

Srimad Bhagavatam Canto 1 Chapter 8: Prayers of Queen Kunti

11 September 2026



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With folded hands, Queen Kunti stands before Sri Krishna as He prepares to leave for Dwaraka and pours out one of the most beloved prayers in all of scripture.

Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya.

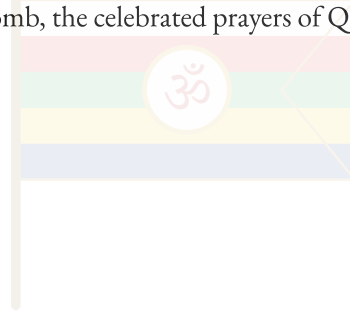
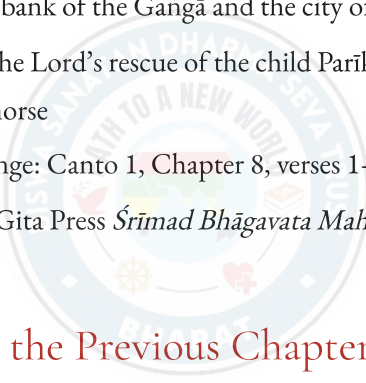
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Welcome to *Srimad Bhagavatam Wisdom*, a devotional journey through the sacred histories and teachings of the Srimad Bhagavat Mahapurana. The great war is over. The field of Kurukshetra is silent, the funeral rites are done, and the surviving family gathers by the holy Ganga with hearts worn thin by grief. Into this weariness the eighth chapter of the First Canto brings two of the most tender moments in the whole scripture: the saving of a child still unborn, and the prayer of a widowed queen who asks not for comfort but for calamity — so that she may never forget the Lord. Here devotion is shown not in triumph but in sorrow, and it shines all the brighter for it.

Chapter Information

- Scripture: Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa
- Canto: 1 (Book One)
- Chapter: 8 (Discourse 8)
- Chapter title: Queen Kuntī's Prayers and Parīkṣit's Rescue in the Womb
- Principal speakers: the blessed Sūta, Ugrasravā (narrator); Queen Kuntī (Pṛthā); Uttarā; King Yudhiṣṭhira
- Principal listener: the sages of Naimisaranya, headed by Śaunaka
- Main setting: the bank of the Gaṅgā and the city of Hastināpura, after the Mahābhārata war
- Central subject: the Lord's rescue of the child Parīkṣit in the womb, the celebrated prayers of Queen Kuntī, and King Yudhiṣṭhira's remorse
- Principal verse range: Canto 1, Chapter 8, verses 1–52
- Primary edition: Gita Press *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*



Context from the Previous Chapter

In the seventh discourse, the anguish of the war reached its cruel climax. Aśvatthāmā, son of Droṇa, had slaughtered the five sleeping sons of Draupadī and was dragged back bound to the camp. Rather than let him be killed, Arjuna — reading the mind of Śrī Kṛṣṇa — shaved the fallen Brāhmaṇa's head, stripped him of his gem, and drove him out in disgrace. The grief-stricken Pāṇḍavas then performed the funeral rites for their departed kinsmen. It is from these cremation grounds and this heavy sorrow that the eighth chapter opens.

Oblations on the Bank of the Ganga

Placing the widowed ladies at the head of the procession and accompanied by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the family made their way to the bank of the Gaṅgā to offer water to their departed kinsmen, who longed for such oblations. Having offered the water and wept bitterly for the dead, they immersed themselves once more in the sacred river — its waters made holier still by the touch of the dust of Śrī Hari's lotus-feet.



Placing the widowed ladies at the head and accompanied by Sri Krishna, the family offer water to their departed kinsmen on the bank of the sacred Ganga.

There, seated together in their grief, were King Yudhiṣṭhira and his younger brothers, the blind king Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Gāndhārī stricken by the loss of her hundred sons, Kuntī, and Draupadī — all of them plunged in sorrow at the loss of their own. Showing how every created being is subject to a death that cannot be averted, Lord Mādhava and the sages, Dhaumya and the others, gently consoled the mourners. Then, having restored to Yudhiṣṭhira the kingdom that gamblers had usurped, and having helped him perform three Aśvamedha sacrifices with the finest materials, Śrī Kṛṣṇa caused the king's sacred renown to spread in every direction.

Krishna Prepares to Leave, and Uttara Runs for Refuge

His work of comforting done, the Lord took leave of the sons of Pāṇḍu and paid His respects to holy Brāhmaṇas such as Dwaipāyana (Vyāsa), who returned His homage. Then He mounted His chariot and was about to set out for Dwārakā, with Sātyaki and Uddhava beside Him, when — O Śaunaka — He caught sight of Uttarā, the young widow of Abhimanyu, running toward Him, overcome with fear.



The pregnant queen Uttara, widow of Abhimanyu, runs to Sri Krishna in terror, begging Him to spare the child in her womb (verse 10).

उत्तरोवाच

पाहि पाहि महायोगिन् देवदेव जगत्पते ।

नान्यं त्वदभयं पश्ये यत्र मृत्युः परस्परम् ॥ ९ ॥

uttarovāca pāhi pāhi mahā-yogin deva-deva jagat-pate / nānyaṁ tvad abhayaṁ paśye yatra mṛtyuḥ parasparam ॥ 9 ॥

Meaning: Uttarā said: Protect me, protect me, O great Yogī! O God of gods, O Lord of the universe! I see no refuge from fear other than You, in a world where every creature is death to another. (Canto 1, Chapter 8, verse 9)

अभिद्रवति मामीश शरस्तप्तायसो विभो ।

कामं दहतु मां नाथ मा मे गर्भो निपात्यताम् ॥ १० ॥

abhidravati mām īśa śaras taptāyaso vibho / kāmam dahatu mām nātha mā me garbho nipātyatām ॥ 10 ॥

Meaning: A dart of burning steel is rushing toward me, O almighty Lord! Let it burn me if it must, O master — but let it not destroy the child in my womb. (Canto 1, Chapter 8, verse 10)

The Weapon of Brahma and the Shelter of the Discus

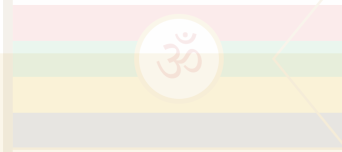
Hearing her words, the Lord, who is ever fond of His devotees, understood at once that this was the missile discharged by Aśvatthāmā to exterminate the line of the Pāṇḍavas. That very instant, O chief of the sages, the sons of Pāṇḍu also saw five blazing shafts speeding toward them, and each took up his own weapon. Perceiving the danger to His kinsmen —

who thought of none but Him — the almighty Lord protected them with His own discus, the Sudarśana. And Śrī Hari, the Master of Yoga, the very Self dwelling within the heart of every living being, enveloped the womb of Uttarā by His own Māyā, His divine power, in order to preserve the line of Kuru.



Sri Krishna, the indwelling Self of all beings, shields the womb of Uttarā by His own divine power, preserving the line of Kuru (verse 14).

अन्तःस्थः सर्वभूतानामात्मा योगेश्वरो हरिः ।
स्वमाययावृणोद्गर्भं वैराट्याः कुरुतन्तवे ॥ १४ ॥



antaḥsthaḥ sarva-bhūtānām ātmā yogeśvaro hariḥ । sva-māyayāvṛṇod garbhaṁ vairāṭyāḥ kuru-tantave ॥ 14 ॥

Meaning: Śrī Hari, the Master of Yoga, who dwells within all beings as their very Self, covered the womb of Uttarā, daughter of King Virāṭa, with His own divine potency, in order to continue the dynasty of Kuru. (Canto 1, Chapter 8, verse 14)

Though the weapon presided over by Brahmā is unfailing and irresistible, it was quenched the moment it met the effulgence of the Lord. This, the narrator tells us, should be no cause for wonder in the case of Lord Acyuta, the infallible one, who though Himself unborn creates, maintains, and dissolves the whole universe by His deluding potency. The child so protected in the womb would one day be born as Emperor Parīkṣit — the very king who, at the far end of this Canto, receives the Bhāgavata itself.

The Prayers of Queen Kunti

When Śrī Kṛṣṇa was at last about to depart, the virtuous Pṛthā — Queen Kuntī — together with her sons who had just escaped the fire of the missile, and her daughter-in-law Draupadī, came before Him. And Kuntī, mother of the Pāṇḍavas, aunt of the Lord, lifted her voice in a prayer that devotees have cherished ever since.

She began not with a request but with surrender. Bowing to Him as the Prime Person who transcends Nature and dwells within and without all beings, she confessed her own smallness before His greatness.

कुन्त्युवाच

नमस्ये पुरुषं त्वाद्यमीश्वरं प्रकृतेः परम् ।

अलक्ष्यं सर्वभूतानामन्तर्बहिरवस्थितम् ॥ १८ ॥

kunty uvāca namasye puruṣaṁ tvādyam īśvaraṁ prakṛteḥ param । alakṣyaṁ sarva-bhūtānām antar bahir avasthītam ॥ 18
//

Meaning: Queen Kuntī said: I bow to You, the primeval Person, the Supreme Lord beyond Nature, invisible, existing within and without all created beings. (Canto 1, Chapter 8, verse 18)

You, she said, are screened by the curtain of Māyā and cannot be recognized by a person of dull vision — even as an actor in costume is not known for who he truly is. How, then, can we simple women perceive You, who have appeared in our midst to awaken devotion in the hearts of the pure Paramahansas, the great sages of spotless mind?

Obeisance to the Lotus-Marked Lord

Then Kuntī bowed again and again to the Lord in His most beloved forms — Śrī Kṛṣṇa, son of Vasudeva, the delight of Devakī, the foster-child of the cowherd Nanda, Lord Govinda. She saluted Him whose every feature recalls the lotus: navel, garland, eyes, and feet.



Queen Kuntī offers obeisance to the Lord whose navel, garland, eyes, and feet all resemble the lotus (verse 22).

नमः पङ्कजनाभाय नमः पङ्कजमालिने ।

नमः पङ्कजनेत्राय नमस्ते पङ्कजाङ्घ्रये ॥ २२ ॥

namaḥ paṅkaja-nābhāya namaḥ paṅkaja-māline । namaḥ paṅkaja-netrāya namas te paṅkajāṅghraye ॥ 22 ॥

Meaning: Obeisance to You whose navel bears the lotus; obeisance to You who wear the wreath of lotuses; obeisance to You of lotus eyes; obeisance to You whose feet are like the lotus. (Canto 1, Chapter 8, verse 22)

Just as He had delivered Devakī, His own mother, long imprisoned by the wicked Kaṁsa, so, Kuntī recalled, had He again and again saved her and her sons from a long chain of calamities — from poison, from a great fire, from man-eating demons, from the assembly of wicked men, from the perils of exile in the forest, from the weapons of many great warriors in every battle, and now from the missile of Aśvatthāmā.

The Prayer for Adversity

Then came the words for which this prayer is most loved of all. Rather than beg for an end to her troubles, Queen Kuntī asked for their continuance — for one priceless reason.



Kuntī prays that calamities may come again and again, for in adversity she is blessed with the sight of the Lord that ends all rebirth (verse 25).

विपदः सन्तु ताः शश्वत्तत्र तत्र जगद्गुरो ।

भवतो दर्शनं यत्स्यादपुनर्भवदर्शनम् ॥ २५ ॥

vīpadaḥ santu tāḥ śaśvat tatra tatra jagad-guro । bhavato darśanam yat syād apunar bhava-darśanam ॥ 25 ॥

Meaning: May those calamities come again and again, at every step, O Teacher of the universe — for in adversity there comes the sight of You, and to see You is to see the end of all rebirth. (Canto 1, Chapter 8, verse 25)

For, she explained, a person swollen with pride of high birth, power, learning, and wealth cannot even bring himself to call upon the Lord's name; God reveals Himself only to the one who has nothing to call his own. He is the wealth of those who own nothing, beyond the play of the three modes of Nature, content within His own Self, perfectly at peace, the Lord of final liberation.

The Mystery of the Descending Lord

Kuntī then meditated aloud on the great mystery of who He is. She believed Him to be Kāla, the Time-Spirit, the almighty ruler without beginning or end, moving alike among all creatures, and yet the very occasion by which they contend with one another. None can know what He intends when He acts among men; to Him no one is dear and no one is hateful, though people in their diversity imagine otherwise. He is the Soul of the universe and the universe itself, without birth and without action — and yet He takes birth and acts, among gods and men and beasts and sages, as pure sport.

She lingered, with a mother's wonder, on the sweetest memory of all: how, when the child Kṛṣṇa had angered His foster-mother Yaśodā and she took up a cord to bind Him, He stood there with His face cast down and His eyes rolling in fear, the kohl dissolving in His tears. That He of whom Fear itself is afraid should stand trembling before a cowherd woman — this, Kuntī said, bewilders the mind. Some say He was born in the noble house of Yadu to enhance its glory, as a sandal tree lends its fragrance to the Malaya hills; others, that He was born of Devakī to protect the world and destroy the enemies of the gods; still others, that He descended at Brahmā's prayer to relieve the earth of her burden. And some maintain He comes simply to perform deeds worth hearing and singing by those who are scorched by ignorance, desire, and selfish action — which is why His devotees ever listen to, sing, and contemplate His stories, and so behold before long His lotus-feet that end the stream of births and deaths.

The Fear of Being Left Behind

Even in the midst of this wonder, Kuntī could not keep back a plainer fear. Though You have completed every task, she said, do You leave us today, when we have no other refuge and every king now stands against us? Should Your glance no longer rest upon us, our name and the honor of the Pāṇḍavas and the Yadus would fade at once, just as a body's glow departs the instant the living spirit leaves it. She looked upon their own kingdom and saw the proof of what she meant: it was beautiful only because His feet had walked upon it, its fields heavy with grain, its rivers running full, its hills rich in ore, and its seas full of treasure — every one of these blessings tracing back to a single glance from Him (verses 37–40).

Sever the Bond of Affection

At last Kuntī turned from praise to petition — but her petition, too, was for God alone. She asked the Lord, who is the ruler, the Soul, and the very substance of the universe, to cut asunder the strong cord of affection that bound her to her own people, the Pāṇḍavas and the Vṛṣṇis. In place of that binding love she asked for one unbroken flow of love toward

Him.

त्वयि मेऽनन्यविषया मतिर्मधुपतेऽसकृत् ।
रतिमुद्वहतादद्धा गङ्गेवौघमुदन्वति ॥ ४२ ॥

tvayi me 'nanya-viṣayā matir madhu-pate 'sakṛt । ratim udvahatād addhā gaṅgevaugham udanvati ॥ 42 ॥

Meaning: O Lord of the Madhus, let my thought, fixed on You alone, flow constantly toward You in loving devotion — even as the Gaṅgā pours her waters ceaselessly into the sea. (Canto 1, Chapter 8, verse 42)

Then, in her final words of praise, she bowed to Him under many names at once — as Kṛṣṇa's own comrade and the pride of the Vṛṣṇi line, as the blazing power that consumes proud dynasties weighing down the earth, as Govinda who lifts the sorrow of the cows, the Brāhmaṇas and the gods, and as the Lord of Yoga who teaches every world.

The Lord's Smile and Yudhishtira's Grief

When Pṛthā had thus extolled in sweet words the boundless glory of the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha, He gently smiled, as if enchanting her by His Māyā. Saying “So be it,” Śrī Kṛṣṇa took His leave and entered the city of Hastināpura once more; and after bidding farewell to the other ladies as well, He was about to set out for Dwārakā when King Yudhiṣṭhira, out of love, detained Him.



King Yudhishtira, unconsoled even by Vyasa and by Sri Krishna, gives way to sorrow over the kinsmen slain in the war.

For the king could not be consoled. Though Vyāsa and the other sages who understood the ways of Providence, and even Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, comforted him with sacred legends, Yudhiṣṭhira brooded over the death of his kinsmen with a bewildered mind. Overwhelmed by affection and confusion, he lamented aloud: “Look at this ignorance rooted in my heart! Evil-minded as I am, I brought about the destruction of whole armies for the sake of this body, which is only food

for jackals and dogs. There can be no redemption for me, an enemy of children, Brāhmaṇas, and my own kin. The scriptures say that a king who destroys enemies in a righteous war commits no sin — yet that saving clause gives my heart no peace.” The wrong done to the widowed women, he grieved, could never be washed away by any householder’s sacrifice.

Important Verses

Kuntī’s crowning prayer gathers the whole chapter into a single verse of surrender:

श्रीकृष्ण कृष्णसख वृष्णयुषभावनिधुग्
राजन्यवंशदहनानपवर्गवीर्य ।
गोविन्द गोद्विजसुरार्तिहरावतार
योगेश्वराखिलगुरो भगवन्नमस्ते ॥ ४३ ॥

*śrī-kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa-sakha vṛṣṇy-ṛṣabhāvani-dhruḡ rājanya-vaṁśa-dahanānapavarga-vīrya । govinda go-dvija-surārti-harāvatāra
yogeśvarākhila-guro bhagavan namas te ॥ 43 ॥*

Meaning: O Śrī Kṛṣṇa, friend of Arjuna, foremost of the Vṛṣṇis, the fire that consumes the royal houses that burden the earth, whose prowess never fails; O Govinda, whose descent removes the distress of the cows, the Brāhmaṇas, and the gods; O Master of Yoga, Teacher of all the worlds, Supreme Lord — obeisance to You. (Canto 1, Chapter 8, verse 43)

And the chapter closes on Yudhiṣṭhira’s insight into the weight of violence:

यथा पङ्केन पङ्काम्भः सुरया वा सुराकृतम् ।
भूतहत्यां तथैवैकां न यज्ञैर्माष्टुमर्हति ॥ ५२ ॥

yathā paṅkena paṅkāmbhaḥ surayā vā surākṛtam । bhūta-hatyāṁ tathaiṣaikaṁ na yajñair mārṣṭum arhati ॥ 52 ॥

Meaning: Just as muddy water cannot be cleared by more mud, nor the taint of wine washed away by more wine, so the killing of even a single living being cannot be atoned for by any number of sacrifices. (Canto 1, Chapter 8, verse 52)

Principal Teachings

1. The Lord shelters His devotees from within. When Uttarā cried out, Śrī Hari — the Self seated in every heart — enveloped her womb with His own power (verse 14). Divine protection is not distant; it works from the innermost center of our being.
2. Adversity can be a hidden mercy. Kuntī’s most famous prayer welcomes calamity, for in trouble the proud heart is emptied and turns to God, and His sight ends all rebirth (verse 25). Difficulty, received rightly, becomes a doorway to remembrance.

3. God belongs to those who have nothing to call their own. The one swollen with birth, power, learning, and wealth cannot even utter His name; He is “the wealth of those who own nothing.” Humility, not possession, opens the way to Him.

4. Devotion asks for love, not relief. Kuntī prays that her attachment to her own people be cut, and her love flow toward the Lord alone like the Gaṅgā into the sea (verse 42). True prayer seeks God Himself above every other gift.

5. Even the great may drown in grief. Yudhiṣṭhira, the very son of Dharma, is overwhelmed by remorse and cannot be consoled even by Kṛṣṇa (verse 46). The chapter honestly shows that sorrow visits the noble too — and sets the stage for the healing teachings to come.

6. The Lord’s descent is His sweet sport. Unborn and actionless, He yet takes birth and acts for the good of the world — protecting the devoted, relieving the earth, and leaving behind stories that purify all who hear them.

A Devotional Reflection

There is a startling honesty in this chapter. It does not pretend that faith removes all pain. The war’s victors sit weeping by the river; a mother trembles for her unborn grandchild; a righteous king cannot forgive himself. And yet, threaded through all this sorrow, is a quieter and stronger current — the current of turning toward God in the midst of loss. Kuntī does not ask the Lord to make her comfortable. She asks Him to keep her close, even if closeness must come wrapped in hardship. That is a difficult prayer, and an honest one. Most of us pray for our troubles to pass; she prayed that her heart might never again grow so full and so proud that it forgets the One who saves. When we sit with this chapter, we are gently invited to loosen our grip on the many things we clutch, and to let our love run, like a river to the sea, toward the Lord who is nearer to us than our own fear.

A Daily Devotional Practice

Today, take one worry you are carrying — a fear for someone you love, or a regret you cannot undo — and, like Uttarā and like Kuntī, place it directly in the Lord’s hands rather than trying to carry it alone. Speak a simple prayer: “I see no refuge other than You.” Then read or recite Queen Kuntī’s words slowly, and let one line rest in your heart through the day. Let the practice be small and sincere. That is enough to begin.

Conclusion

So ends the eighth discourse of the Śrīmad Bhāgavata, which the God-realized call the Paramahansa-Saṁhitā. In this chapter, Srimad Bhagavatam Canto 1 Chapter 8, we have seen the grieving family offer water to their dead upon the bank of the Gaṅgā; we have seen the pregnant Uttarā run to Śrī Kṛṣṇa in terror, and the Lord shield the child in her womb from the unfailing weapon of Brahmā, preserving the line of Kuru in the future Emperor Parīkṣit. We have heard Queen Kuntī pour out her matchless prayer — welcoming adversity, asking for love rather than relief, and begging that her heart flow toward the Lord like the Gaṅgā into the sea. And we have watched the noble Yudhiṣṭhira give way to a grief that

even Kṛṣṇa's comfort could not lift, a sorrow that opens the door to the great teachings of the coming chapters. Devotion here wears the face of loss, and is only made more beautiful by it. May we learn, from this widowed queen, to hold the Lord more tightly than we hold our own.

May the divine wisdom of Srimad Bhagavatam awaken pure devotion within our hearts.

Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya.

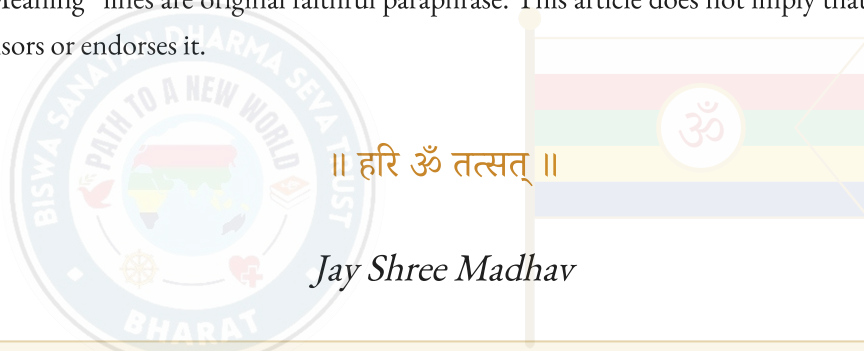
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References and Attribution

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