

Book IV

The Tale of Prince Dhruva:¹ The Five-Year-Old Yogī Prodigy

Yoga Blueprint *Prince Dhruva's story illustrates a number of important devotional themes. First, as the Gītā informs us (IX.30–32), there are no gender, caste, class, background, or age disqualifications in the ability to attain success in bhakti: Dhruva was a mere five-year-old child. But he exhibited an unstoppable determination and undeviating focus, which are requisites for success in yoga. Where Dhruva's tale departs from many of the other stories in the Bhāgavata is that his initial motive in his yogic practice was purely materialistic—the “mixed bhakti” discussed in “Bhakti Mixed with Attachment to Dharma and Jñāna.” However, because he was fortunate enough to fix his mind on Viṣṇu in his quest for realizing his ambition, Dhruva's mind was purified of all desires, and he nonetheless attained a divine vision by the grace of Viṣṇu. That Īśvara can award liberation on the yogī who selects Him as a devotional object of meditation is a theme stressed ubiquitously in all devotional traditions,² irrespective, in some cases, of one's initial motivations for undertaking such meditation.*

Dhruva's story also touches on a number of other important themes in yoga: the need for a guru to oversee one's yogic practice is illustrated by the appearance of the famous sage Nārada in the story (see “Satsaṅga and the Guru”). Nārada imparts the mantra to the child and provides him with further instructions on the specifics of practice. Sacred sound as mantra has been foundational to Hinduism from its earliest Vedic origins to the present day. In the devotional traditions, God manifests in the form of sound, that is, the names of Viṣṇu are nondifferent from Viṣṇu in person. Fixing the mind on the mantra, then, not only provides a support upon which the mind can rest in meditative states, but affords the mind an opportunity to bathe in the actual and immediate presence of God in sonic form. As was the case with Dhruva, the mind thereby becomes purified of all impurities.

Another means by which divinity can manifest in the physical world, prakṛti, is through a deity made of some form of matter—usually stone or

metal. This is perhaps the most dominant and ubiquitously visible expression of Hinduism, which, for most Hindus, involves some sort of relationship with a temple and its deities. As discussed in “Arcana (Worship),” this is not considered a limitation of God’s omnipresence—on the contrary, denying God the ability to manifest in such forms would be a limitation of God’s omnipotency (nor is God depleted or minimized thereby, as He personally can manifest in unlimited forms and still maintain a separate presence). Nārada instructs Dhruva to make such a form and worship it according to time and place. The Dhruva story thus exemplifies five distinct experiences of the divine presence: initially in the form of his guru, then through the mantra and the deity, and finally through direct perception, first as an internal vision, then as an external one. Dhruva’s story thus illustrates various forms of divine epiphany.

Other than this, the Dhruva story illustrates the practice of saṁnyama (Yoga Sūtras III.4ff.). By concentrating with the utmost intensity upon an object the mind becomes one with that object and manifests the qualities of that object—a mystic power touched upon in the anubhūti chapter of the Yoga Sūtras (see III.23, 24). Since Dhruva had fixed his mind on Viṣṇu, who can be seen as having the universe as His body, he became as if one with the universe. Therefore, Dhruva’s bodily state of breath restraint was felt by all creatures in the universe owing to this merging of micro and macro realities by intense mental absorption. As the Yoga Sūtras makes clear, however, mystic powers are considered attainments only by those still unenlightened as to the true nature of the self owing to the influence of ignorance. Dhruva’s embarrassment at his foolish initial motives are poignant instructions for those approaching yoga with material goals in mind.

Book IV, Chapter 8

8. Sunīti and Suruci were the two wives of King Uttānapāda. Suruci was dearer to her husband than his other wife, Sunīti, who was the mother of Dhruva.

9. Once, the king lifted Uttama, the son of Suruci, onto his lap, caressing him. But he did not welcome Dhruva, who also wished to climb up.

10. As Dhruva, the son of her co-wife, was trying to do this, the arrogant Suruci enviously said as follows in the hearing of the king: 11. “Dear child, you should not try to climb up on the lap of your father, because, although you are the son of the king, you were not conceived by me in my womb.

12. You are only a child, but nonetheless you should now know that unfortunately you were born from the womb of another woman, not from me. Therefore, you cannot fulfill your wish.

13. If you desire the throne of the king, worship God, the Supreme Being, and attain my womb [in your next life] by His grace.”

14. Maitreya said:

“Dhruva’s father looked on without saying a word. Pierced by the harsh words of his stepmother, Dhruva went weeping to his own mother, breathing with anger, like a snake struck by a stick.

15. Sunīti lifted the boy onto her lap. His upper and lower lips were trembling, and he was short of breath. After hearing [what had happened] at length from the mouths of the other residents of the palace, she became agitated at what had been said by her co-wife.

16. Losing her composure, the woman, her face beautiful as a lotus, lamented with the burning fire of grief, like twine in a fire. Thinking of the words spoken by her co-wife, his mother spoke, her words choked up with tears.

17. Breathing heavily, the woman, who was unable to see the means of overcoming this intrigue, said: ‘Do not wish harm on others, O son. A person who inflicts harm on others himself experiences the same.

18. Suruci spoke the truth: I am an unfortunate woman and you were born in my womb, and reared on my breast. The king, Lord of the earth, is ashamed to keep me, or even think of me as his wife.

19. Accept without hostility whatever your stepmother told you, my son, since it is the truth. If you wish to take a seat like Uttama [on your

father's throne], then you should worship the lotus feet of the lotus-eyed Lord [Viṣṇu].

20. It is Viṣṇu who controls the *guṇas* for the purpose of maintaining the universe. Indeed, Brahmā himself, the unborn one, worshipped His feet. As a result of this, Brahmā assumed the supreme post [in the universe] which is honored by the *yogīs* who have controlled their mind through breath restraints.

21. Likewise, the most honorable Manu, your own grandfather, worshipped Viṣṇu with concentrated mind through abundant sacrifices and charity. He consequently gained worldly and celestial happiness, followed by liberation, which is difficult to attain by other means.

22. Take shelter of Viṣṇu, child: He is affectionate to His devotees. His lotus feet are the path [of liberation] sought for by those desiring liberation. Firm in the performance of your personal duty (*dharma*), fix that Supreme Person in your mind and devote yourself to Him exclusively.

23. I cannot find anyone else to remove your frustration other than Lord Viṣṇu with the lotus-petal eyes. Other people seek the Goddess of Fortune, who holds a lotus in her hand, but She herself seeks Him.”

24. Maitreya said:

“These words spoken by his mother were intended for his welfare. After hearing them, Dhruva controlled his mind with the mind,³ and set out from his father's city.

25. The sage Nārada overheard all this, and understood Dhruva's intentions. Astonished, he touched Dhruva on the head with his hand, which can remove all sins, and spoke: 26. ‘*Aho!* Just see the potency of the warrior caste (*kṣatriyas*)—they cannot bear a slight on their pride! Even though this one is a mere child, he has taken the unjust words of his stepmother to heart.’

27. Nārada said: ‘My son: I still cannot fathom how notions of honor and

dishonor can exist in a young boy like you who is attached to playful games and such things.

28. Even if the distinction [between honor and dishonor] has already made its presence felt in your life, there is no cause for anyone to be frustrated, other than because of ignorance. People have different lots in life according to their personal *karma*.

29. Therefore an intelligent person should be satisfied with just whatever has been bestowed by Providence, O child. One should understand this as the way to reach *Īśvara*.

30. You now wish to gain His favor by following the *yoga* instructed by your mother. In my opinion, God is definitely not solicited easily by people.

31. Even sages do not find the path that leads to Him, despite searching for many births free from attachments through intense *yoga* practices and states of *samādhi*.

32. Therefore you had better give up this useless endeavor of yours. You can attempt it later, when a better occasion presents itself.

33. An embodied being, who is self-content in whatever situation of happiness and distress has been ordained by destiny, attains the state beyond darkness (*tamas*).

34. If one is overwhelmed with happiness for someone with higher qualities and sympathy toward one with lower qualities, and seeks friendship with one with equal qualities, one is never overcome by difficulties.⁴

35. Dhruva replied:

‘This equilibrium of mind⁵ that you have taught out of compassion for people who are afflicted by happiness and distress, good sir, is difficult to realize for the likes of me.

36. I am an uncouth soul and have inherited a fierce warrior nature. Therefore [your instruction] does not take root in my heart, which was

pierced by the arrows of Suruci’s harsh words.

37. I desire to attain a domain that is the highest in the three worlds, one that has not been ruled over even by our grandfathers, nor by anyone else.⁶ Please instruct me about the right path to achieve this goal, O *brāhmaṇa*!

38. Indeed, you, sir, are the son of Lord Brahmā, highest of the celestial beings. Like the sun, you travel about for the welfare of the universe, plucking your *vīṇā* instrument.”⁷

39. Maitreya said:

“When he heard this response, the honorable sage Nārada was impressed. He replied to the boy kindly, with words of truth.

40. Nārada said: “The path of Lord Vāsudeva [Kṛṣṇa] taught by your mother will lead you to the ultimate goal. Worship Vāsudeva with your soul dedicated to Him.

41. For one who desires the best for oneself—namely, righteous duty, prosperity, fulfillment of desire, and liberation [the four goals of life]⁸—there is only one source for these: service to the feet of Hari [Kṛṣṇa].

42. I wish you good fortune in this, my son. Go to Madhu forest, a holy place on the banks of the *Yamunā* river. The presence of Hari is always in that place.

43. After bathing there constantly in the auspicious waters of the *Kāḷindī* (*Yamunā*) river, and performing the rites appropriate for you [given your age], dedicate your time there on a suitable seat, *āsana* [for practicing *yoga*].

44. First, cast off, gradually, the impurities of the mind, senses, and life airs (*prāṇa*) by means of the three forms of breath control (*prāṇāyāma*),⁹ then you should meditate on Viṣṇu, the [Supreme] *guru* with a fixed mind.¹⁰

45. He is always mercifully inclined, and His eyes and face are always benevolent. His nose and eyebrows are gorgeous, and His cheeks are

delightful. He far surpasses the celestials in beauty.

46. He is youthful and His limbs are attractive. His eyes and lower lip are reddish in color. He is the refuge of His devotees, and the worthy shelter for all humanity. He is an ocean of mercy.

47. He is a personal Being. His color is dark blue, He wears a garland of forest flowers, and He is characterized by the *śrīvatsa* tuft of hair.¹¹ He has four arms, each one distinct [in holding] a conch, discus, club, and lotus, respectively.

48. He wears earrings and an ornate headdress, and is endowed with armlets and bracelets. His neck is adorned with the *kaustubha* gem, and He wears a yellow silk garment.

49. Girded with a belt of bells, and wearing shining golden anklets, He is the most beautiful sight of everything that is worth beholding. He is peaceful, and enlivening to the eyes and the mind.

50. One should worship His feet, resplendent with the brilliance of His ruby-like toenails. He is situated in the *ātman*. His seat is the pericarp of the lotus in the heart.¹²

51. He is the ultimate bestower of boons. With concentrated mind, one should constantly contemplate Him smiling and casting affectionate glances.

52. When the mind is meditating on the auspicious form of the Lord in this way, it is quickly immersed in supreme bliss and never ceases to be so.

53. Now hear the highest and most intimate sacred sound recitation, *japa*.¹³ A person reciting this aloud for seven nights will be able to see the mystic beings who travel through the air,¹⁴ O prince: 54. “*Om namo bhagavate Vāsudevāya.*” [Reciting] this *mantra*, one who is wise and understands how to adjust to context, should make a physical form (deity) of the Lord and worship it with various paraphernalia according to time and place.¹⁵

55. One should worship the Lord with pure water, garlands of forest flowers, roots, and fruits, etc., freshly cut sprouts and stems, and with the *tulasī* plant, which is dear to the Lord.¹⁶

56. Alternatively, the sage, who is peaceful, whose mind is fixed and speech controlled, and who subsists by frugally eating the produce of the forest, can worship a physical form of the Lord made from earth or water, *etc.*¹⁷

57. By means of His inconceivable personal powers, the Lord (*Uttama-śloka*¹⁸) will perform deeds in the form of the pure activities of His incarnations. One should contemplate those deeds.

58. These acts of worship to God were practiced by the ancients to the best of their abilities. One should concentrate on the Lord by [chanting] the *mantra* in the heart. The Lord manifests in the form of the *mantra*.

59.–60. The Lord increases the loving feelings [of his devotees]. Being worshipped in this way by devotional acts of worship through body, mind, and words by people worshipping free from guile, He bestows welfare such as *dharma*, *etc.*,¹⁹ to the living entities, according to their desires.

61. Detached from the pleasures of the senses by means of practicing *bhakti yoga* with great seriousness and with mind always absorbed in the Lord, one should worship in this way in order to attain liberation.’

62. Addressed in this way, the prince offered obeisances to Nārada and circumambulated him.²⁰ Then he entered the holy Madhu forest, which is imprinted by the footprints of Hari.

63. As Dhruva was entering the forest to perform penance, Nārada entered the king’s inner palace. He was welcomed with due respect by the king, and after he was comfortably seated the sage addressed him.

64. Nārada said: ‘O king, why are you pining with a withered face? Is there something lacking in your pursuit of righteousness, gratification, and material well-being?’²¹

65. The king replied:

‘O wise Nārada, my son, a boy of five years, along with his mother, has been banished by me. I am a cruel soul who is under the control of a

woman, O great sage.

66. O *brāhmaṇa*, he is without a guardian: may the wolves not have devoured the boy, his lotus face faded, while he was resting, or sleeping.

67. Oh, woe is me! You should consider me to be a cruel-hearted person. I did not welcome Dhruva, who was desiring to climb up onto my lap out of love. I am the lowest of rascals.'

68. Nārada said: 'Don't worry, don't worry! Your son is protected by the gods, O Lord of men. You are unaware of his power: his fame will spread all over the world.

69. He will perform an exceedingly difficult deed even for kings to perform, O master. He will return after a short period of time, O king, and spread your fame far and wide.'"

70. Maitreya said:

"After hearing these words spoken by the celestial sage, the king, Lord of the Earth, ceased paying any attention to the fortunes of the kingdom, and immersed his mind solely in thoughts of his son.

71. Meanwhile, in the forest, Dhruva took a bath, and fasted that night attentively. Then he worshipped the Supreme Being devotedly, according to the instructions of the sage.

72. He passed one month worshipping Hari while eating only wood apple and *jujube* fruits after every three nights and then only as much as was needed to sustain himself.

73. Then, for the second month, as he worshipped the Lord, the boy took for his food withered leaves and grass once every six days.

74. The boy spent the third month with his mind fixed in unbroken concentration (*samādhi*), on the Lord, who is praised in the best of verses, while consuming water only every nine days.

75. He underwent the fourth month meditating on the Lord with his breath under control while subsisting only on air inhaled once every twelve days.

76. When the fifth month arrived, the son of the king stood on one foot as immobile as a pillar while meditating on *Brahman*, with his breath controlled.

77. He withdrew his mind, which is the support of the senses and sense objects, from all objects, and, meditating on the form of *Bhagavān* in his heart, gave up awareness of anything else.

78. Because Dhruva was concentrating on *Īśvara*, the primeval Lord, *Brahman*, who is the support of the entire material manifestation, the three worlds began to tremble.

79. When the boy prince stood on one leg, the earth, being pressed by his toe, inclined on one side, just as a boat, mounted by a tusker elephant, lurches to the left and right at each of its steps.

80. By dint of his undeviating concentration on the Soul of the Universe, Dhruva blocked the pathways of air in the universe as he was meditating.²² At this, the [denizens of the] other realms, along with their rulers, feeling greatly afflicted on account of their own breathing being blocked, approached Hari for help.

81. The celestials said:

‘O Lord, we do not understand the cause of this suppression of air, which is affecting the condition of all beings, moving and non-moving. Therefore please free us from this distress. We have approached You for shelter, since You can bestow shelter.’

82. The Lord, *Śrī Bhagavān*, said: ‘Do not fear! I will restrain the boy from his extreme austerities. Return to your abodes. The son of king Uttānapāda has absorbed himself in Me. It is because of this that your breath has been choked!’”

Book IV, Chapter 9

1. Maitreya said:

“Their fear dispelled by these words, the gods offered their respects to Lord Viṣṇu (Urukrama²³) and set out to their abodes throughout the three worlds. Then, Viṣṇu (the thousand-headed One²⁴) also went to Madhuvan (the sweet forest) on Garuḍa, His eagle carrier,²⁵ with the desire of seeing His servant Dhruva.

2. Viṣṇu, on account of the intensity of Dhruva’s mature *yoga* practice, appeared in the lotus of Dhruva’s heart, effulgent as lightning. Dhruva beheld Him. Then Viṣṇu suddenly disappeared. [Opening his eyes] Dhruva saw Him standing outside in the same position.

3. Seeing that vision, Dhruva was thrown into confusion. He prostrated his body on the ground like a stick²⁶ and offered obeisance. Beholding Lord Viṣṇu, the boy was as if drinking Him with his eyes, kissing Him with his mouth, and embracing Him with his arms.

4. Hari is situated in Dhruva’s heart—as well as in everything—and understood that Dhruva, who was standing with hands folded in supplication, was intensely desiring to speak, but did not know how to do so. Out of compassion, He touched the boy on the cheek with his conch shell, made of *Brahman*.²⁷

5. At this, Dhruva understood the will of the Supreme Being, whose glories are widespread. Absorbed in devotional feelings, he slowly offered to the Lord in praise the divine words that had been bestowed upon him with which to do so. Dhruva’s [future] abode, the polestar, would remain permanent²⁸ [see IV.9.19–20 below].

6. Dhruva said:

‘You, the possessor of all power, have entered within me and, with Your own power, have animated these words of mine from their state of dormancy, as well as my other [faculties]—hands, feet, ears, skin, etc.—and my life airs, too. Obeisance to You, *Bhagavān*, the Supreme Being.

7. O *Bhagavān*, You are the one Supreme Person. Through Your personal powers, You create all the primordial material ingredients of this world,

which consists of the vast *guṇas* and is known as *māyā*.²⁹ You then enter the ever-changing *guṇas* and illuminate them, like fire lighting up an assortment of wood.

8. Lord Brahmā was completely surrendered to You, O Lord, and so perceived the universe by means of the wisdom bestowed by You, like a person awakening from sleep.³⁰ Your lotus feet were the refuge for Brahmā when he was seeking liberation—what learned person would forget them? You are the friend of the downtrodden.

9. You are a wish-fulfilling tree.³¹ You bestow birth, death, and liberation. Certainly those who desire the gratification of this body, which is like a corpse, and worship You for other things [apart from liberation] are people whose intelligence has been stolen by Your illusory power (*māyā*). Such sense pleasure is available even for people in hell.

10. The pleasure [experienced] by embodied beings from meditating on Your lotus feet or from hearing about Your deeds from Your devotees does not exist in *Brahman*, even though that is also a part of Your own majesty, O Lord.³² What to speak, then, [of the lesser pleasure experienced by the residents of the celestial realms], who fall from their celestial air-vehicles,³³ when struck by the sword of Death.

11. Let me always have the association of those great pure-hearted devotees, who are constantly immersed in devotion to You, O unlimited One. With this, I will become intoxicated with drinking the nectar of the narrations about You, and easily cross over the ocean of material existence, brimming with grave dangers.³⁴

12. O Lord with the lotus navel! Your devotees' hearts are enamored by the fragrance of Your lotus feet. Those who associate with them forget about this mortal life, sons, friends, households, wealth, and wives.”

[...]

18. Maitreya said:

“Upon being glorified in this way by the intelligent and noble-hearted Dhruva, the Lord, who is affectionate to His devotees, greeted him kindly, and spoke as follows.

19. The Lord said:

‘I know the resolve in your heart, O prince. You have upheld your vow, so I will grant you that boon [which you desired], even though it is one that is hard to attain.

20. My dear boy, one place that has never been ruled over by anyone else is the polestar, an effulgent unmoving realm. The circuit of the luminaries, stars, constellations, and planets revolves around it.

[...]

25. After this life, you will go to My abode [Vaikuṅṭha³⁵]. It is beyond [the realms] of the sages, and worshipped by all the realms.”

26. Maitreya said:

“Thus, the Lord, who had been worshipped in this way, bestowed His personal abode on Dhruva. Then *Bhagavān*, whose banner bears the emblem of Garuḍa,³⁶ returned to His abode while the boy was watching.

27. Dhruva returned to the city. Although he had fulfilled his wish and attained the fulfillment of his resolve by serving the feet of Viṣṇu, the boy was not very happy in mind.”

28. Vidūra spoke: “How is it that Dhruva considered his own personal goal to be unfulfilled? He understands the goals of human life.³⁷ In just one life, he obtained the supreme abode, which is achieved by worshipping the feet of Hari, the possessor of *māyā*!”

29. Maitreya said:

“Dhruva’s heart was pierced by the arrows of his co-mother’s words. Because of harboring them in his mind, he did not desire liberation from the Lord of liberation. It is because of this that he became distressed.

30. Dhruva said:

‘Even the celibate Sanandana and his brothers³⁸ did not attain the Lord’s abode in one birth through their *samādhi*, whereas I attained the shelter of His feet in six months. But my mind was fixed on some other goal, and so I squandered the opportunity.

31. *Aho!* Just see my materialism. I am so unfortunate: after attaining the lotus feet of the One who can dispel *saṁsāra*, I asked for something that was temporary instead.

[...]

33. I perceived reality through the lens of differences,³⁹ and so, after submitting to the influence of illusion (*daivī-māyā*),⁴⁰ I behaved like someone asleep. Even though there are no differences [in reality], I was tormented in my heart by the scourge of enmity toward my brother.

34. I requested Him for something useless—like requesting medicine for someone already dead. The Soul of the Universe is very hard to please, yet, after having managed to please Him with austerities, I then went and requested Him for *saṁsāra*⁴¹—He who can dispel *saṁsāra*. I am so foolish.

35. Alas! Like a fool who, because of little merit,⁴² requests some meager chaffed rice from someone who is a sovereign, I, because of illusion, requested for my pride [to be upheld] from the Lord who was offering me His own personal abode.”

36. Maitreya said:

“People like yourself, dear Vidūra, who relish the dust of Mukunda’s [Kṛṣṇa’s] lotus feet, aspire to His servitude with no desire for personal benefit. They feel satisfied in their minds with whatever comes along providentially.

37. After hearing that his son was returning, as if coming back from the dead, the king could not believe it: ‘I am so wretched. How has this good fortune come for me?’

38. But, believing the words of Nārada, the celestial sage, the king was overwhelmed with a surge of joy. In an ecstatic mood, he bestowed a very valuable necklace as a gift to the bearer of the news.

39.–40. Eager to see his son, he mounted his chariot decorated with gold and drawn by trusty steeds, and hastily set out from the city to the sound of conches, drums, flutes, and the chanting of Vedic *mantras*. He was surrounded by *brāhmaṇas*, family elders, ministers, and friends.

41. His two queens, Sunīti and Suruci, adorned with golden ornaments, mounted a palanquin along with Uttama, and also set forth.

42. In the vicinity of the small forest, the king hastily got down from his chariot when he saw his son arriving. He quickly approached Dhruva, immersed in loving feelings.

43. The king, whose mind had long been full of regret and who was breathing heavily, embraced his son with his two arms. Dhruva’s bonds of sin had been entirely destroyed by the touch of the lotus feet of the Lord of the Universe.

44. Then, the king, his heart’s burning desire fulfilled, smelled his son’s head repeatedly,⁴³ and bathed him with the cold tears from his eyes.

45. Dhruva, the most righteous of people, was lovingly welcomed and honored with blessings. He offered obeisance to his father’s feet, and then bowed his head to his two mothers.

46. Suruci picked up the boy who was prostrated at her feet, embraced him, and, with a voice stammering with tears, said: ‘May you live long.’

47. Just as water spontaneously [gravitates] to a lower place, all living beings offer respect to one who has pleased the Lord by means of one’s qualities, friendly behavior, and such.

48. Uttama and Dhruva, both trembling with love for one another, shed torrents of tears continuously, their hairs ecstatically standing on end from the contact of each other's bodies.

49. Dhruva's mother, Sunīti, embraced her son, who was dearer to her than even her life airs. Full of joy from the touch of his body, she gave up her grief.

50. O hero Vidūra: the breasts of the mother of the hero were moistened by auspicious tears flowing from her eyes, and milk flowed from them continuously.

51. The people praised that queen: 'Your son had been lost for such a long time. But by good fortune he was regained and has removed your anguish. In the future, he will be the protector of the entire earth.'"

Book IV, Chapter 11

Preamble Dhruva's father eventually retires to the forest at the end of his life to contemplate the ātman, installing Dhruva on the throne. One day, Dhruva's brother, Uttama, is killed by a celestial yakṣa while hunting in the forest. Enraged, Dhruva sets out to the land of the yakṣas and challenges them to battle. A furious battle ensues, during which Dhruva slaughters countless yakṣas. His grandfather Svāyambhuva Manu, seeing this massacre, and feeling compassion for the yakṣas (also known as guhyakas), appears before his grandson.

6. After seeing innocent *guhyakas* (*yakṣas*) being slaughtered by the powerful Dhruva on his amazing chariot, his grandfather Manu approached Dhruva, the son of Uttānapāda, out of compassion, accompanied by sages.

7. Manu said:

"Enough, my child, of this fury. It is sinful and the pathway to *tamas*. Blinded by this, you have abused these innocent, pious people.

8. Such a deed is not befitting our lineage, my dear child, and is forbidden by the righteous. You have undertaken a slaughter of these celestials who have done nothing.

9. Consider, my child: you loved your brother, but, outraged by his murder, many *yakṣas* have been killed by you, simply by dint of their

kinship with just one who committed the crime.

10. To butcher living beings like beasts due to thinking the body to be the self is not the way of the saintly (*sādhus*) who are devoted to Kṛṣṇa.

11. You worshipped Hari, the abode of all beings, by means of understanding that He is the *ātman* within all beings; as a result of this you won that supreme abode of Viṣṇu, which is so difficult to attain.

12. You are that same person who did that then. You are beloved by Hari, and you are also highly esteemed by people. How, then, by performing such a censurable act as this now, are you exemplifying the behavior of the saintly?

13. *Bhagavān*, the *ātman* of everything, is pleased by tolerance, compassion, friendship, and equanimity for all creatures.

14. When *Bhagavān* is pleased, a person is freed from the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*, and, liberated, attains *brahma-nirvāṇa*.

15. Men and women are produced from the five great elements, and from the sexual union between them, further men and women are produced in this world.

16. It is from the agitation of the *guṇas* of the *māyā* of the Supreme *Ātman*, O king, that the creation, maintenance, and withdrawal of the universe comes about.

17. The Supreme *Puruṣa*, who is transcendent to these *guṇas*, is merely the efficient cause of this universe of manifest and unmanifest things. It is because of Him that the universe is set in motion, like iron [filings are set in motion by a magnet].

18. That *Bhagavān* projects his power by means of the activities of the *guṇas* through the power of Time. Therefore He creates, but yet is not the doer, and destroys, but is not the destroyer. The deeds of the Supreme Being are difficult to fathom, indeed.

19. Although He Himself is without end in the form of Time, He causes death, and although He is changeless and without beginning, He initiates everything. He causes the birth of progeny through others who were themselves progeny, and causes death to those who inflict death on others.

20. There are no friends or enemies of the Supreme, for He pervades all creatures equally in the form of death. The host of beings are subject to His ways, as He moves things along, just like particles of dust in the wind.

21. It is that Supreme Lord who apportions the growth and decline in life span of all living beings who are suffering [in *saṁsāra*]. But He Himself is self-sufficient and transcendent to both.

22. Some call Him *karma*, O king, others Nature. Some call Him Time, and still others the desire (*kāma*) of men.

23. Who can know the design of He who manifests through his various powers (*śaktis*) but who is inconceivable and immeasurable, my child? He is the source of one's very own being!

24. These *yakṣas*, the followers of Kuvera, the treasurer of the celestials, were not the killers of your brother. Destiny is the cause of the creation and demise of beings, my dear son!

25. It is He who creates, and He who maintains and destroys this universe, yet He Himself is not propelled by the *guṇas* and *karma*, as He is devoid of all ego.

26. He is the *ātman* of all beings, the controller of all beings, and the source of all beings. Employing His power of *māyā*, He creates, maintains, and destroys all beings.

27. My dear Dhruva! Take refuge in Him with your whole being. He is Destiny. He is death and immortality. He is the refuge of the universe. The secondary creators of the world⁴⁴ bear offerings to Him, just like bulls who are controlled by a rope through the nose.

28. You, at five years of age, were pierced to the heart by the words of your co-mother, your father's other wife. So you left your own mother, went to the forest, worshipped the transcendent Viṣṇu through austerities, and gained a place at the very top of the universe.

29. O child, seek Him within your heart, freed from anger. He is situated there, beyond the *guṇas*, infallible and unique. He is the Supreme *Ātman*, the seer of the *ātman*. It is within Him that this world appears to be independent and unreal.

30. Therefore, offer your supreme *bhakti* to Him, the Supreme, the inner *ātman*, the infinite *Bhagavān*. He is pure bliss and the possessor of all powers. Then you will gradually pierce through the bonds of ignorance, which have manifested in the form of ‘I’ and ‘mine.’

31. O king, may you be blessed! Anger obstructs your ultimate welfare: restrain your anger by means of immersing yourself completely in the sacred teachings, which act just like medicine in counteracting disease.

32. People are terrified by a person overwhelmed with anger. A wise person desiring to attain a state of fearlessness for himself, does not allow himself to fall under the control of anger.

33. You have committed an offense against Kuvera, the brother of Śiva, because, in a state of fury, you have slaughtered innocent *yakṣas* [his followers] thinking they were the murderers of your brother.

34. Pacify Kuvera immediately, O son, by offering him obeisance, respect, and sweet words, lest the wrath of the great souls consume our family dynasty.

35. After admonishing his grandson Dhruva in this manner, Svāyambhuva Manu received respect from him and then departed to his own city, accompanied by the sages.”

Book IV, Chapter 12

1. Maitreya said:

“Upon understanding that Dhruva’s anger had subsided and that he had desisted from the slaughter, Kuvera, the lord of wealth, went to that place, praised by the celestial *cāraṇas*, *yakṣas*, and *kinnaras*. He addressed Dhruva, who was standing there with hands folded in respect.

2. ‘*Bho! Bho!* O faultless warrior prince! You have satisfied me! You have renounced anger on the instruction of your grandfather. It is so hard to relinquish.

3. It is not you who killed the *yakṣas*, nor was it they who killed your brother. It is Time which is actually the controller of the coming and

going of all beings.

4. Like a dreaming person, the false notions of “I” and “you” are meaningless; they arise from contemplating the unreal due to a person’s ignorance. It is because of this that there is bondage and misfortune.

5.–6. Therefore go on your way, Dhruva. May there be good fortune for you. For liberation from *saṁsāra*, worship *Bhagavān*, Viṣṇu, for He is the destroyer of *saṁsāra*. Do this while contemplating the *ātman* within all beings, as it is He who manifests as the *ātman* within all beings. His feet are worthy of worship. He is connected with his powers—those of *māyā* and of the *ātman*—yet He is separate from them.

7. Dear Dhruva! We have heard that you are inseparable from the feet of Viṣṇu, from whose navel the lotus is born. Choose any wish, O king, anything that enters your mind. Be happy and don’t hesitate: you deserve a boon, O son of Uttānapāda.’

8. Urged on by Kuvera, the king of kings, to pick a boon, the high-minded Dhruva, a great *bhāgavata*, chose unwavering remembrance of Hari. It is by this that one easily crosses over *tamas*, which is so difficult to surpass.

9. With a satisfied heart, Kuvera awarded him this boon. Then as Dhruva was watching, he disappeared, and returned to his own city.

10. After this, with sacrificial rites and lavish wealth, Dhruva performed *yajña*, ceremonial rites, for Viṣṇu, who is the bestower of the fruits of ritual. The ritual involved wealth, sacrificial acts, and the celestials.

11. Engaging in intense *bhakti* to the infallible Kṛṣṇa, the *ātman* of everything who is yet separate from everything, Dhruva perceived Him, the Lord, situated in the *ātman* of all beings.⁴⁵

12. The citizens considered Dhruva to be like their father: he was endowed with good character, devoted to the *brāhmaṇas*, compassionate to the less fortunate, and the protector of the codes of *dharma*.

13. He ruled the earth globe for thirty-six thousand years, destroying his pious *karma* through experiencing its fruition, and his impious *karma* through austerity.

14. After ruling the kingdom in this way for many years in a manner

conducive to the first three goals of life,⁴⁶ the great-souled Dhruva, his senses completely controlled, transferred the royal throne to his son in turn.

15. He considered this universe to be a mental construct produced in dream through ignorance (*avidyā*) caused by *māyā*, like the city of the celestial *gandharvas*.⁴⁷

16. After realizing that his body, wives, offspring, and friends; his power, abundant treasury, harem, and beautiful pleasure groves; and the entire earth bound like a girdle with oceans, were all temporal and subject to Time, Dhruva set out for the holy place Badarikāśrama.⁴⁸

17. He bathed in the pure waters of that place, his senses under control. He set up a sitting place (*āsana*), and with his breath restrained and his senses controlled by the mind, fixed his mind on that image of *Bhagavān* made of the gross elements (the *Virāt*).⁴⁹ Then, after meditating on this without interruption, he relinquished that form and entered into the state of *samādhi*, beyond thoughts.⁵⁰

18. Carried away by his *bhakti* to *Bhagavān*, Hari, he was continually overwhelmed with tear drops of ecstasy (*ānanda*) flowing ceaselessly. His body was covered with hairs that stood on end due to bliss, and his heart melted. Freed from the subtle body, he lost awareness of his body.

19. Then Dhruva saw a superb celestial vehicle descending from the heavens, appearing like the full moon illuminating the ten directions.

20. He saw two magnificent celestials standing on that. They had four arms, were blackish in complexion, and their eyes were reddish like the lotus. They were holding clubs, beautifully dressed, and adorned with attractive earrings, armlets, necklaces, and helmets.

21. Upon realizing that they were two servants of Viṣṇu, Dhruva stood up. Out of astonishment, he had forgotten the proper etiquette of welcome; so he offered respects to the two associates of Viṣṇu by reciting the names of Hari, the enemy of Madhu, with hands folded in respect.

22. Sunanda and Nanda, the esteemed servants of the lotus-naveled Viṣṇu, approached Dhruva. His mind was absorbed in Kṛṣṇa, his hands

were folded in respect, and his neck was bent in humility. They addressed him.

23. Sunanda and Nanda said:

‘*Bho, Bho*, O king, may you be blessed! Listen carefully to what we have to say. When you were five years old, you thoroughly satisfied the Lord with your austerities.

24. We two are the associates of the Lord, who is the wielder of the *śārṅga* bow and the Creator of the entire universe. We have been sent here to bring you to *Bhagavān*’s abode.

25. Come! You have earned that abode of Viṣṇu, which is so hard to attain. The celestials cannot attain it; they can only glimpse at it from afar. The moon, sun, stars, constellations, planets, and all celestial bodies circumambulate it on the right.⁵¹

26. This realm has never been attained by any of your forefathers, dear Dhruva. Come now to the supreme abode of Viṣṇu, which is glorified by all the universes.

27. You have earned the right to ascend this divine vehicle. It has been sent by the supreme Lord, who is praised in the best of verses.”

28. Maitreya said:

“After hearing the nectarlike words of those eminent servants from Vaikuṅṭha, Dhruva, beloved of Viṣṇu, took a purifying bath, performed his daily auspicious duties, offered his respects to the two sages, and returned their blessings.

29. After circumambulating that splendid vehicle, Dhruva worshipped it, offered respects to the two Vaikuṅṭha associates again, and assumed a golden form. He then desired to mount up on that carrier.

30. Then Dhruva, the son of Uttānapāda, saw that Death had approached. He put his foot on the head of Death,⁵² and climbed onto

that marvelous aerial structure.

31. At this, the prominent *gandharvas* resounded their *mṛdaṅga*, *paṇava*, and other such drums, sang, and showered down *kusuma* flowers like rain.

32. As he was about to ascend up beyond the celestial realms, Dhruva remembered his mother, Sunīti, and thought: ‘I will give up going to Viṣṇu’s realm, even though it is so hard to attain, and go to my poor mother instead.’

33. Having understood his resolve, those two eminent divine beings showed Dhruva that the queen was already proceeding ahead of them in another vehicle.

34. Here and there along the path of ascent, Dhruva saw the planets one by one. As he was proceeding along, he was bestrewed with divine flowers from the celestials in their vehicles as they glorified him.

35. Traversing beyond the three worlds and even the realm of the sages⁵³ on that celestial vehicle, Dhruva then reached the realm of Viṣṇu beyond all that. He had attained an eternal destination.

36. It was effulgent through its own all-pervading luster—it is on account of that effulgence that these three worlds here shine. Those who are not compassionate to other living entities do not attain that place—only those who constantly perform auspicious deeds attain there.

37. Those dear to Kṛṣṇa, the infallible Lord, are peaceful, equanimous, pure, and affectionate to all beings. Even those who are friends with them easily go to the abode of Viṣṇu.

38. In this way, Dhruva, son of Uttānapāda, who was fully devoted to Kṛṣṇa, became like the crest jewel of the three worlds.

39. The circle of constellations are placed around this realm [the polestar] and revolve around it with great power ceaselessly, like a herd of bulls circle a central post.

40. After seeing the greatness of Dhruva, the eminent sage Nārada sang verses about him at the sacrifice of the Pracetās, while plucking his *vīṇā*.

41. Nārada sang: ‘Despite knowing the means to do so, the followers of the Vedas are not capable of approaching the destination attained by

Dhruva, the son of the chaste Sunīti, through the power of his austerities —what to speak then of kings attaining this?

42. At the age of five years, he departed to the forest with a heart tormented by the piercing words of his father’s co-wife. Following my instructions, he conquered the unconquerable Lord, won over by the qualities of His *bhakta*.

43. When Dhruva was five or six years old, he pleased the Lord of Vaikuṅṭha, and attained His realm. A *kṣatriya* warrior in this world might at best desire to ascend to that realm even after many years, but it was attained by Dhruva in a few days.”

The Tale of King Pṛthu: The Ideal Monarch

Yoga Blueprint *The teachings in this section continue in the vein of normative Yoga philosophy. What is noteworthy in this passage is the preeminent regard and respect that is offered to those sages who teach and exemplify such teachings.*

Book IV, Chapter 22

1. Maitreya said:

“While the citizens were extolling King Pṛthu of great fame, the four boy sages (*Kumāras*), who were as effulgent as the sun, approached that place.

2. The king, along with his entourage, saw those perfected masters (*siddhas*) descending from the sky. They were recognizable by their effulgence, and were purifying the worlds of sin.

3. Pṛthu, son of Venu, along with his entourage and followers, jumped up, trying to regain his breath that had been lost from seeing those sages. They appeared just like the *jīva*, lord of the senses, [captivated by] the sense objects made from the *guṇas*.

4. Feeling overwhelmed by their august presence, the king arranged for them to be worshipped once they had accepted seats and other items used for welcoming guests. With head bowed he was humble and courteous.