

Lord Vishnu

By Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji



Lord Vishnu is the all-pervasive Lord who expands into everything. He is the maintainer of the universe and the complete cosmic creation. He is called Vishnu because He overcomes all.¹ He represents *sattva-guna*, or the mode of goodness by which everything is sustained. He is also called Narayana, which means the shelter, resting place or ultimate goal of all living entities. It also means the one whose abode is the causal waters (Karana Ocean), and one who lives in the hearts of all living beings. It is this *sattva* nature which gives the living beings the tendency to grow toward a higher truth, the light, a more cohesive and intense reality. In this sense, Lord Vishnu is also called Hari, or one who removes the darkness of illusion. This illusion ultimately means the idea that the living beings live separate from, or without connection to, the Lord.

References to the glories of Lord Vishnu are found in such early books as the *Rig-veda*. Many of them are in relation to His form

as Vamanadeva, the dwarf incarnation who begged for only three steps of land from Bali Maharaja and with those three steps covered the whole universe. A few of these verses are as follows:

“The gods be gracious unto us even from the place whence Vishnu strode, through the seven regions of the earth. Through all this strode Vishnu; thrice His foot He planted, and the whole was gathered in His footstep’s dust. Vishnu, the Guardian, He whom none deceiveth, made three steps; thenceforth establishing His high decrees. Look ye on Vishnu’s works, whereby the Friend of Indra, close-allied, hath let His holy ways be

seen. The princes evermore behold that loftiest place where Vishnu is, laid as it were an eye in heaven. This, Vishnu's station most sublime, the singers ever vigilant, lovers of holy song, light up." (*Rig-veda*, 1.22.16-21)

A similar reference to Lord Vishnu's abode and His pastime as Vamanadeva is found in the *Rig-veda* (1.154.1-5). A few of the verses read as follows: "Him whose three places that are filled with sweetness, imperishable joy as it may list them, Who verily alone upholds the threefold, the earth, the heaven, and all living creatures. May I attain to His well-loved mansion where men devoted to the Gods are happy. For there springs, close akin to the Wide-Strider, the well of meath in Vishnu's highest footstep."

Another quote that shows Lord Vishnu's superiority over the demigods reads like so: "Far-shining, widely famed, going Thy wonted way, fed with the oil, be helpful, Mitra-like, to us. So, Vishnu, even the wise must swell Thy song of praise, and he who hath oblations must pay thee solemn rites. He who brings gifts to Him, the Ancient and the Last, to Vishnu who ordains, together with His spouse [Lakshmi], who tells the lofty birth of Him, the Lofty One, shall verily surpass in glory even his peer.. The Sovran Varuna and both the Asvins wait on this the will of Him who guides the Marut host. Vishnu hath power supreme and might that finds the day..."²

Lord Vishnu is often portrayed resting on the huge serpent of Sesha. We see that the thousand heads of Sesha are all turned inward, representing a tranquil mind, and looking toward the Absolute Truth of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu is also seen in the yogic sleep called *yoga-nidra*. The *yoga-nidra* (*yoga* or the root *yuj* meaning to connect or join) is a cosmic sleep wherein the Lord is focused on the Infinite Reality of His own identity.

Lord Vishnu is also seen standing on the whirl of a lotus flower with four hands, which represent the four directions and indicates His absolute power in the four corners of the universe. Each hand holds an item, such as a disc, lotus, conch, and mace. Of the four items, the conch represents the five universal elements. When the conch is blown, it is said to produce a sound related to the original vibration of universal creation. The Lord also blows His conch in calling everyone to turn to the higher reality rather than remaining in the darkness of material existence. This calling is the inner voice which nudges all beings of conscience to seek the Absolute Truth. If man does not heed the call, then the Lord may still use His conch to cut asunder the ego and material attachments of those who do not turn toward the spiritual path.

The disc or *chakra* signifies the universal mind or awareness.³ It rids all darkness wherever it appears, and thus shows the path to higher awareness. The disc is called Sudarshan, the limitless power and light that destroys all forms of ignorance. Thus, Lord Vishnu allows it to cut off the heads of envious demons. It has six spokes and shows the revolving nature of the universe (*maya*) around an unmoving and changeless center. The Sudarshana Chakra, when shown alone, is often viewed as a person with four, eight, or sixteen arms, holding such items as a bow, arrow, trident, noose, and a

poker. These are said to represent the will and power of the Lord to not only create but to also destroy the universe.

The mace represents the cosmic intellect or knowledge. It is called Kaumodaki, meaning that which captivates the mind. It is also associated with time, which destroys all, and is thus also related to Kali, the power of time.⁴ When pictured as a deity, it is viewed as a female with two hands, positioned in respect. The lotus being twirled in His hand shows the revolving or changing nature of the universe.⁵ It also indicates the real purpose of human existence, which the Lord invites all to follow.

The Vaijayanti garland (garland of victory) with five rows of flowers that the Lord wears indicates the five senses and the Lord's illusory power which affect the senses.⁶ Its fragrance represents the subtle elements found within the material manifestation. All this reflects the Lord's mastery of the whole universe, which is created out of the mixing or revolving of the five elements and the universal mind and intellect. The Srivatsa or lock of hair on the Lord's chest, which indicates the Goddess of Fortune, represents the products of the material creation, or the objects of enjoyment for which all living beings seek.⁷ And the gem, called Kaustubha (Treasure of the Ocean) represents the one who enjoys these products. Thus, this world of the enjoyer and the enjoyed is but a piece of decoration for the Lord, a spark of His energy.

Lord Vishnu is also sometimes seen with additional items, such as a bow, called Sharnga. This represents the darker form of false-ego that makes one think he is nothing but the material body, not connected to the Lord. The arrows are the activities of the intellect, which can cut through false-ego when used properly. His fish shaped earrings represent the two processes of knowledge, such as through the *sankhya* (intellectual) and *yoga* (intuitive) methods. His armlets represent the three goals of worldly life, namely *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (economic success) and *kama* (pleasure). Lord Vishnu's crown represents the highest and incomprehensible reality. The yellow cloth that He wears (Pitambara) is said to indicate the *Vedas*. Through the Vedic hymns the divine reality is revealed, just as the Lord's dark color can be seen through the cloth that He wears. And His sacred string, made of three threads, is said to indicate the three letters of the hallowed word AUM.

The various forms of Lord Vishnu are composed of the different arrangements of the four symbols He holds in His four hands. For example, in one form He holds the conch in His lower right hand, the disc in His upper right, the mace in His upper left, and lotus in the lower left. In this form He has the name of Keshava, meaning the Lord with long hair, according to the *Padma Purana* (Book Four, Chapter 79). In other forms, in which case He holds the items in different hands, He has the names that include, Narayana (the universal shelter), Govinda (saver of the Earth and protector of cows), Madhava (Lord of knowledge), Madhusudana (the destroyer of the demon Madhu), Trivikrama (the one who conquered the three planetary systems), Vamana (the dwarf incarnation), Shridhara (the possessor of fortune), Hrishikesha (Lord of the senses), Padmanabha (whose navel produced the universal lotus), Damodara (who is self-restrained), Sankarshana (who reabsorbs), Vasudeva (one who dwells within), Pradyumna (who

has the most wealth), Aniruddha (who no one can oppose), Purushottama (best of all men), Adhoksaja (the expanse of the universe), Nrisimha (the half-man and half-lion form), Achyuta (the inconceivable), Krishna (the dark and all-attractive one), Hari (He who removes obstacles or sorrow), Janardana (He who gives rewards), and Upendra (the brother of Indra). Many other names of Lord Vishnu are found in the *Vishnu-sahasranam*, the Thousand Names of Vishnu, located in the *Anushasan Parva* (149.14-120) of the *Mahabharata*.

Lord Vishnu is also called Nilameghashyama for having a dark blue complexion. This represents a number of things, including pure consciousness, the infinite, and the all-pervading power.

At other times Lord Vishnu is seen resting on the coils of the serpent Shesha, also called Ananta. Sheshanaga is the expansion of Lord Balarama, Lord Krishna's brother, and serves the Lord in this way as the Lord's support and paraphernalia. Shesha has a thousand heads swinging to and fro over the form of Lord Vishnu, creating a shelter and couch for the Lord. Ananta means endless, and Ananta is endlessly singing the praises and glories of the Lord from His thousand hoods without ever reaching the end. His hoods are also supporting the many planetary systems in the cosmic creation that are orbiting throughout the universe above His heads. Ananta also means endless in terms of the endlessness of cosmic time. This is also represented by His thousand hoods as divisions of time. The material worlds are created within the element of time, and are thus sustained by time. During the process of the universal annihilation, time ceases to exist, in which case the material planets are also forced into obliteration.

Lord Shesha is often seen floating on the causal waters of the Garbhodaka Ocean, which exists on the bottom of the universe. Lord Vishnu is thus resting on Sheshanaga as They float on the ocean. At other times, They are viewed floating on the Kshiramudra, or an ocean of white milk. This represents the Prakriti or the ingredients of the unmanifest material nature in its purest form.

Sometimes, Lord Vishnu is also seen riding on his carrier bird, Garuda. This is a half-man and half-eagle bird, whose name means "Wings of Speech." It is described that he is huge and has a fierce expression. His color is that of molten gold. He has the head of an eagle with a red beak and feathered wings, and two arms like a man.⁸ Different divisions of the *Vedas* are parts of the body of Garuda. The sound of his wings reflect the utterances of the Vedic hymns, which can carry a person to another world with the speed of light and power of lightning. Thus, it is also the sound of the *Veda* that carries Lord Vishnu, and which can also transport Him into the hearts and minds of people.

According to the *Puranas*, Garuda is a son of Kashyapa and Vinata, who was a daughter of Daksha.⁹ He is also the younger brother of Aruna. Garuda is known for his dislike of snakes, which he will eat. One reason for this is explained in the *Mahabharata* (1.20-35). Vinata once quarreled with her co-wife, Kadru, who was the mother of the serpent species known as nagas. It was from her that he inherited this hostility toward

snakes. Then Garuda, with his wife Unnati, produced six sons, from whom descended all the bird species that eat snakes.

LORD VISHNU IS AN EXPANSION OF LORD KRISHNA

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Many people think that Lord Vishnu is the source of all other incarnations of God. This is true, but not in the case of Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna is actually the source of Lord Vishnu. When Lord Krishna descends into this world, He appears as Himself and not as an expansion of Lord Vishnu. To verify this, let me present the following details.

It is explained that for the maintenance of the universe Lord Krishna descends in the form of Lord Vishnu, who is His personal plenary expansion and the director of the mode of goodness. Thus, Lord Vishnu is above the influence of the material energy. However, being in the category of *svamsha* (another form of God with unlimited potencies), Vishnu's opulences are almost equal to Lord Krishna's. Yet Krishna is the original person and Vishnu is His personal expansion. This can be compared to one candle lighting the flame of another. The second burns separately in a different position, but its illumination is equal to the original candle. In the same way, Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality, expands Himself into the different forms of Vishnu, who are equally bright and powerful.¹⁰

Furthermore, it is described that outside the boundaries of the unlimited spiritual Vaikuntha planets is the transcendental sky known as the Brahman effulgence. Beyond that is the

Karana or Causal Ocean, which is also spiritual.¹¹ This is what surrounds the innumerable material universes. Lord Vishnu in His form as Karanadakashayi Vishnu, or Maha-Vishnu, lies on the Causal Ocean and creates the universes merely by glancing upon the material nature. Thus, Lord Krishna personally has nothing to do with the material creation, nor does He ever come in touch with the material energy. He remains absorbed and unaffected in Goloka Vrindavan, the highest planet in the spiritual sky. The material energy never comes in contact with the spiritual world, nor even the Causal Ocean, as explained in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (11.22.17):

“In the beginning of creation nature assumes, by the modes of goodness, passion and ignorance, its form as the embodiment of all subtle causes and gross manifestations within the universe. The Supreme Personality of Godhead does not enter the interaction of material manifestation but merely glances upon nature. As the material elements, headed by the *mahat-tattva*, are transformed, they receive their specific potencies from

the glance of the Supreme Lord, and being amalgamated by the power of nature, they create the universal egg.”

Before the *mahat-tattva*, however, there is the *pradhana*, which is the sum total of all material energy in its subtle and undifferentiated stage. Material nature is always existing in its subtle form as the energy of the Lord. Sometimes, under the direction of the Supreme, it manifests its temporary existence in the form of the material cosmos.

In spite of the fact that everything comes from the Supreme Being, He is still aloof from it all. He does not disengage Himself from His eternal pleasure pastimes with His devotees in the spiritual realm. So in the process of creating the material worlds, the Supreme expands Himself into various forms, which are His plenary parts. Krishna is the primeval Lord, the original Personality of Godhead, so He can expand Himself into unlimited forms with all potencies. They are no different from Him, but may exhibit differences in form.

It is explained that Lord Krishna first expands Himself into Baladeva, or Balarama, who is considered Krishna's second body and brother. Balarama assists in Lord Krishna's innumerable spiritual pastimes in both the spiritual and material realms.

Lord Balarama is also Lord Sankarshana, the predominator of the creative energy. He creates and is the shelter of the material and spiritual worlds. By the will of Krishna and the power of the spiritual energy, Lord Balarama creates the spiritual world, which consists of the planet Goloka Vrindavana and the Vaikuntha planets.¹² Lord Balarama especially assists Lord Krishna in the creation of the material worlds. After Balarama has expanded Himself into Lord Maha Sankarshana, He expands Himself into four different forms, including: 1) Karanadakashayi Vishnu [Maha-Vishnu], 2) Garbhodakashayi Vishnu [the expansion in each universe], 3) Kshirodakashayi Vishnu [the Supersoul in each individual], and 4) Sesha, also called Seshanaga. These first four plenary portions assist in the material cosmic manifestation. Sesha is Balarama's form who assists in the Lord's personal service. He is also called Ananta, meaning unlimited, because He assists the Lord in His unlimited variety of pastimes.¹³

All expansions of the Lord begin with Sri Krishna. For His pastimes in one of the highest levels of the spiritual realm, called Dvaraka, Sri Krishna expands Himself into Balarama, who then expands Himself into Pradyumna and Aniruddha. These four (Krishna, Balarama, Pradyumna and Aniruddha) expand into a second quadruple which is present in the unlimited Vaikuntha planets of the spiritual sky. The second quadruple is known as Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. They are changeless, transcendental expansions of the Supreme Lord, Krishna. In this second quadruple, Vasudeva is an expansion of Krishna, and Sankarshana is a representation of Balarama.

In the Vaikuntha sky there is the pure, spiritual creative energy called *Shuddha-sattva* that sustains all of the spiritual planets with the full opulences of knowledge, wealth, power, beauty, etc., all of which pervade the entire spiritual kingdom and are fully

enjoyed by the residents there. This energy is but a display of the creative potencies of Balarama, Maha-Sankarshana. It is also this Sankarshana who is the original cause of the Causal Ocean where Karanodakashayi Vishnu (Maha-Vishnu) sleeps, while breathing out the seeds of innumerable universes. When the cosmic creation is annihilated, all of the materially conditioned, although indestructible, living entities merge back into the body of Maha-Vishnu where they rest until the time of the next creation. So Balarama as Sankarshana is the origin of Maha-Vishnu, from who originates all of the potencies of the material manifestation.¹⁴

So to summarize, for His spiritual pastimes in the Vaikuntha realm, Lord Krishna has four original expansions, namely Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. Maha-Vishnu is an expansion of Sankarshana; Garbhodakashayi Vishnu is an expansion of Pradyumna; and Kshirodakashayi Vishnu is an expansion of Aniruddha.¹⁵

THE FUNCTIONS OF LORD VISHNU

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To begin explaining the purpose and function of these Vishnu expansions, the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (2.6.42) describes that, "Maha-Vishnu (Karanodakashayi Vishnu) is the first incarnation of the Supreme Lord in the process of creating the material worlds. He is the master of eternal time, space, cause and effects, mind, elements, material ego, the modes of nature, senses, the universal form of the Lord (Garbhodakashayi Vishnu) and the sum total of all living beings, both moving and nonmoving."

It is further explained that Maha-Vishnu, who appears in the Karana Ocean and is an incarnation of Lord Sankarshana, becomes the resting place of the *jiva-shakti*.¹⁶ This is the collective energy of the individual spirit souls, the *jivatmas*. "There is one marginal potency, known as the *jiva*. Maha-Sankarshana is the shelter of all *jivas*."¹⁷ It is this Sankarshana who is the original source of all living entities because they are expansions of His marginal potency. Some become conditioned by the material energy while others are under the protection of the spiritual nature.¹⁸

Lord Maha-Vishnu is the source of thousands of *avataras* in His thousands and thousands of subjective portions. He is the creator of countless individual souls. He is also known by the name of Narayana, meaning the shelter of all the individual *jiva* souls. From Him springs forth the vast expanse of water known as the spiritual Causal Ocean wherein the material creation takes place. Maha-Vishnu then reclines in the waters of the Causal Ocean in a state of divine sleep, called *yoga-nidra*. Thus, it is said that the universal creation is but the dream of Maha-Vishnu.¹⁹

Then Maha-Vishnu lies down in the Causal Ocean, also called the Viraja River, which is the border between the spiritual and material worlds.²⁰

Since the water of the Causal Ocean, known as the Karana Ocean, come from the body of Maha-Vishnu, it is completely spiritual. The sacred Ganga (Ganges River) is but a drop from that ocean, which has entered this universe and can purify the fallen souls.²¹

It is Lord Balarama who expands into the great serpent known as Ananta, or Seshanaga. He reposes on the Causal Ocean and serves as the couch upon whom Lord Maha-Vishnu reclines.²² That Ananta-Seshais the devotee incarnation of God who knows nothing but service to Lord Krishna. With His thousands of mouths He always sings the endless glories of Lord Krishna. He also expands Himself to serve as Lord Krishna's paraphernalia, including such items as the umbrella, slippers, bedding, pillow, garments, resting chair, residence, sacred *gayatri* thread, and His throne in the pastimes of Lord Krishna. Thus, He has attained and exhibits the ultimate end of servitude to Lord Krishna.²³

At the time of creation, after the Supreme has been sleeping for some time, the first emanations from the breathing of Lord Maha-Vishnu are the personified *Vedas* who serve Him by waking Him from His mystic sleep. They begin to enthusiastically sing His glories, pastimes, and praises, just as a King is awoken in the morning by poets who recite his heroic deeds.²⁴ This shows the eternal nature of the Vedic literature. They are not merely the writings of men, but they are spiritual vibrations that exist before and after the material creation, and which emanate from the Supreme Lord.

In the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (10.87.50) when the personified *Vedas* are offering their prayers to Lord Narayana [Maha-Vishnu], they relate His all-powerful position. "He is the Lord who eternally watches over this universe, who exists before, during and after its manifestation. He is the master of both the unmanifest material energy and the spirit soul. After sending forth the creation He enters within it, accompanying each living entity. There He creates the material bodies and then remains as their regulator. By surrendering to Him one can escape the embrace of illusion, just as a dreaming person forgets his own body. One who wants liberation from fear should constantly meditate upon Him, Lord Hari, who is always on the platform of perfection and thus never subject to material birth."

Once the Lord is awoken, He casts His glance upon the material energy of *maya*. This glance is how the Supreme impregnates material nature with all the original seeds of the living beings. Thus, the Lord does not personally touch the material energy, but by His functional expansion He places the living entities into the material nature by His glance. Then *maya*, the material nature, becomes agitated.²⁵ This functional expansion of the Lord takes the form as Shiva, known in this activity as Shambhu. It is Shambhu who carries the living entities in the glance of the Lord into the material energy.

So the Supreme Being in His feature as Maha-Vishnu impregnates the material nature by His glance. Through this glance, which is the impregnation of consciousness, and by

the influence of the time element, the innumerable living beings appear.²⁶ The Supreme Being then, out of His own body, sowed the seeds of universal manifestation within the *mahat-tattva*.²⁷ In this way, the Lord, who is the controller of all energies, by His own potency creates eternal time, the fate of all living entities, and their particular nature. At the end of the cosmic creation He again merges them back into Him.²⁸

The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (11.9.16-18) relates that the Lord of the universe, Narayana, Maha-Vishnu, is the worshipable Lord of all beings. With no other assistance, the Lord creates the universe by His own potency, and at the time of annihilation He destroys the universe through His expansion of time. He withdraws the complete universe and all materially conditioned living beings into Himself. In this way, His unlimited Self is the shelter and reservoir of all potencies. The Lord stands alone after the universal annihilation. He is the supreme worshipable object for all beings, such as liberated souls, demigods, and ordinary conditioned souls. He is eternally free from the material energy and constitutes the totality of spiritual bliss, which one can experience by seeing the Lord's spiritual form. Thus the Lord exhibits the full meaning of liberation.

The countless souls that appear within the material energy in the variegated species of life are all spiritual in nature, they are all spiritual beings. However, they can also become deluded by material energy. When they are thus deluded, they hanker for material activities and attractions. In order to accommodate this, the Supreme provides this material world as a playground in which they can work out their material desires. This means that regardless of species, whether it is Lord Brahma, or humans, animals, birds, or even tiny insects, material nature is the mother and the Supreme Lord is the seed-giving, universal Father.

After agitating material nature into three qualities, which are the modes of nature in the form of passion, goodness and ignorance, they become active and material nature begins to give birth to the total material energy known as the *hiranya-mahat-tattva*. This is the sum total of cosmic intelligence. Thus, material nature becomes agitated by the destinations of the conditioned souls as determined by the influence of the modes of nature.²⁹ Simply by the glance of Maha-Vishnu consciousness is created, which is known as the *mahat-tattva*. The predominating Deity of the *mahat-tattva* is Lord Vasudeva, another expansion of Lord Krishna. This explains how the material energy is like the mother of the living beings while the Lord is the Supreme Father of everyone. Just as a woman cannot give birth without the contact of a man, or at least his seed, so material nature cannot create without the contact of the Supreme Being.

So first the total material energy is manifest, and from this arises the three types of egotism, which are the original sources of all the demigods [the minor controlling deities], the senses, and material elements. By combining the different elements, the Supreme Lord creates all of the unlimited universes. Once the material elements have been manifested, and the full potential for creating the universes has been established, the innumerable universes begin to emanate from the pores of the body of Maha-Vishnu, and from His exhalations. They appear just like atomic particles that float in sunshine and pass through a screen. When Maha-Vishnu inhales at the time of the

universal annihilation, they return to His body. In this way, Maha-Vishnu is the Supersoul of all the universes.³⁰

Brahma, the demigods, and each universe remain alive for the duration of one of His exhalations.³¹ However, there is no limit to the exhalations of Maha-Vishnu.³²

Garbhodakashayi Vishnu, who is known within the universe as Hiranyagarbha and Antaryami, the Supersoul, is glorified in the Vedic hymns. He is the master of each and every universe and shelter of the external or material energy. However, being transcendental, He is completely beyond the touch of the external energy.

Next is the third expansion of Vishnu, called Kshirodakashayi Vishnu, who is the incarnation of the quality of goodness. He is the universal form of the Lord and expands Himself as the Supersoul within every living entity. He is known as Kshirodakashayi Vishnu because He lies on the ocean of milk (*kshira*) on the island of Svetadvipa. These are the three expansions of Lord Vishnu who oversee and make the creation of the material worlds possible.³³

Before the creation within the universe takes place and after the Lord enters the universe, there is a period of non-activity for one thousand celestial years. All of the living entities that have been injected into the *material-tattva* are divided among all the universes with each incarnation of Garbhodakashayi Vishnu, and all of them are as if dormant in the Lord until the birth of Lord Brahma. From Brahma all other demigods and living entities are born.³⁴

Once all of the universes are created, which are unlimited, Maha-Vishnu expands Himself into unlimited forms and enters each universe as Garbhodakashayi Vishnu. Once He is in each universe, He sees that there is no place to reside. Then, after some consideration, He fills half of the universe with water from His own perspiration.³⁵

On that water He creates his own residence as an expansion of Vaikuntha and rests in the waters on the bed of the great serpent, Lord Ananta, Seshanaga.³⁶ Although He appears to be in slumber, enjoying transcendental bliss in his internal potency, His eyes are slightly open. When He is ready to begin the act of creation, a golden lotus springs from his navel that becomes the birthplace of Lord Brahma. Within the stem of that lotus are the fourteen planetary systems.³⁷ Then Lord Brahma is manifested as described in the previous chapter.

Not only do the creations and annihilations of the cosmos go on continually, but the maintenance of the universe also takes constant supervision. It is explained that as long as the Supreme Being as Maha-Vishnu continues to glance upon nature, the material world continues to exist. Thus, the variegated flow of universal creation perpetually manifests through procreation.³⁸ So, we can see that time and nature have no power to act independently, but are under the supervision of the Supreme.

However, it is also described that it is not only the material nature that is maintained, everyone in it is also given the ability to act and function through the power of the Supreme in His form as the Supersoul. He creates the entire variegated universe and then enters into it as the Supersoul. Through this means He provides the life force and consciousness of everyone, and, thus, maintains the creation. As Sri Krishna further explains, "As the mighty wind, blowing everywhere, always rests in ethereal space, know that in the same manner all beings rest in Me."³⁹ As the Supersoul, He also enters into each planet, and by His energy they maintain their orbits.⁴⁰ Thus, the Lord's energy enters each planet, every living being, and even each atom, by which everything is appropriately manifested and maintained. Without this, everything would revert back to chaos and deterioration.

Another way that the Lord maintains the universe is by personally appearing within it, or by manifesting His plenary expansions. The scriptures proclaim that Lord Krishna descends to take away the burden of the earth. However, it is Krishna's expansion as Lord Vishnu who primarily engages in maintaining this universe. It is Lord Vishnu who makes the adjustments for the proper administration of the cosmic creation. When Lord Krishna personally appears, His primary mission is to simply display His transcendental pastimes and attract the conditioned souls for going back to the spiritual domain. However, since Lord Krishna is the source of all incarnations of the Supreme, all other incarnations and expansions combine together within Him when He descends. In this way, all other *lila* or pastime incarnations, the *yuga-avatars*, the *manvantara* incarnations, and as many other incarnations as there are, even Lord Vishnu, all descend in the body of Sri Krishna when He appears. Thus, He is the complete Supreme Personality and can do whatever He likes to exhibit His power and maintain the universe when He descends.⁴¹

The Supreme Being also sets up the universal demigods to continue overseeing the maintenance of the universe. For example, it is explained that Indra, after receiving benediction from the Supreme Lord, maintains the living beings by pouring sufficient rains all over the planets. Furthermore, in every *yuga*, the Supreme Lord assumes the form of Siddhas such as Sanaka-kumara, to preach transcendental knowledge. He assumes the form of great saintly persons such as Yajnavalkya to teach the way of karma. He assumes the form of great souls, such as Dattatreya, to teach the system of mystic yoga. In the form of Prajapati Marici, the Supreme creates progeny; becoming the king, He kills rogues and thieves; and in the form of time, He annihilates everything. All of the different qualities of material existence are aspects and a display of the energy of the Supreme Absolute Truth.⁴²

So because of the benediction and power given by the Supreme to the demigods, they can provide the living beings with all necessities. However, Lord Krishna explains in the *Bhagavad-gita* (3.14-15) that all living entities subsist on food grains, which are produced from rains, which is manifest through the performance of spiritual activities prescribed in the spiritual writings of the Vedic scripture and the teachings of the Lord and great sages. Consequently, the all-pervading Transcendence is eternally situated in acts of sacrifice.

This is all a part of the process of how the Lord and His expansions of Vishnu maintain the world. As mankind engages in acts of sacrifice or spirituality, which simply means the worship of the Supreme, the Lord and the demigods are automatically satisfied to supply everyone with all necessities of life. In this way, there can be proper cooperation between man, nature and God so that everyone can be peaceful and content with the facilities for living in this world.

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