The Power of Devotion

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Narad, the Divine Storyteller, sits down to tell the story of the greatest devotee the world has ever seen - Prahlad. When Hiranyakasipu, still burning with the need for revenge of his brother’s death, finds out that it was Lord Vishnu who was responsible, he makes it his life purpose to slay down the Creator himself. But Prahlad, his son, is far from feeling hatred. To him, Vishnu is the ultimate God. Hiranyakasipu finds out and decides that it is time to turn things around. The ultimate test soon awaits them both; for Hiranyakasipu, it is destroying the devotion in his own son, even if that means killing him. For Prahlad, it is the greatest test of faith of his devotion, and he knows that he has the Lord by his side.
Once upon a time, a group of sages visited Nand's ashram to listen to stories on the divinity of Lord Vishnu.

Who is the greatest devotee of Lord Vishnu?

We are curious to know about Prahlad. Tell us his story in detail please.

Lord Vishnu does not differentiate between his devotees. He always comes to the rescue of his devotees. However, I shall answer your question. According to me, Prahlad is the greatest devotee of Lord Vishnu.

Prahlad is also known as Bhakt Prahlad for his total devotion to Lord Vishnu. He worshipped Lord Vishnu despite being the son of Hiranyakashipu, the Asura King who was a staunch enemy of Lord Vishnu. Prahlad had to face several harsh punishments from his father but his faith in Lord Vishnu did not falter.
Once upon a time there lived a powerful asura King called Hiranyakasipu. He desired to rule the entire universe along with his younger brother Hiranyaksha.

I seek your permission to conquer our enemies and establish our supremacy throughout the universe.

You are the greatest warrior of my army. I wish you success in your quest.

So Hiranyaksha receded with his quest of absolute supremacy for his brother.

Accept the supremacy of my brother Hiranyakasipu. Worship him! He is the true ruler of this universe!

Lord Vishnu protect us from the cruel monster.

Hiranyakasipu was shattered to see the dead body of his brother.

Who killed my brother?

The brave Hiranyaksha was killed by our arch enemy Vishnu.

I swear to extract revenge from Vishnu. I shall not rest until I humiliate him and force him to accept my superiority!
Hiranyakasipu went to the ashram of his spiritual mentor Shukracharya to seek his guidance.

You have guided me and helped me to establish the supremacy of our race in this universe. I have come to seek guidance from you.

I am sorry for your loss, O King. Please have a seat and we can discuss a future strategy.

I shall go to Mandara Mountain and begin my penance immediately.

Lord Vishnu has always favoured the Devas and conspired against the Asuras. You must appease Lord Brahma with a powerful penance and seek immense power from him. When he blesses you, ask for a boon which will make your death virtually impossible.

Bless me with success.

I wish you success in your efforts.
Hiranyakasipu went to the palace to inform his wife Kayadhu about his penance.

How can you leave me alone in such a condition? Are you not worried about your unborn child?

I am going to Mount Kailasa to perform a severe penance to appease Lord Brahma.

Kayadhu controlled her emotions and ordered the maids to bring her a tray with an earthen lamp and flowers in it.

I shall pray for your success.

You are the queen of the Asura race. You shall be looked after well, even in my absence. I must go immediately or I shall not find peace within me.

I am proud of you. Look after our child in my absence. I shall be back very soon.

Hiranyakasipu reached Mount Kailasa and commenced his severe penance. He was determined to appease Lord Brahma, hence he chose a difficult posture by standing on one foot, called the Vrikshasana.
I was summoned to Vaikunth by Lord Vishnu.

Narayan! Narayan! Why did you summon me to Vaikunth my Lord?

Hiranyakasipu is performing a severe penance to appease Lord Brahma. Indra, the king of Devas is afraid of Hiranyakasipu and will try to kill his unborn child. You know that the child will be my devotee. I want you to protect Kayadhu and her unborn child. Give them shelter and act as a spiritual guide to the boy.

Your leela is divine. The son of your arch enemy shall become your greatest devotee. Narayan! Narayan! I shall follow your command and rush to the aid of Kayadhu immediately.

Indra led an army of Devas and attacked Hiranyakasipu's kingdom. In the absence of Hiranyakasipu, the Asura army could not fight the Devas. Sensing defeat, many warriors fled the battlefield.

Instead of protecting their queen, the guards fled when Indra arrived at the palace.

Where are the guards? How did you enter my palace? What do you want?

Take her prisoner and escort her to my palace!
I arrived in time to protect Kayadhu and her unborn child.

Stop Devraj Indra. This is no way to treat a queen. Kayadhu is innocent. You are committing a grave sin by taking an innocent woman as your prisoner in the absence of her husband.

She is the wife of my arch rival Hiranyakashipu. Her son will become a threat to me in the future. I shall kill him while he is still a little baby.

Set Kayadhu free or you shall regret your actions later.

Devraj Naad! Today I shall not obey you orders or accept any advice from you. I shall kill the boy.

I thank you Devraj Naad for protecting me and my son.

No person in this universe can harm the boy. Lord Vishnu is his protector. The boy shall become the greatest devotee of Lord Vishnu. So set Kayadhu free unless you wish to displease Lord Vishnu. Are you ready to face the consequences of your foolish actions?

You have nothing to fear my child. You and your son shall be safe in my ashram. You can wait until your husband arrives after completing his meditation.
Upon reaching Narad’s ashram...

Queen Kayadhu will stay with us until her husband Hiranyakshipu returns after completing his penance. Please look after her as she is about to give birth to a boy.

I promise to give birth to my son only when my husband comes back after finishing his penance.

Kayadhu lived in the ashram like an ordinary person and helped the other women in their daily duties.

Kayadhu also sat with the sages and their wives to listen to the stories of Narad who would tell them about the virtues of worshipping Lord Vishnu.

Narad’s stories of Lord Vishnu were full of devotion and the boy in Kayadhu’s womb absorbed his teachings.

A person who has dedicated his life to the service of Lord Vishnu should be treated as the most learned person as he has acquired divine knowledge.
India was worried about Hiranyakashipu’s penance.

If Hiranyakashipu succeeds in his penance he shall become the ruler of the three worlds and shall take over our kingdom.

We must ask Lord Brahma not to grant the boon to Hiranyakashipu.

Lord Brahma! I request you not to grant the boon to Hiranyakashipu. He shall destroy the entire Vedic religion and unleash a reign of terror.

I am bound by the rules of this universe. I have to grant the boon to Hiranyakashipu for his severe penance.

I am pleased with your devotion. Ask for a boon.

No weapon, human being, animal, God, Demons or any of the living entities created by you should be able to kill me. I should not die within any residence or outside of any residence, during the daytime or at night. I should die neither on the ground nor in the sky.

So be it!

Lord Brahma was impressed by Hiranyakashipu’s devotion and resurrected him by throwing holy water from his kamandalu.
Hiranyakashipu reached Narad’s ashram to take Kayadhu back to his palace.

Narad! You are the biggest devotee of arch enemy Vishnu but I am sparing your life because you have protected Kayadhu and my son. However I warn you to stop preaching about Vishnu because I shall become the new ruler of this universe and shall forbid anyone from worshipping him.

Kayadhu gave birth to a handsome boy. Hiranyakashipu was very pleased. They named him Prahlad.

Soon Hiranyakashipu defeated all the kings and the Devas and became the undisputed ruler of the universe.

I hereby ban all yajyas and offerings to the Devas and Vishnu. Anyone who disobeys my order will be killed.

Though Hiranyakashipu had banned worship of Lord Vishnu, he was unaware that his own son Prahlad was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu.

Om Narayan Namok Namah!

Mother, I feel great pleasure and peace when I pray to Lord Vishnu.

I am proud to have such a devout and obedient son. But I warn you not to speak of lord Vishnu be it in your father.
The asura army killed anyone who disobeyed Hiranyakshipu's order.

You have disobeyed the order of our King by worshipping his arch enemy Vishnu. You shall pay for your sins with your death.

The Devas rushed to Vaikunttha to seek help from lord Vishnu.

Hiranyakshipu is killing innocent souls on earth. We request you to kill him and end the misery for everyone.

I cannot kill Hiranyakshipu yet. You will have to wait.

But why?

Hiranyakshipu shall enjoy all the benefits of his penance until his sins neutralise his good karma.

Soon Hiranyakshipu will try to kill his own son Prahlad who is totally devoted to me. Then I shall take an avatar and kill him.
Soon it was time to send Prahlad to Shukacharya’s ashram to start his education.

Prahlad was welcomed into the ashram by Shand and Amanka who are the sons of Shukacharya, the spiritual teacher of Asuras.

Welcome to the garudul prince. We shall start your education tomorrow.

Prahlad, your father is sending you to gunakul to receive your education. You must treat all the students as your friends. You must always listen to your teachers and respect them.

Prahlad was shocked to see an idol of his father in the ashram.

Unlike other kids from the royal families, Prahlad was not interested in learning about politics.

King Hiranyakashipu is the supreme ruler of this universe. All of us worship him!

My father is not the ruler of this universe. Lord Vishnu is the supreme ruler of this universe.

How can we treat someone as our enemy? We should treat everyone as our friend just like Lord Vishnu who is a friend to all of his devotees.

What are you making?

I’m making an idol of Lord Vishnu, the supreme god of this universe. I feel sad unless I pray to my lord.
Lord, I wish to stay connected with you always and spread your teachings to everyone around me.

One of the teachers saw Prahlad worshipping the idol of Lord Vishnu.

Son, why are you worshipping this idol? Who told you about Lord Vishnu? We have never mentioned him in our teachings.

How can the son of Hiranyakashipu worship his arch enemy Vishnu? I must investigate before this turns into a crisis.

Soon...

I have felt a special connection with him since my birth. Devotion to Lord Vishnu makes me extremely happy and hence I worship him.

You shall ruin our reputation. Unless I stop you, you shall become a poisonous fruit that shall destroy the entire Asura clan.

My mother had instructed me to obey my teachers and treat them with respect. I shall accept their punishment with humility and shall never complain about it.

The teachers taught Prahlad in isolation. They tutored him only on topics of politics, economic development and statecraft. However...

Narayan Narayan!
Impressed with Prahlad’s devotion towards Lord Vishnu, many of the other students were curious to know about him.

Why do you pray to Lord Vishnu despite knowing that he is the arch enemy of your father?

You were punished by the teacher for worshipping Lord Vishnu. Your father kills anyone who worships Lord Vishnu. Aren’t you afraid?

My father treats Lord Vishnu as his enemy but Lord Vishnu is a friend to anyone who seeks his blessings. He is not an enemy of the Asura clan. He simply restores the balance of the universe by destroying evil.

Fear can be conquered by true devotion. Why should I worry when I have Lord Vishnu to protect me?

Prahlad preached sermons about Lord Vishnu to all the students in the ashram. They were impressed and listened to him attentively.

We must control our senses and not seek materialistic pleasures which shall lead us away from Lord Vishnu. Our goal is to return back to Lord Vishnu and serve him.
Most of the Asuras treat Lord Vishnu as their enemy. Why will he bless us?

We can have the blessings of Lord Vishnu by surrendering ourselves to Him. You need only devotion to win Him over.

Who taught you about Lord Vishnu? None of our teachers teach us anything about him.

Though my devotion to Lord Vishnu has been since my birth, I treat the wise sage Narad as my spiritual teacher. He is totally devoted towards Lord Vishnu and I listened to his teachings when I was still in the womb of my mother.

At that precise moment, Narad appeared before the students.

Narayan! Narayan! Pahlad, I am so pleased that you treat me as your spiritual teacher. I am lucky to have a student like you.

Narad left the ashram after getting the reassurance from Pahlad.

I have come here to warn you, Pahlad. You are about to face the biggest tests of your life. You must stay devoted to Lord Vishnu, Narayan! Narayan!

May your fame spread in all directions.

I have nothing to worry when the Lord is there to protect and guide me.
Lord Vishnu is the supreme god of this universe. Why are you trying to mislead us?

Hiyyakshipu is not a god. He is a mere ruler.

Things are going out of control. Prahlad has turned the boys to revolt against our teachings. We must present Prahlad in front of the king.

Don’t praise Lord Vishnu in front of your father. He will kill you.

Kayaadu asked to the royal court and tried to convince Prahlad.

Don’t worry mother, Lord Vishnu’s shall protect me.

Welcome to my royal court holy sages. Why have you brought Prahlad here?

We beg for your mercy King. We cannot teach Prahlad. He is totally devoted towards Lord Vishnu and has poisoned the minds of other Asura students in our ashram.

Are they speaking the truth Prahlad? How dare you go against me by singing the praises of Vishnu?

Yes, I suggested that my friends should worship Lord Vishnu. He is the true god of this universe and I have immense faith in him.

Vishnu has conspired to weed out the Asura. From within. A devotee of Lord Vishnu cannot be my son. Kill this boy by placing him in front of a mad elephant.
Everyone was surprised at the miracle.

Use your weapons and kill this boy.

Narayan! Narayan!

Hitanyakshipu imprisoned Pratapad and kept him hungry for days. When Pratapad refused to yield, Hitanyakshipu decided to give him poison.

Sons, I want you to drink this poison.

I shall obey your command father.
Due to the blessings of Lord Vishnu, the poison in the bowl had turned into sweet nectar. He has extraordinary powers! I must find another way to kill him.

After numerous attempts to kill Prahlad, Hiranyakashipu called upon his sister Holika.

Dear sister, take Prahlad with you and sit on a pyre after you have wrapped yourself with the magical shawl given to you by Lord Brahma. The magical shawl will shield you while he shall be reduced to ashes.

Prahlad, will you sit on those logs of wood along with me?

Sure.

Holika tricked Prahlad to sit with her while she executed the evil plan to kill Prahlad.

Light the fire. Don't be scared Prahlad. Your ordeal shall be over very soon.

Om Namo Bhagvate Vasudevaya

Lord Vishnu came to the rescue of his devotee, and due to his Leela the shawl blew off Holika's body and was wrapped around Prahlad.
By the blessings of Lord Vishnu, Prahlad was unharmed while Holika was reduced into ashes.

Finally Hiranyakashipu decided to kill Prahlad himself.

I'm giving you the last chance to live. Accept me as the supreme god of this universe.

Father, surrender yourself to Lord Vishnu and beg for his forgiveness. I am sure that he will forgive your sins.

Where is your Lord Vishnu? Why doesn't he come here and face me?

Lord Vishnu is present everywhere. He shall appear if you call Him with devotion.

Is he present inside this pillar?

Yes he is.

Why don't you summon your Lord Vishnu to emerge from this pillar? If it does not emerge from this pillar you must accept me as the true God.

Lord, I request you to honour the commitment of your humble devotee.

Lord Vishnu emerged from the pillar as Narasimha, a half-man-half lion, to protect his devotee.
Though Hiranyakashipu tried his best, Narasimha defended his blows with ease.

Hiranyakashipu was unable to withstand Narasimha’s blow.

Narasimha killed Hiranyakashipu and restored the balance of good over evil.

You are neither inside your residence nor outside. It is neither day nor night. You are neither on the ground nor in the sky. I am neither human nor an animal nor a god. I am not an entity created by Lord Brahma. I am not using any weapons to kill you. My claws shall rip your body apart.
The anger of Narasimha refused to subside even after killing Hiranyakashipu. Even the gods were scared of him. The deities asked Goddess Lakshmi to pacify him, but...

Prahlad was not afraid of Narasimha and approached him with devotion and humility.

I bless you, Prahlad. People will remember you for ages and shall acknowledge you as my biggest devotee.

Prahlad, I declare you as the king of Asuras. Rule your kingdom wisely and lead your race to prosperity.

Prahlad made peace with Devas and ruled the Asuras for a long time. He urged them to shun materialistic pleasures and stay devoted to Lord Vishnu. He shall always remain the epitome of devotion towards Lord Vishnu.

We thank you for narrating the wonderful story of Prahlad. This story has inspired us to surrender ourselves to Lord Vishnu and seek his blessings.

The End