmaṇa said: O King, the embodied living entity automatically experiences unhappiness in heaven or hell. Similarly, happiness will also be experienced, even without one's seeking it. Therefore a person of intelligent discrimination does not make any endeavor to obtain such material happiness.

Text 2:

Following the example of the python, one should give up material endeavors and accept for one's maintenance food that comes of its own accord, whether such food be delicious or tasteless, ample or meager.

Text 3:

If at any time food does not come, then a saintly person should fast for many days without making endeavor. He should understand that by God's arrangement he must fast. Thus, following the example of the python, he should remain peaceful and patient.

Text 4:

A saintly person should remain peaceful and materially inactive, maintaining his body without much endeavor. Even though possessed of full sensual, mental and physical strength, a saintly person should not become active for material gain but rather should always remain alert to his actual self-interest.

Text 5:

A saintly sage is happy and pleasing in his external behavior, whereas internally he is most grave and thoughtful. Because his knowledge is immeasurable and unlimited he is never disturbed, and thus in all respects he is like the tranquil waters of the unfathomable and unsurpassable ocean.

Text 6:

During the rainy season the swollen rivers rush into the ocean, and during the dry summer the rivers, now shallow, severely reduce their supply of water; yet the ocean does not swell up during the rainy season, nor does it dry up in the hot summer. In the same way, a saintly devotee

who has accepted the Supreme Personality of Godhead as the goal of his life sometimes will receive by providence great material opulence, and sometimes he will find himself materially destitute. However, such a devotee of the Lord does not rejoice in a flourishing condition, nor is he morose when poverty-stricken.

Text 7:

One who has failed to control his senses immediately feels attraction upon seeing a woman's form, which is created by the illusory energy of the Supreme Lord. Indeed, when the woman speaks with enticing words, smiles coquettishly and moves her body sensuously, his mind is immediately captured, and thus he falls blindly into the darkness of material existence, just as the moth maddened by the fire rushes blindly into its flames.

Text 8:

A foolish person with no intelligent discrimination is immediately aroused at the sight of a lusty woman beautifully decorated with golden ornaments, fine clothing and other cosmetic features. Being eager for sense gratification, such a fool loses all intelligence and is destroyed just like the moth who rushes into the blazing fire.

Text 9:

A saintly person should accept only enough food to keep his body and soul together. He should go from door to door accepting just a little bit of food from each family. Thus he should practice the occupation of the honeybee.

Text 10:

Just as the honeybee takes nectar from all flowers, big and small, an intelligent human being should take the essence from all religious scriptures.

Text 11:

A saintly person should not think, "This food I will keep to eat tonight and this other food I can save for tomorrow." In other words, a saintly person should not store foodstuffs acquired by begging. Rather, he should use his own hands as his plate and eat whatever fits on them. His only storage container should be his belly, and whatever conveniently fits into

his belly should be his stock of food. Thus one should not imitate the greedy honeybee who eagerly collects more and more honey.

Text 12:

A saintly mendicant should not even collect foodstuffs to eat later in the same day or the next day. If he disregards this injunction and like the honeybee collects more and more delicious foodstuffs, that which he has collected will indeed ruin him.

Text 13:

A saintly person should never touch a young girl. In fact, he should not even let his foot touch a wooden doll in the shape of a woman. By bodily contact with a woman he will surely be captured by illusion, just as the elephant is captured by the she-elephant due to his desire to touch her body.

Text 14:

A man possessing intelligent discrimination should not under any circumstances try to exploit the beautiful form of a woman for his sense gratification. Just as an elephant trying to enjoy a she-elephant is killed by other bull elephants also enjoying her company, one trying to enjoy a lady's company can at any moment be killed by her other lovers who are stronger than he.

Text 15:

A greedy person accumulates a large quantity of money with great struggle and pain, but the person who has struggled so much to acquire this wealth is not always allowed to enjoy it himself or give it in charity to others. The greedy man is like the bee who struggles to produce a large quantity of honey, which is then stolen by a man who will enjoy it personally or sell it to others. No matter how carefully one hides his hard-earned wealth or tries to protect it, there are those who are expert in detecting the whereabouts of valuable things, and they will steal it.

Text 16:

Just as a hunter takes away the honey laboriously produced by the honeybees, similarly, saintly mendicants such as brahmacārīs and sannyāsīs are entitled to enjoy the property painstakingly accumulated by householders dedicated to family enjoyment.

Text 17:

A saintly person dwelling in the forest in the renounced order of life should never listen to songs or music promoting material enjoyment. Rather, a saintly person should carefully study the example of the deer, who is bewildered by the sweet music of the hunter's horn and is thus captured and killed.

Text 18:

Becoming attracted to the worldly singing, dancing and musical entertainment of beautiful women, even the great sage R̥ṣyaśṛṅga, the son of a deer, fell totally under their control, just like a pet animal.

Text 19:

Just as a fish, incited by the desire to enjoy his tongue, is fatally trapped on the fisherman's hook, similarly, a foolish person is bewildered by the extremely disturbing urges of the tongue and thus is ruined.

Text 20:

By fasting, learned men quickly bring all of the senses except the tongue under control, because by abstaining from eating such men are afflicted with an increased desire to gratify the sense of taste.

Text 21:

Although one may conquer all of the other senses, as long as the tongue is not conquered it cannot be said that one has controlled his senses. However, if one is able to control the tongue, then one is understood to be in full control of all the senses.

Text 22:

O son of kings, previously in the city of Videha there dwelled a prostitute named Piṅgalā. Now please hear what I have learned from that lady.

Text 23:

Once that prostitute, desiring to bring a lover into her house, stood outside in the doorway at night showing her beautiful form.

Text 24:

O best among men, this prostitute was very anxious to get money, and as she stood on the street at night she studied all the men who were passing by, thinking, “Oh, this one surely has money. I know he can pay the price, and I am sure he would enjoy my company very much.” Thus she thought about all the men on the street.

Texts 25-26:

As the prostitute Piṅgalā stood in the doorway, many men came and went, walking by her house. Her only means of sustenance was prostitution, and therefore she anxiously thought, “Maybe this one who is coming now is very rich... Oh, he is not stopping, but I am sure someone else will come. Surely this man who is coming now will want to pay me for my love, and he will probably give lots of money.” Thus, with vain hope, she remained leaning against the doorway, unable to finish her business and go to sleep. Out of anxiety she would sometimes walk out toward the street, and sometimes she went back into her house. In this way, the midnight hour gradually arrived.

Text 27:

As the night wore on, the prostitute, who intensely desired money, gradually became morose, and her face dried up. Thus being filled with anxiety for money and most disappointed, she began to feel a great detachment from her situation, and happiness arose in her mind.

Text 28:

The prostitute felt disgusted with her material situation and thus became indifferent to it. Indeed, detachment acts like a sword, cutting to pieces the binding network of material hopes and desires. Now please hear from me the song sung by the prostitute in that situation.

Text 29:

O King, just as a human being who is bereft of spiritual knowledge never desires to give up his false sense of proprietorship over many material things, similarly, a person who has not developed detachment never desires to give up the bondage of the material body.

Text 30:

The prostitute Piṅgalā said: Just see how greatly illusioned I am! Because I cannot control my mind, just like a fool I desire lusty pleasure from an insignificant man.

Text 31:

I am such a fool that I have given up the service of that person who, being eternally situated within my heart, is actually most dear to me. That most dear one is the Lord of the universe, who is the bestower of real love and happiness and the source of all prosperity. Although He is in my own heart, I have completely neglected Him. Instead I have ignorantly served insignificant men who can never satisfy my real desires and who have simply brought me unhappiness, fear, anxiety, lamentation and illusion.

Text 32:

Oh, how I have uselessly tortured my own soul! I have sold my body to lusty, greedy men who are themselves objects of pity. Thus practicing the most abominable profession of a prostitute, I hoped to get money and sex pleasure.

Text 33:

This material body is like a house in which I, the soul, am living. The bones forming my spine, ribs, arms and legs are like the beams, crossbeams and pillars of the house, and the whole structure, which is full of stool and urine, is covered by skin, hair and nails. The nine doors leading into this body are constantly excreting foul substances. Besides me, what woman could be so foolish as to devote herself to this material body, thinking that she might find pleasure and love in this contraption?

Text 34:

Certainly in this city of Videha I alone am completely foolish. I neglected the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who awards us everything, even our original spiritual form, and instead I desired to enjoy sense gratification with many men.

Text 35:

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is absolutely the most dear one for all living beings because He is everyone's well-wisher and Lord. He is the Supreme Soul situated in everyone's heart. Therefore I will now pay the



price of complete surrender, and thus purchasing the Lord I will enjoy with Him just like Lakṣmīdevī.

Text 36:

Men provide sense gratification for women, but all these men, and even the demigods in heaven, have a beginning and an end. They are all temporary creations who will be dragged away by time. Therefore how much actual pleasure or happiness could any of them ever give to their wives?

Text 37:

Although I most stubbornly hoped to enjoy the material world, somehow or other detachment has arisen in my heart, and it is making me very happy. Therefore the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu, must be pleased with me. Without even knowing it, I must have performed some activity satisfying to Him.

Text 38:

A person who has developed detachment can give up the bondage of material society, friendship and love, and a person who undergoes great suffering gradually becomes, out of hopelessness, detached and indifferent to the material world. Thus, due to my great suffering, such detachment awoke in my heart; yet how could I have undergone such merciful suffering if I were actually unfortunate? Therefore, I am in fact fortunate and have received the mercy of the Lord. He must somehow or other be pleased with me.

Text 39:

With devotion I accept the great benefit that the Lord has bestowed upon me. Having given up my sinful desires for ordinary sense gratification, I now take shelter of Him, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Text 40:

I am now completely satisfied, and I have full faith in the Lord's mercy. Therefore I will maintain myself with whatever comes of its own accord. I shall enjoy life with only the Lord, because He is the real source of love and happiness.

Text 41:

The intelligence of the living entity is stolen away by activities of sense gratification, and thus he falls into the dark well of material existence. Within that well he is then seized by the deadly serpent of time. Who else but the Supreme Personality of Godhead could save the poor living entity from such a hopeless condition?

Text 42:

When the living entity sees that the entire universe has been seized by the serpent of time, he becomes sober and sane and at that time detaches himself from all material sense gratification. In that condition the living entity is qualified to be his own protector.

Text 43:

The avadhūta said: Thus, her mind completely made up, Piṅgalā cut off all her sinful desires to enjoy sex pleasure with lovers, and she became situated in perfect peace. Then she sat down on her bed.

Text 44:

Material desire is undoubtedly the cause of the greatest unhappiness, and freedom from such desire is the cause of the greatest happiness. Therefore, completely cutting off her desire to enjoy so-called lovers, Piṅgalā very happily went to sleep.