

Chapter One: The Advent of Lord Krishna

Once upon a time, when Mother Earth was overwhelmed by the military forces of various demons disguised as kings, she went to Lord Brahma for help. Assuming the form of a cow, Mother Earth approached Lord Brahma with tear-lled eyes and related her troubles. After hearing her sad tale, Lord Brahma led Mother Earth, Lord Shiva and the other demigods to the shores of the Ocean of Milk. There the demigods worshiped Lord Vishnu by reciting *Vedic mantras*, for He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Master and Maintainer of the whole universe and the One Who relieves the suffering of all.

Entering a trance state, Lord Brahma received a message from Lord Vishnu, and then relayed this to the demigods: “O great demigods, hear the word of Lord Ksirodakasayi Vishnu and follow this order without delay. Having heard our petition, the Supreme Personality of Godhead will soon appear personally as the Son of Vasudeva. For as long as He manifests on Earth to lessen her burden, you demigods should all appear as children of the *Yadu* dynasty. Your wives should also go in order to satisfy Him. Krishna’s foremost manifestation, Sankarsana, Who is the origin of all Incarnations within the material world, will also appear, being known as Baladeva, just to assist Krishna in His Pastimes. Vishnu-maya, the Lord’s energy Who is equal to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, will also come, accompanied by Her different potencies, just to execute the desire of the Lord.”

Having thus advised the demigods and soothed Mother Earth, this universe’s all-powerful Lord Brahma returned to Brahmaloka. King Surasena, the leader of the *Yadus*, ruled over the district known as Mathura, a place very closely connected to Krishna, for He lives there eternally. Once upon a time, the son of Surasena, Vasudeva, just after marrying Devaki, mounted his chariot to bring his new wife home. Kamsa, son of Ugrasena and brother to Devaki, became their chariot driver just to please his sister and took the reins of the horses. When the young bride and groom started for home, bugles, drums and kettledrums sounded in concert for their pleasure. While joyfully guiding the chariot along the road, the procession was stopped in its tracks by a mysterious celestial voice that said, “Kamsa, you fool! The eighth child of this couple you are driving will kill you!” Being very sinful, Kamsa was the most demonic of the Bhoja dynasty kings. Upon hearing this voice from the sky, he immediately grabbed Devaki’s hair with one hand, drew his sword with the other, and prepared to behead Devaki.

Intent on saving his new bride from her demonic brother, who was so shamelessly cruel that he was ready to murder his sister, great-souled Vasudeva, the future father of Krishna, spoke diplomatically: “My dear brother-in-law, Kamsa, great hero and pride of the Bhoja dynasty, how can one so qualified as you kill a woman, especially your sister, on her wedding day? For one who has taken birth, death is certain, either today or in a hundred years. Death is sure for everyone! When the present body becomes dust, the living being automatically gets another material body, according to his *karma*. When he gets his

next body, he leaves the old one. It is just like a person walking, putting one foot on the ground and then lifting the other, or like a worm transferring itself from one leaf to another. Similarly, the materially illusioned soul takes another body and then relinquishes the one he had before.

“According to the mind’s thinking, feeling and willing at the time of death, which is a result of its fruitive activity, one gets a particular body. Changes of the body and differences of body are due to the ickering mind. Except for this, the soul would remain content with its original spiritual body. Since, therefore, envious and sinful activities produce a body of suffering in the next life, why act sinfully? In consideration for one’s own welfare, one should never envy anyone, for envy always means to reap harm from others, either now or in the future. This girl, Devaki, your younger sister, is as dear as a daughter to you and should be affectionately maintained. Be merciful and don’t kill her! She deserves your love and protection.”

Being a *Rakshasa*, Kamsa was very cruel and could not be pacified; neither could he be intimidated by any philosophy or logic presented by Vasudeva. He cared nothing for sinful reactions in this life, nor a degraded birth in the next. Seeing Devaki’s life in great danger, Vasudeva thought quickly and conceived another idea to avert this crisis: “If I deliver all my sons to Kamsa, who is like Death Personified, perhaps I can save Devaki’s life. Then, perhaps, Kamsa may die before my sons are born, or, if he is really destined to be killed by my son, perhaps one of them may do it. For the present, just let me try promising to hand over my sons to him, in order to avoid this immediate threat.”

Thus thinking, Vasudeva submitted his proposal respectfully and smilingly to Kamsa: “O most reasonable one, from what you heard from this heavenly omen, you have nothing to fear from your sister, only from her sons. Therefore, I offer you my vow that any son born from her will immediately be delivered to you!”

Kamsa was persuaded by this logic, and since he believed Vasudeva’s word of honor implicitly, gave up his intent to kill Devaki. Vasudeva congratulated him on his honorable decision and entered his house. Every year after that, Devaki gave birth to a child, altogether eight sons and one daughter, Subhadra. Vasudeva was very intent on keeping his promise. Although it was very painful for him to do, he took his firstborn son, Kirtiman, to Kamsa and delivered him into his hands. Nothing is painful for a saintly soul who knows the truth: that the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the Cause of all causes and all that is. Therefore, what cannot be forsaken for His sake by those who are fully surrendered to Him and His service?

When Kamsa perceived the truthfulness and equanimity of Vasudeva, despite Vasudeva’s love for his son, he was very pleased and with a smile said, “O Vasudeva, take your child and go home! This child is of no concern to me. It is the eighth child I fear.” Vasudeva happily took back his child and went home, but because he knew Kamsa’s bad character, he could not trust Kamsa’s word.

All the residents of Vrindavana and the *Vrishni* dynasty, including King Nanda, Vasudeva and Devaki, as well as their family, relatives and well-wishers, were actually heavenly denizens. Even those who appeared externally to be supporters of Kamsa were, in truth, demigods. Soon thereafter, sage Narada visited Kamsa and related the real truth

behind the presence of these demigods, of how the Earth had become overburdened with demonic persons and would soon be relieved by their annihilation. From then on, Kamsa became very fearful and suspicious of everyone. Thinking that everyone in the *Yadu* dynasty must be a demigod, and that any child born of Devaki might be Vishnu, Kamsa immediately arrested Devaki and Vasudeva and imprisoned them with iron shackles. He mercilessly killed all their children, one after another, fearful of the prediction of his death at the hand of Vishnu.

To protect their sense gratification, wealth and power, even worldly kings frequently kill their rivals indiscriminately, including mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers or friends. In a former life, Kamsa had been the great demon, Kalanemi, and had been slain by Vishnu. Hearing of this from Narada, Kamsa became inimical to everyone in the *Yadu* dynasty. This very powerful son of Ugrasena, Kamsa, even dethroned and incarcerated his own father, and personally ruled the states known as Surasena.

Commentary on Chapter One

The descent of the Lord to this mortal world is the greatest miracle and the most rewarding event. A miracle is an occurrence that apparently contradicts natural law. The manifestation of the Absolute in the realm of duality is certainly a paradox. It is the inclusion of the Whole in a part, of eternity in time. Eternity is all-inclusive whereas time discretely breaks into past, present, and future. Therefore, the descent of the Absolute is a logical impossibility. Still, it is a fact, and the greatest fact, for it reveals the fullness of Reality.

If existence is ultimately to make any sense, it must transcend the limitations of duality and encompass the greater reality of the Whole. But the part cannot possibly encompass the Whole. Yet, it is possible for the Absolute Whole to infuse Itself into the part. Indeed, the Fourth Chapter of the *Gita* says:

By knowing this truth of My pastimes and birth,
Transcendent, yet manifest now on this earth,
One never returns to this valley of pain,
But goes to Vaikuntha, My home to regain. (Ch. 4)

Proper perception and understanding is a real need for imperfect humanity. To instill perfect understanding, the Absolute Personality of Godhead Himself descends to do the job. Thus in almost every culture, we have an account of the Person of Absolute Reality coming to this world of duality for the purpose of giving His fallen children divine guidance.

In the Fourth Chapter of the *Gita*, Krsna says that simply by understanding the transcendental nature of His appearance and activities, one becomes liberated from material existence. This assurance pertains not only to understanding His appearance as Krsna ve-thousand years ago, but also to understanding His numerous other appearances, such

as Lord Buddha, Lord Jesus Christ, and the Prophet Mohammed. Furthermore, Kṛṣṇa's statement in the *Gīta* also applies to comprehending His advent today, in a devotee's heart. The incarnation of Divinity is not something done and gone. It is the very being of the Godhead. If we really know the truth of Kṛṣṇa's descent, we can also know how to give birth to the Godhead in our heart today.

Proper understanding of the Lord's advent involves our considering several basic questions. Perhaps the first question we should ask is "Why does the Lord come?" Kṛṣṇa Himself answers this in the same chapter of the *Gīta*:

Although I'm eternal, undying, unborn,
I descend in each age in a spiritual form.
When pure goodness declines, and the godly are rare,
And evil increases, and foul is deemed fair,
I come to kill demons and restate the Dharma,
And thus please devotees and save them from karma. (Ch. 4)

Lord Kṛṣṇa's appearance ten-thousand years ago very appropriately illustrates His response to His devotees' plight. Owing to a petition by Lord Brahma, the primal Spiritual Master, the Lord descended. Brahma had informed the Lord of the Earth's plight and asked for correction. It is significant that not everyone heard the Lord's answer. Only Lord Brahma, the Spiritual Master, heard it and then he in turn broadcast the Lord's message to the others. This transmission of spiritual knowledge via a pure representative is still the process of enlightenment today. People generally are incapable of approaching the Lord directly. One already intimate in the ways of devotional science must show them the way. When Moses presented the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai to the Israelites, the people petitioned him: "You speak to the Lord, and then tell us; we will hear you, but not the Lord, lest we die." (Ex. 20:19) God is holy, and those who approach Him must also be holy, just as one who would enter must become one. Therefore, God speaks to His Moses, His Brahma, or His Son, Who in turn speaks as a transparent representative, and in this way presents the message of Godhead for everyone's understanding. Anyone who can repeat God's Word as it is is a clear channel for His transcendental message.

Logically, the next question one should ask concerns the Divine Word. "What is Godhead's message?" The answer is that since the transmission is one, the message is also one: "The Lord is coming soon. Get ready!" The Prophet Elijah, John the Baptist, and Lord Jesus all sounded the alarm: "The Kingdom of God is at hand!"

"How do we get ready?" you ask. All bona fide messengers of Godhead agree: "Repent and be converted. Turn from your sinful ways!" This command means that the individual must become transformed - turned around in how he perceives himself and corrected in his relationship to the world about him and also in his relationship to God. Because humans are weak and prone to sin, such a radical change necessitates a process of purification, which usually calls for austerities and penances, prayer and meditation.

In the specific instance of Lord Kṛṣṇa's advent, Brahma was speaking not to ordinary humans but to demigods, higher entities in the universe who assist the Lord in cosmic affairs. Brahma instructed them to immediately take birth on the Earth for assisting the Lord in His mission here. Superdially, the messages given to humans and demigods may

appear somewhat different, but actually they are one. Both are rooted in obedience and submission. When we repent and surrender to the Lord, obeying His commandments and instructions, we humans partake of the nature of demigods. Moreover, in the cases of both humans and demigods, surrender to the Lord's instructions produces a significant change in the individual's perception. What sinners do only out of fear and regret, demigods do out of love and devotion. Their service is based on the realization that their true identity is part and parcel of God - His eternal servant. Actually, we are all meant to be demigods, pure devotees, pliant instruments in the hands of the Lord.

To be a demigod or a pure devotee does not depend on externalities, like dress or language. Surrender is a matter of the heart. Conversely, ignorance of scripture and religious ritual is not what makes a demon. Kamsa knew both the scriptures and the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness better than many devotees. But he was a demon because he did not use this knowledge for the service of the Lord and the good of others. Contrast Kamsa with Vasudeva who was willing to do anything to save the life of his young wife Devaki. He acted in the present. He tried to serve the Lord to his best capacity, according to the circumstances surrounding Him. Therefore He thought, "Somehow, let me save Devaki now, and if there are children later, the Lord will show me how to save them at that time."

Vasudev was a man of faith. On account of his faith in God, he always kept his word. The scripture specifically points out that Kamsa knew well the value of Vasudeva's word and believed him. Because of Vasudeva's faith in Kṛṣṇa, he had fully realized that he was not the body. Consequently, even in the most dire situations, he could control his senses. Only a man of firm sense control can have fixed determination. Otherwise, one will be controlled by his senses and mind. Like Kamsa, the uncontrolled senses and mind are always flickering and unsteady. Although Kamsa gave his word that he would not harm Devaki's first seven children, when his mind became agitated, he quickly abandoned his vow.

In the next chapter, we will see that Kamsa formed alliances with other evil kings and usurped the kingdoms of the pious Yadu rulers. His behavior, of course, is typical of a demon. Denying the sovereignty of God, the demons are envious of Him, the King of kings, and want to substitute their will for His will. On the other hand, devotees are the friends of the Lord. Because they are never envious of Him, they surrender to Him and receive His protection. On this one qualification—envy or the absence thereof—hinges the future of the conditioned soul. This critical factor determines whether he meets the Lord as friend or as Death Personified. Owing to his envy, Kamsa was condemned from the start. Only love and devotion, manifest in complete surrender and submission to the divine will, prepares our heart for the advent of the Lord. Then we can receive Him into our heart as the King of our life.

Chapter Two: Prayers by the Demigods

Enlisting the help and cooperation of powerful demons like Jarasandha, Pralamba, Baka, Putana and many others, the mighty Kamsa embarked on his persecution of the *Yadu* dynasty. With the escalating danger, the *Yadavas* abandoned their kingdom and sought shelter elsewhere, in the *Kuru* and *Pancala* kingdoms. Some, however, became servants of Kamsa. After Kamsa murdered the first six sons of Devaki, Krishna's plenary portion, Ananta, entered her womb, arousing in her both extreme pleasure and great fear.

To protect His personal devotees, the *Yadavas*, from Kamsa's persecution, the Supreme Personality of Godhead ordered *yogamaya* as follows: "Go to Vraja, the home of many cowherds, where Rohini, the spouse of Vasudeva, resides at the home of King Nanda. Within Devaki's womb lies My plenary portion, Sankarsana or Sesa. Transfer Him to the womb of Rohini. I shall then personally appear, with My six opulences, as the child of Devaki and you will be born as the daughter of Mother Yasoda, King Nanda's queen. Rohini's Son will be known as Sankarsana for having been transferred from Devaki's womb to Rohini's. He will also be known as Rama for His highly pleasing nature, and as Balarama for His great physical strength."

Chanting the *Vedic mantra 'om'*, *yogamaya* departed on her mission. At once she set out for Nanda-gokula, where she quickly accomplished the Lord's directives. When Devaki's fetus was transferred to Rohini by *yogamaya*, Devaki was said to have had a miscarriage. Then the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Supersoul of all and He who vanquishes the fear of His devotees, came into Vasudeva's mind with His full opulences. With the Supreme Personality of Godhead in his heart, Vasudeva shone with the Lord's transcendental effulgence. He appeared luminous like a second sun. It was difficult to look at or approach him, due to his dazzling effulgence.

Soon the all-auspicious Supreme Personality of Godhead was conveyed from Vasudeva's mind to Devaki's mind. Now carrying the original consciousness of everyone, the Cause of all causes, Lord Krishna, within her womb, Devaki became exceedingly beautiful, even as the eastern sky becomes beautiful by hosting the rising moon. She had the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the foundation of the whole cosmos, within her, but due to being confined to the prison house of Kamsa, she was like a brilliant fire covered by thick walls, or like one who has great knowledge, but cannot impart it to others. Due to the Lord's presence, Devaki shone with a brightness that illumined the entire space where she was confined.

Seeing her joyous radiance, Kamsa thought grimly: "Vishnu, who will kill me, is now certainly within Devaki, for she has never looked so radiant and jubilant. What should I do? She is a woman, my sister, and pregnant. If I kill her, it will surely ruin my reputation and destroy my opulence and duration of life. A very cruel person is as good as dead, even while living, for whether living or dead, everyone hates him; and after death, he certainly goes to hell."

Thinking these dark thoughts, Kamsa, although always inimical to the Lord, abstained from the heinous act of killing his sister. He would wait until He was born and then do what was necessary. Whether sitting on his throne or within his apartment, whether lying on his bed or, indeed, while doing anything – eating, sleeping, walking –

Kamsa always visualized his enemy, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hrishikesh. Truly, by always thinking of his omnipresent enemy, Kamsa became indirectly Krishna conscious.

Meanwhile, Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma, together with great sages like Vyas and Narada, and great demigods like Chandra, Indra and Varuna, approached the delivery room of Devaki, remaining unseen by others, and all joined together in offering obeisances and prayers to the Lord. “O Lord, You never break Your word, which is ever perfect and cannot be thwarted by anyone. You are the Supreme Truth, and only the truthful can achieve Your favor. You are the fundamental principle of everything and are known as *antaryami*, the inner force. You are equal to all, and Your teaching applies to all, for all time. Therefore we offer our obeisances to You and surrender to You. Please give us protection.

“The fundamental cause of the material world and its many varieties is You, O Lord. You are its creator and maintainer, and after annihilation, You are He in whom all is conserved. Covered by Your external energy, conditioned souls fail to see You behind this cosmic manifestation, but they do not see things as they are. You are ever complete in knowledge, O Lord, and just to benedict living beings You manifest different incarnations, which are all transcendental. To the pious and religious, these incarnations are most pleasing, but to non-devotees they are Death Personified. By constantly meditating on Your lotus feet, O lotus-eyed Lord, and accepting Your lotus feet as the suitable boat to cross this ocean of nescience, we follow in the footsteps of great saints and sages. By this blissful process, we can cross this ocean of ignorance as quickly and as easily as stepping over the hoof print of a calf. O Lord, luminous like the blazing sun, You always want to fulfill Your devotees’ desires, and thus You are like a wish-fulfilling tree. When the holy teachers cross over the dangerous ocean of nescience by taking shelter of Your lotus feet, they leave behind a stout boat by which others may cross. Your lotus feet are Your causeless mercy for all who take shelter of them. Non-devotees may perform severe penances and austerities for the same end, and they may even think themselves very advanced and liberated, but their intelligence is not pure. They fall down from their supposed position of advancement due to having no appreciation for Your lotus feet.

“O Supreme Personality of Godhead, O Madhava, Lord of the Goddess of Fortune, devotees completely in love with You may also fall from the path of pure devotion, but they never become non-devotees and You still protect them. Thus they can fearlessly pass over the heads of non-devotees and continue to advance in devotional service. O Lord, for cosmic maintenance, You manifest Your various incarnations, which are all transcendental, beyond nature’s modes. Your appearance bestows auspiciousness upon the living beings by instructing them how to perform *Vedic* practices, such as mystic *yoga*, ritualistic ceremonies, penances and austerities, and finally, *samadhi*: ecstatic absorption in thought of You.

“O Supreme Cause of all causes, only because Your transcendental body is beyond nature’s modes can we understand the difference between transcendence and matter, and only due to Your personal appearance can we understand the transcendence of Your Lordship. You are the Master and Controller of material nature. Unless one is blessed by Your personal presence, Your transcendental nature is very difficult to comprehend.

Your transcendental Name and Form, O Lord, are not knowable by any amount of mental speculation or imagination. Your Attributes, Names and Form are known only by pure devotional service. Even while engaged in apparently mundane activities, pure devotees – those whose minds and hearts are constantly absorbed in Your lotus feet and who constantly chant, hear, and meditate upon and cause others to contemplate Your transcendental Forms and Names – are truly always on the spiritual platform, and thus fully realize the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

“How fortunate we are, O Lord, that earth’s heavy and demonic burden is immediately relieved by Your appearance! How fortunate we are to be able to see the all-auspicious marks of lotus, club, conch and disc that adorn Your lotus feet upon this Earth and the heavenly planets. You are not an ordinary living being, O Supreme Lord, appearing here by the reactions of fruitive activities. Your appearance here has no other cause than Your own most sweet and perfect will. Your Lordship formerly appeared in incarnations as a Fish, a Tortoise, a Horse, a Boar, a Man-Lion, a Swan, as Lord Rama, Lord Parasurama and Lord Vamana, just to show Your causeless mercy by protecting the world. Now, kindly protect us again and show Your mercy by removing our disturbances. O Krishna, foremost of *Yadus*, we offer respectful obeisances to You.

“Dear Mother Devaki, fortunately the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in person and with all His expansions, is now within your womb. You have no need to fear Kamsa, who is destined to be slain by the Lord. Your Son, Krishna, is the Eternal Protector of the whole *Yadu* dynasty.”

Thus having offered prayers to the Supreme Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Transcendence, the attendant demigods headed by Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma, departed for their own abodes in the heavenly planets.

Commentary on Chapter Two

This chapter mentions Devaki’s beauty twice: once while she is carrying Ananta Sesh, a plenary portion of the Godhead, and again when she is carrying the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself, Krsna, in her womb. As an iron rod in contact with the Supreme Lord ceases to be material and becomes radiant spirit, so too the living entity in contact with the Supreme Lord ceases to be material and becomes radiant spirit. Devaki’s effulgent beauty was visible to Kamsa—proof that he was no ordinary being. Actually, Kamsa was a great devotee of the Lord. To serve the Lord’s transcendental plan he acted like a great demon. In this role as a demon, he appeared to suffer from the reactions of sinful karma; but since he was performing this pastime for the Lord’s pleasure, he always remained in the transcendental position. The part Kamsa played culminated in the Lord’s slaying him and taking him back home, back to Godhead.

Devaki did not know Krsna’s true identity. Otherwise, she would not have been able to genuinely display her transcendental maternal love. Since Kamsa had killed her

previous six children, she had a real fear for the life of her seventh child. Therefore, just to show compassion upon Devaki and to further the Lord's transcendental plan, the Internal Potency of the Lord, Yogamaya, transferred her seventh child to the womb of Rohini. Godhead has many potencies, usually divided into three: internal, external, and marginal. His devotees, His spiritual abode, and His transcendental activities are affected by the internal potency. The material world is the creation of the external energy.

The living beings have independence to align themselves with either the internal or the external potency. Therefore, situated in between, they are known as the marginal energy. When the living being surrenders to the control of the internal potency, he takes on the quality of the internal potency. But if he surrenders to the external energy, which induces a sense of separateness from God, then Maya traps him, covering him with ignorance. Acting like a child of the external energy, the conditioned soul perceives himself separate from the Lord. Although all three energies belong to the Lord, the internal is called chief because of its high service and self-realization.

The freedom to choose either Kṛṣṇa or Maya is the heart of devotional life. This free choice is how we show our love for God. Choosing Kṛṣṇa's will is devotional love; choosing our personal gratification is self-love. Bhaktivinode Thakur has rightly said, "Liberty . . . is the principle which we must consider the most valuable gift from God." (The Bhagavata, p. 29)

The internal energy is ever cognizant of its dependence on the Supreme Lord, the Supreme Energetic. In one sense, the energy and the energetic are one. Yet in another sense, they are different. They are one in quality, but different in quantity. Consider the example of electricity. The electricity in your home is one with the powerhouse, its generating source. But at the same time, it is also different. The amount of electricity in the home is infinitesimal in comparison to the potential output of the powerhouse. Similarly, any manifested power in God's creation is one in quality with God, its source, yet infinitesimal in quantitative expression.

Godhead is revealed to the conditioned soul both as the Supreme Powerful and the Supreme Power. This combination is the significance of our worshipping Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Sita-Ram, and Vishnu-Devi. According to Vaishnav philosophy, one should never separate the energy and the energetic. Materialistic persons generally try to separate them, since they have more appreciation for the power_something they can see with their physical eyes and use to gratify their material senses. The source of power, The All-Powerful, however, demands their subordination and service.

Bhaktivinode warns that "Liberty abused causes degradation." (Ibid) Certainly, by worshipping the energy, one can very quickly receive material boons_another reason why energy-worship is popular. But energy-worshippers cannot attain the ultimate boon of liberation. Such foolish persons want to see themselves separate from the Lord and in control of His energy. Consequently, Maya covers them even more, so that they dream that they are the material body of pleasure and pain. This increase of dualistic ignorance condemns them to continued existence in the material world. On the other hand, truly intelligent persons, concerned about the soul's liberation, worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the energetic source of all, together with His energy, which is always subordinate to Him. This dedication to the energy and energetic source combined is the

reason we bow down and worship Radha-Krsna, the Complete and Perfect Whole, the Original Entity, Who is male and female in One, the Source of All and the End of All. He is inconceivable and unknowable by empiric knowledge or mental speculation. Yet, by His causeless mercy, He is knowable—not by the head, through reason—but by the heart, through love and devotion.

Chapter Three: The Birth of Lord Krishna

At the most auspicious time for His appearance – when the whole universe was surcharged with the qualities of peace, beauty and goodness; when all the planets and stars were auspicious and peaceful and all directions were extremely pleasing; when the earth’s towns and villages seemed all fortunate; when the rivers and lakes were full of clear water and beautiful lilies and lotuses; when the trees and plants were bursting with foliage, fruits and flowers, as well as exotic birds and bees sweetly singing for the demigods; when soft breezes were blowing, carrying fragrant aromas of flowers; when *brahmanas* were engaged in ritualistic ceremonies with resplendent according to *Vedic* principles burning steadily and brightly despite the breeze – the birthless Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Vishnu, was ready to appear, and thus the *brahmanas* and saints, who had been so disturbed by Kamsa and his fellow demons, experienced peace in their hearts and kettledrums resounded in the heavens.

Kinnaras sang auspicious songs; *Siddhas* and *Charanas* offered propitious prayers, and *Vidyadharas* danced in ecstasy. The demigods showered flowers joyously and clouds mildly thundered, like ocean waves. At that time, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Vishnu, who is in everyone’s heart, manifested from Devaki’s heart in the dense darkness of her prison cell, like the full moon rising in the east. Vasudeva saw his newborn son’s lotus eyes, and His four arms bearing a conch, disc, club and lotus. His chest had the mark of *Srivatsa*, and from His neck hung the glowing *Kaustubha* jewel. His blackish body, like a dense cloud, was dressed in yellow silk and upon His full head of hair held was a gorgeous helmet. His ears were decorated with sparkling *Vaidurya* gem earrings and He wore an excellently gleaming belt, armlets, bangles and various other wonderful ornaments.

Sri Sukadeva Goswami continued his enthralling discourse: “When Vasudeva saw his amazing child, he was wonderstruck. In transcendental ecstasy he mentally collected and distributed ten thousand cows to the *brahmanas*. O descendant of Bharata, King Pariksit, when Vasudeva realized that his Son was Narayana, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he became fearless. With folded hands he bowed his head and with concentrated attention offered prayers to the Lord, who brightly illumined the place by His innate powers.”

Vasudeva said: “O Lord, You are beyond material existence, the Person Supreme, the Supersoul of all. Your Form is perceived by knowledge that is transcendental, revealing

Your Supreme Personality of Godhead. I now comprehend Your nature perfectly. O Lord, You are the One who created this whole cosmos in the beginning by Your own external energy. After its creation with those modes – goodness, passion and ignorance – You appear to be within it, although, in truth, You are not.

“Despite Your being perceived by senses, You cannot be known by the senses, as You are, in truth, nor comprehended by the mind nor described by any material means. With senses, we may perceive something, but not everything. You are beyond the range of these senses. Although You are present in nature’s modes, You are not affected by them. You are the prime factor of everything, the omnipresent, undivided Supersoul. Thus, for You nothing is external or internal. You never entered Devaki’s womb, for You were never absent.

“One who thinks that his material body, a product of nature’s three modes, to be independent of the Supreme is ignorant of material existence’s root, and is thus a fool. The learned know that without support from the soul, the material body and senses would be illusory. *Vedic* scholars know, O Lord, that creation, maintenance and annihilation of the whole cosmos are all done by You, the great non-doer, beyond modes and changeless in Your spiritual identity. In You, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, there are no contradictions, because the modes are all under Your control and everything transpires automatically. O Lord, although Your Form is transcendental to nature’s modes, You assume the luminous white color of Vishnu in goodness just to maintain the three worlds. For creation, which is enveloped with passion, You look reddish. At the end, for annihilation, which is hidden in ignorance, You appear to be very dark or blackish. O Protector of creation, You have now manifested in my house to protect the world. It is certain that You will destroy all the military forces that are moving over the face of the Earth under the command of so-called politicians, dressed like *kshatriyas*, but who are, in fact, demons. They too will be killed by You, for the welfare of the innocent masses.

“O Lord of the demigods, after hearing the heavenly omen that his killer would take birth in our home, cruel Kamsa has killed so many of Your senior brothers and now, as soon as he hears of Your birth, he will come with weapons to slay You.”

Having thus seen that her Son bore all the marks of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Devaki began to pray to the Lord, being very fearful of Kamsa, saying: “My dear Lord, You are *Brahman*, the greatest of all, as effulgent as the sun. You know no material cause, and You have no material desire. Therefore, the *Vedas* declare You to be the substance. You are, therefore, the origin of all *Vedic* statements, and one who knows You, knows everything. Everything emanates from You, the Supreme Cause of all causes, the light of all transcendental knowledge.

“After millions of years and cosmic annihilations, You alone remain and are known as *Ananta Sesa-naga*. This creation works under the control of almighty Time, which is but Your manifestation as Lord Vishnu. I surrender to You, O Lord. In the material world, no one can free themselves from birth, death, old age and disease, even by going to higher planets. But with Your appearance, O Lord, Death Personified is going from You, and those who have taken shelter of Your lotus feet are sleeping in perfect peace.

“O Lord, because You dissipate the fears of Your devotees, please save us and

protect us from our terrible fear of Kamsa. Please make Your Form as Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, invisible to those with material vision only. Due to Your appearance, O Madhusudana, I am becoming more and more fearful of what he may do to You. Therefore, please make it impossible for sinful Kamsa to understand that You have taken birth from my womb.

“O Lord, all-pervading Supreme Personality of Godhead, Your four-armed transcendental Form is unnatural to us earthlings. Please cover this form and appear just like an ordinary child so we can try to hide You. The whole cosmos, with all its moving and non-moving beings, enters Your transcendental body at the time of annihilation and is held there very easily. Now Your same transcendental Form appears to have taken birth from my womb. No one can understand this and thus I shall be an object of scorn.”

The Supreme Personality of Godhead replied: “O Mother, most chaste lady, in your former birth during the Svayambhuva millennium, you were called ‘Prsni’ and Vasudeva, my father was called ‘Sutapa.’ Lord Brahma ordered you two to create progeny, and for that purpose you controlled your senses and underwent great austerities. Together, you endured wind, rain and sun, heat and cold, and all kinds of climactic disturbances. Practicing *pranayama* and *yoga*, you controlled your bodily airs and by eating only fallen leaves and air, you purified your minds of all contamination. Desiring a benediction from Me, you thus worshiped Me with peacefulness. Twelve thousand celestial years were spent in *tapasya* and consciousness of Me.

“At the end of that time, I was very satisfied with you. Being the best of benefactors, I appeared before you and offered a benediction. You asked to have a Son just like Me. Being husband and wife but childless, you wanted a Son like Me, and so were attracted by sex desire in transcendental love under the influence of Devamaya. Thus you never desired liberation from the material world. After receiving My benediction, I disappeared and you engaged in sex to obtain a Son like Me. Your desire was soon fulfilled. Finding no one as elevated in simplicity and other good qualities as you, I took birth in this world as Prishnigarbha, the Son of Prsni.

“I appeared again for you two in the next millennium. You were my mother, known as ‘Aditi’, and Vasudeva, my father, was called ‘Kasyapa’, and I was called ‘Upendra’. Due to My stature as a dwarf, I was also called ‘Vamana’. O chaste Mother, I, the same person, have again for the third time appeared as your Son. My words are true! This Form of Lord Vishnu is just to help you recall My previous births. Had I appeared only as an ordinary child, you might doubt that the Supreme Personality of Godhead had indeed appeared as your Son.

“Although you and your husband think of Me constantly as your Son, you should also know that I am the Supreme Personality of Godhead. By thus constantly thinking of Me with loving affection, be assured that you will attain the highest perfection and return Home, back to Godhead.”

Sukadeva Goswami said: “Having thus instructed His mother and father, Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, became silent. By His internal energy, He then became an ordinary, two-armed human baby. According to the plan of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vasudeva was inspired by the Lord to take the newborn baby out of the delivery room, and simultaneously, *yogamaya*, the Lord’s spiritual energy, was born

as the daughter of King Nanda and Queen Yasoda in Vraja.”

By the power of *yogamaya*, the dungeon door keepers were cast into a deep slumber. As Vasudeva approached the strongly pinned and locked doors, they automatically opened. Since it was thundering and raining outside, the Lord’s expansion as Ananta-naga manifested behind Vasudeva with his hoods expanded over him to protect the baby like a giant umbrella. Due to heavy rains sent by Indra, the Yamuna River was roaring and foaming with fiercely churning waves. But even as Lord Ramacandra was allowed passage over the Indian Ocean to Lanka, Vasudeva fearlessly forged ahead and crossed the river.

Reaching the house of King Nanda, Vasudeva noticed that the entire household was deep in slumber. Placing his Son on Yasoda’s bed and taking her daughter, *yogamaya*, he quickly returned to Kamsa’s prison house in Mathura. There he placed the little girl in Devaki’s bed, reshackled himself and waited. Weakened by her labor pains, Mother Yasoda slept very deeply and was unable to remember whether she had given birth to a boy or girl.

Commentary on Chapter Three

The birth of Krsna is always an occasion of joy. The relation reflects in the beauty of nature, which increases magnificently, auspiciousness permeates the whole world. No one need strive to make things fortunate. Simply by Krsna’s presence, good fortune automatically appears. Just as there can be no question of darkness when the sun shines, similarly there can be nothing less than perfection when Krsna is present.

The storm, in which Vasudev carried Krsna from the prison of despair to a secret hiding place in Gokula, represents disturbances on the path to Krsna. But even when the process of opening up to Krsna becomes stressful, the Lord intervenes to clear the way. In the form of Ananta Sesh, He makes the way to Gokula safe and easy. Ananta Sesh, a plenary expansion of Vishnu, is the special protector of devotees. Indeed, He is so merciful that in His incarnation as Nityananda in Lord Chaitanya’s pastimes, He begged the Lord not to kill the demons’ physical existence, but to kill their demonic mentality. Nityananda knew that the all-auspicious sound vibration of the Holy Name, nondifferent from the Lord, would automatically slay the demonic nature. He argued that if Lord Chaitanya would actually annihilate the demons, no one would be left, since in this age almost everyone is a demon.

One who wants to become fortunate simply has to know how to manifest Krsna in his life. Of course, in the highest sense, Krsna is everywhere. But we cannot realize His presence until we fulfill the conditions for seeing Him. Krsna is, in fact, the Lord of everything. But He does not reveal His omnipresence to us until we voluntarily and lovingly make Him the Lord of our life. Therefore, Krsna says:

*The Supreme Lord dwells mercifully in every heart;
For all beings He takes the director’s part.*

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*All are seated on this material machine,
But due to ignorance, Supersoul is unseen.
O Arjuna, surrender to Me utterly,
By My grace, you'll enjoy peace, wealth, and victory.*

(Gita, Ch. 18)

The Lord is truly in everyone's heart, but some know it and some do not. Some are blessed with transcendental knowledge, and some are covered with maya's ignorance. Why? Why does the Lord bless some with knowledge and condemn others with ignorance? In the Sri Isopanishad He says that He is "supplying everyone's desire." (Mantra 8)

The Lord advises us to surrender to Him utterly. Yet, He does not force His desire upon us, because where there is force, there is no love. God wants us to love Him because He is love and because we can only know Him through love. Lord Krsna tells Arjuna exactly the same:

*The countenance you now so happily see,
Eludes mundane research and austerity.
Only by undivided devotional love
Can I be known as I am in heaven above.
Only by loving service am I known in truth;
Only by devotion am I won forsooth.*

(Gita, Ch. 11)

Certainly the Whole, Krsna, The Absolute Truth, God by whatever name you call Him, is unknowable by empiric knowledge—experimental or speculative. The senses cannot perceive Him, nor can reason comprehend Him. Not even when aided by science, philosophy, or theology can the senses and reason approach Him. Furthermore, according to Bhaktivinode Thakur, "Our Shastras [scriptures]. . . do not contain all that we can get from the infinite Father. No book is without its errors. God's revelation is Absolute Truth, but it is scarcely received and preserved in its natural purity. We have been advised in the 14th Chapter of the 11th Skandha [canto] of the Bhagavata [Srimad-Bhagavatam] to believe that Truth when revealed is Absolute, but it gets the tincture of the nature of the receiver . . . and is converted into error by continual exchange of hands from age to age." (The Bhagavata, p. 28)

If one cannot know God, as He is, by empirical experience, by reason, by scripture, or by tradition, then what is the correct method? We can know Him by the heart through love. This method of knowing Him is the miracle and mystery of bhakti. According to Bhaktivinode Thakur, "The word [bhakti] has no equivalent in the English language. Piety, devotion, resignation, and spiritual love unalloyed, without any sort of petition except in the way of repentance, compose the highest principle of Bhakti." (The Bhagavata, p. 18)

Someone may say, "How can the Absolute, the Whole, enter into a mortal womb, like Devaki's? This objection is answered by Vasudev as follows:

*Though You appear upon this Earth mundane,
Which Your external energies maintain,
The origin of energy is You,
To those whose perception is really true.*

Krsna rst lies on t he Causal ocean as t he Maha V ishnu, a nd f rom Hs b reathing innumerable universes emanate. Then, the scripture says, He enters within each universe as the Garbhodakasayi Vishnu. Then again, He enters into the heart of each living being and even each atom, as Ksirodakasayi Vishnu. His entering the womb of Devaki is understood in the same way. By His own divine inconceivable potency, He appears to enter within; yet He does not cease to be all-pervading. In the same way the unbroken expanse of planetary water divides into seven oceans but still remains one. Similarly the all-pervading Krsna simultaneously manifests in many individual forms but remains One. No one can fathom His greatness.

Chapter Four: King Kamsa's Atrocities

As soon as Vasudeva had put the little girl on Devaki's bed and reshackled himself, the child began to scream, waking the guards. The guards quickly notified Kamsa of the birth of Devaki's child, for he was anxiously awaiting the news so he could immediately take action. Quickly rising from his bed, his hair all disheveled, he hurried to Devaki's bedside.

Terror-stricken, Devaki pleaded piteously with Kamsa, "Don't kill my lovely baby girl. She can be a wife for your son. Please, my dear brother, to kill a woman is not good for your reputation. O brother, due to the prophecy you have killed so many of my sons, even though they were as bright and beautiful as re. Kindly spare t his little girl a nd give her to me as a token of your love. I am very weak and lonely, deprived of all my children. Please, dear brother, I am your little sister and thus it would be auspicious for you to allow me to keep this little girl."

Clutching her daughter desperately and weeping, Devaki pleaded with Kamsa for the baby's life. Heartlessly cruel, he rebuked her, and wrenched the newborn from her arms.. Having abandoned all loving concern for his sister out of his sel shness and fear, Kamsa grabbed the baby by her legs and attempted to dash her head on a stone. The baby, who was actually *yogamaya*, the younger sister of Vishnu, slipped out of his hands and rose into the air as Devi, the Goddess Durga, replete with eight arms holding various weapons. Decorated with oer garlands, sandal w od pul p excel lent gar m nt s and valuable jewels, the Goddess Durga brandished a bow, trident, arrows, shield, sword, conch, disc and club. Victoriously she cried, "O foolish Kamsa, what will you accomplish by killing me? Your enemy, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who will surely kill you, is already born somewhere else!"

Upon hearing Goddess Durga's words, Kamsa was thunderstruck. Approaching his sister and brother-in-law, Devaki and Vasudeva, he immediately took off their shackles and spoke humbly: "O my dear sister and brother-in-law! How sinful I have been, just like a *Rakhasa* man-eater, killing so many of your sons. Cruelly and mercilessly I have violated

friends and relatives, like the killer of *brahmanas*. I do not know what will be my fate, now or hereafter. Just see! Not only human mortals, but even higher powers lie. I am so foolish to have believed the heavenly omen and reacted by murdering my sister's children.

“O great souls, Vasudeva and Devaki, your sons have reaped their own *karma*. Thus, do not lament for them. Everyone is under the control of the Supreme, and thus they cannot always live in peace together. Here on Earth, we experience that various products are manifest from earth, decay and then disappear, mixing again with the earth. In the same way, the conditioned living beings are embodied and then disembodied; but the living being, like the earth, remains unchanged and is never annihilated. If one does not understand the innate position of both the eternal soul and the temporary body, he identifies himself with and feels affected by the union or separation that occurs with a family, society or nation. So long as such misidentifications continue, he continues his material existence.

“I wish you all good fortune, my dear Devaki. Under the direction of Providence, everyone experiences the reactions of his own work. Thus, despite your sons having been tragically slain by me, do not grieve for them. In ignorance one thinks, ‘I am killed,’ or ‘I killed my enemy.’ So long as one thinks the self to be either killer or killed, he suffers responsibility for material affairs and thus suffers reactions of happiness and distress.” Kamsa pleaded: “Dear sister and brother-in-law, you are both great souls, be merciful to this wretch. Please excuse my heinous offenses.”

Having thus spoken, Kamsa fell at Vasudeva and Devaki's feet, his eyes brimming with tears of regret. Deeply shaken by the words of Goddess Durga, Kamsa became full of familial affection for Vasudeva and Devaki, and immediately released them. Seeing her brother so repentant, Vasudeva and Devaki were relieved of their anger. Vasudeva spoke affectionately to Kamsa: “O noble Kamsa, only due to ignorance does one identify himself with the material body and bodily ego. You have spoken the correct philosophy. Lacking self-realization, one differentiates, ‘This is mine,’ and ‘This is yours.’ With such a vision of differentiation, one experiences lamentation, jubilation, envy, greed, fear, illusion and madness. They see only the apparent cause and try to counteract it, having no knowledge of the real cause, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” Being thus spoken to in purity by Vasudeva and Devaki, Kamsa felt relieved and sent them home.

The next day, Kamsa called his ministers and told them everything that *yogamaya* had said about his killer being born somewhere else. Thus hearing from their master, the envious demons advised Kamsa as follows: “If this be so, O great Bhoja King, starting today, let us kill all the children born within the past ten days in all towns, villages and pasturing grounds.

“The demigods may vainly boast of their powers away from the battlefield, but only so long as there is no actual fighting. You have nothing to fear from such demigods. Lord Vishnu has hidden Himself in the hearts of *yogis*; Lord Shiva has retired to the forest; and Lord Brahma is always busily engaged in meditation and austerities. Indra and the other demigods are without any real prowess. You have nothing to fear from them. Nevertheless, due to their hostility to us, we should not neglect them. Let us root them out

completely in battle. We are ready to fight for you.

“If a disease is at first neglected, it becomes acute and difficult to cure. If the senses are not initially controlled, it becomes impossible to control them later. So, an enemy neglected at the start later becomes undefeatable. The basis of all the demigods is Vishnu, and He lives and is nourished by religious principles, the *Vedas*, *brahminical* culture, cows, austerities and sacrifice. O King, we, your faithful followers, shall slaughter all the *Vedic brahmanas*, those engaged in performing austerities and sacrifices, as well as killing the cows which supply milk and butter necessary for sacrifice.

“*Brahmanas*, cows, *Vedic* knowledge, truthfulness, austerity, control of the senses and mind, faith, tolerance, mercy and sacrifice are but different parts of Lord Vishnu’s body. They are also the basis of a godly civilization. Lord Vishnu, the Supersoul in everyone’s heart, is the real enemy of the demons and is thus known as the ‘Demon-killer’! He is the foremost of demigods, since all the demigods, including Brahma and Shiva, depend on His protection. Great saints, sages and *Vaisnavas* similarly depend on Him. Thus, persecuting the *Vaisnavas* is the surest way to kill Vishnu.”

Sukadeva Goswami continued: “Having been thus advised by his evil ministers, Kamsa, being devoid of good intelligence and tightly bound by Yamaraj’s law, decided to harass and slay saintly persons and *brahmanas* as the only means to achieve his own advantage. Kamsa’s demon followers were expert at harming others, especially *Vaisnavas*, and could assume any form they desired in order to accomplish their devious exploits. Full of passion and ignorance, the demons began persecuting the Lord’s devotees. O King, persecuting great souls deprives one of longevity, fame, beauty, religion, auspiciousness and promotion to the higher planets.”

Commentary on Chapter Four

We cannot fail to note with great interest and envy the great Krsna consciousness of Kamsa. He was always thinking of Krsna and anxiously awaited His birth. As soon as the first cries of the eighth child reached his attention, Kamsa came running. Unfortunately, Kamsa’s Krsna consciousness was not favorable. His rasa with Krsna was ghastly, not loving. Nevertheless, when Krsna killed him, he attained liberation because of his continuous Krsna consciousness. Therefore, Srila Prabhupada used to say, “If you have to be angry, be angry at Krsna. If you have to be lusty, be lusty for Krsna. Whatever you do, do it with Krsna in mind.”

Because Kamsa’s Krsna consciousness was unfavorable, however, it brought harm and pain to others. Just see how he treated his own sister. Despite her desperate pleas on behalf of her female child, the demon’s heart would not soften. Identifying himself with his body, he considered only his personal gratification. To protect his own sense gratification, a demon like Kamsa is prepared to do any dastardly deed, never mind familial

relationships. History is replete with examples of intrigue in royal palaces, with brother plotting against brother, even son against father.

Notice how repentent Kamsa became when he heard the voice from the sky. Fear of punishment, not love of God, motivated his repentance. Kamsa feared for his sense gratification. Actually, fear for one's sense gratification is just another face of sense gratification. Because sense gratification is always on the platform of the mind and because the mind is always dually—constantly accepting and rejecting—a person on the mental platform can never be steady, regardless of what he does. Thinking ahead to his future state, Kamsa fervently tried to appease his sister and brother-in-law. The next day, however, after consulting with his demonic friends, he prepared to kill all children under fourteen days of age! The conclusion is that a sense enjoyer can never be trusted—no matter how learned he or she may seem in the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or even the details of the scripture.

Even devils can quote scripture. Lord Jesus personally experienced this truth, and Shakespeare dramatized it in the Merchant of Venice. Kamsa's counselors possessed knowledge of the scripture. They even correctly cited the specific functions of Brahma, Vishnu, and Śiva—respectively, the creator, maintainer, and destroyer of the cosmos. But for what purpose did they quote scripture? To serve God? To surrender to His will? No! They quoted scripture to facilitate their sense gratification and to deceive and subvert the faithful. The platform of sense gratification is inherently unstable. What pleases today may not please tomorrow. Unless one comes to the platform of the soul and understands that the constitutional nature of the soul is rendering service to the Supreme, one can never be steady, unmoved, or fearless.

Demonic personalities must ultimately conflict with the soul, because their goals are opposite. The demon thinks that he is the body and therefore in competition with every other body. Thus Kamsa and his demonic council members, perceiving a conflict with the Brahmins, wanted to harass and persecute them. Unfortunately, their decision was a fatal mistake. Their plan could never be successful, because Kṛṣṇa promises that His devotees will never perish. Also, their plan was doomed because demons inevitably bring down the wrath of God upon their heads. The Lord considers an offense committed against a pure devotee to be more serious than an offense committed against Himself. There is no forgiveness for offending a pure devotee unless that devotee himself grants it. The pastime of Durvasa Muni cursing Amburish Maharaj clearly demonstrates this maxim.

Chapter Five: Meeting of King Nanda & Vasudeva

Magnanimous King Nanda was overwhelmed with happiness at the appearance of Lord Krishna as his Son. After bathing and sanctifying himself, he dressed himself appropriately and called for the *brahmanas* expert in reciting *Vedic mantras*. Thus receiving their auspicious blessings, he made plans for a *Vedic* birth ceremony to celebrate his newborn Son, as the rules and regulations prescribe. He further arranged for the appropriate demigod and forefather worship to be performed.

King Nanda donated two million fully decorated cows, also adorned with golden embroidered cloth and jewels, as well as seven hills of grain, to the *brahmanas*. Time purification and material possessions; a bath purifies the body; and washing with water

cleanses soiled things. By the proper ritualistic ceremony, one's birth is purified; austerities and penances purify the senses; worship of and charity given to the *brahmanas* purifies our material possessions; satisfaction purifies the mind; and self-realization, Krishna consciousness, purifies the soul.

Vrajapura, King Nanda's residence, resounded with the vibrations of *Vedic* hymns, the *Puranas* being sung by sweet singers and expert musicians playing in accompaniment. The whole place was festively decorated with flags and festoons, gates in different places made of flower garlands, fancy cloth and mango leaves. The courtyards and rooms of the house were all meticulously swept and cleaned. Even the cows, bulls and calves were decorated and garlanded with flowers and costly ornaments.

The cowherd men were dressed in opulent garments as they approached King Nanda's house, bearing their various gifts for presentation. The wives of the cowherd men were very glad to hear of Mother Yasoda's new Son, and they also came, fully decorated in costly dresses, ornaments and facial paintings. Their lotus-like faces were unusually beautiful. They also hurried to King Nanda's house, bearing various offerings in their hands. The *gopis* offered blessings to Yasoda's baby, Krishna, saying, "May You one day become King of Vraja and maintain its inhabitants for a long time." Sprinkling a mixture of water, oil and tumeric powder over the Unborn Supreme, they offered their prayers.

In their exuberance, the cowherd men splashed one another with a concoction of condensed milk, curd, butter and water. They threw butter and smeared ghee on each other's bodies. For the pleasure of Lord Vishnu, and thus for the benefit of his Son, great-souled King Nanda lovingly gave charity and cows to everyone and thus satisfied everyone's desire. The most fortunate mother of Balarama, Rohini, was also gorgeously dressed and decorated with garlands, necklaces and other ornaments. She freely wandered about greeting the guests who had come to the festival.

O King Pariksit, Nanda's home is eternally the abode of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and because His transcendental Qualities are also always present, Nanda's home is innately endowed with all auspiciousness. From the moment of Lord Krishna's appearance there, it also became the place of Pastimes for the Goddess of Fortune.

O King Pariksit, protector of the *Kuru* dynasty, after that celebration, King Nanda appointed special cowherd men to watch over Gokula, and then he went to Mathura for the purpose of paying the yearly tax to King Kamsa. When Vasudeva heard that his good friend and brother, King Nanda, was in Mathura to pay his taxes, he immediately went to where he was staying. When Vasudeva arrived there, King Nanda was so overwhelmed with friendly feelings that he immediately got up and embraced him tightly. After affectionately and respectfully greeting each other, Vasudeva sat down and inquired concerning his Two Sons with great love.

Vasudeva said: "O King Nanda, my dear brother, how fortunate you are to really have a Son at your advanced age. This is certainly a sign of great good fortune. It is also good fortune for me that I am seeing you. It is almost like a rebirth for me. To meet with such an intimate and close friend is very rare and difficult in this world, even though we both live in the same country. Sticks and pieces of wood are unable to remain together, even though in the same water, but are carried apart by the currents of the river. In the

same way, despite our being intimately related as friends and relatives, we cannot stay together due to our different past activities and the caprices of time.

“My good friend Nanda, is the forest of Vraja suitable and beneficial for your cows, full of grass and fresh water? I hope there are no disturbances or diseases there. Is my Son Baladeva living peacefully with his mother, Rohini, in your house? If one’s relatives and friends are rightly situated, according to scripture, then one’s economic development, sense gratification and religion are all beneficial. But if they are in distress, these three do not bring any happiness.”

King Nanda replied: “Alas, dear brother, King Kamsa murdered so many of yours and Devaki’s sons. But your youngest, a daughter, has entered the heavenly planets. Everyone is controlled by destiny, determined by his fruitive activities. One gets a son or daughter due to destiny, and when the child is taken away, that is also due to unseen destiny. Destiny controls everyone! Knowing this, one is never bewildered.”

Vasudeva said to Nanda: “Please, dear brother, since you have already paid your taxes, and we have met together, do not linger here. Best you return to Gokula as soon as possible, for I fear there may be some disturbance there.”

Being thus advised by Vasudeva, King Nanda and his cowherd associates yoked their oxen to their carts and, with Vasudeva’s permission, immediately departed for Gokula.

Commentary on Chapter Five

Through its various practices, true religious culture, whether Vedic, Judaic, Christian, or Islamic aims at self-purification in all activities performed by the devotee. The Vedic culture views life as a series of sacred events, from birth to death, each meant for further sanctification. At birth, one undergoes a purification ceremony that places him on the path of the twice-born—a rebirth of the Spirit. This preliminary ceremony of rebirth is later consummated when a bona fide spiritual master gives the person initiation. All religious traditions teach about a second birth, or reawakening of the spirit-soul. We should celebrate this event more than we celebrate the birth of our material body.

The description of Kṛṣṇa’s birth ceremony reveals many interesting details of Vedic culture. Generally, the acquisition of wealth entails sinful activities. Therefore, to purify wealth, Vedic culture advises that one give in charity. All Vedic ceremonies include Vedic hymns chanted by qualified Brahmins, whose lifelong study of the scriptures invest their recitation with effectiveness. The Brahmins’ absorption in spiritual studies also tends toward material impoverishment, hence their worthiness to be recipients of charity.

In our contemporary Vaishnava order, one becomes a Brahmin through initiation. The disciple merits admission to the priestly order when he or she understands the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and demonstrates his ability to live an ascetic life of regulative principles. Some other Vaishnava sects have no Brahmin order, and some follow

the tradition that recognizes as Brahmins only those born in Brahmin families. To be bona fide, however, even candidates with Brahmin ancestry must demonstrate sincerity in the ascetic life and understanding of the scriptures.

The study of scripture, practically applied in daily living, purifies the mind. A purified mind is the primary qualification for being a real Brahmin, a pilgrim on the path of truth. When a Brahmin reaches perfection, he is called a Vaishnava, a pure devotee of the Lord. Whether one is a Brahmin by birth or by initiation, to reach perfection he must become a pure devotee of the Lord. Ultimately, God is known only by the heart, through unalloyed love.

Besides the priestly segment, other occupational divisions of society also reach the goal of pure devotion, but their path is somewhat different. For example, Vasudev was a kshatriya, a member of the martial and administrative order, and Nanda and the men of Gokula were Vaishyas, members of the agricultural and mercantile order. For these two segments of Vedic society, wealth is a sign of God's favor, just as in the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic cultures. We should especially note how by basing itself on cow protection, the community of Gokula prospered both materially and spiritually. The lavish use of gold, silver, pearls, and richly embroidered cloth, as well as the liberal use of varied milk products indicates the community's material opulence. During the ceremony celebrating the birth of Kṛṣṇa, the people entertained themselves by throwing butter at each other. Even today, butter is a substance associated with wealth.

Regardless of Gokula's opulence, its widows and its married women whose husbands were away followed a custom of dressing simply. This gesture was part of their high standard of chastity. What, then, shall we deduce from Rohini's dressing festively, even though her husband, Vasudev, was not there? Kṛṣṇa's family was a model of dharma, religious law and custom. So why was Rohini's apparent break with custom not considered a violation? The answer is that when Kṛṣṇa appeared, her real husband had appeared. For Kṛṣṇa's pleasure, she was certainly correct to dress in her best. Kṛṣṇa is the husband of every living entity—what to speak of a Goddess of Fortune like Rohini—for He is the Soul of all souls.

After the birth celebration, Nanda Maharaj journeyed to Mathura. In that city, he met Vasudev, and their joyful exchange of greetings turned into a profound discussion of karma. Their comprehension of karma, however, was not fatalistic. It was coupled with perfect faith in God. Clarifying the positive aspect of karma, Nanda Maharaj said,

*"We are all subject to the deeds we've done,
Whether in this life or another one;
It is God's mercy that through our karma
We're restored to the blessings of dharma."*

Because of unneutralized bad karma, one's balance of good and bad karma may not allow escape from the wheel of samsara, repeated birth and death. Sufficient good karma can elevate one to the position of a demigod, but even more preferable, is to live a human life as a pure devotee; for in this condition, one can more easily become eligible for liberation from samsara and return to Godhead for all eternity. Therefore, Nanda and Vasudev discussed the surrendered devotee's situation:

Vasudev said, "Of course, you are correct,

*And in this life we must be circumspect;
Yet, there are those whose service to Godhead
Places them in a circumstance of dread.”*

Vasudev was explaining that some people’s condition in life may appear to be the result of bad karma, but in fact, even their sufferings are devotional service to God. Thus these sufferings have nothing to do with karma. In truth, whether one’s karma is good or bad, it is expunged when one surrenders to God. Through surrender the devotee turns over the results of all his activities to the Lord, be they good or bad. Therefore, the devotee is completely free of karma, free to love and serve Krsna exclusively.

To be unaffected by the vicissitudes of karma, one need only know that God is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, and that He is all-good. God knows the perfect way to do everything; He is competent to do it; and He has the will to do it. Trust Him. He is a friend closer than a brother and more loving than a mother. Have Faith!

Chapter Six: The Killing of the Demon Putana

On the return journey, King Nanda pondered what Vasudeva had said. “This instinct could not be false or useless. There must be some dangerous situation in Gokula,” he thought. Being very fearful for Krishna’s protection, he took shelter of the Supreme Controller. At the same time that Nanda was returning to Gokula, nefarious Putana was wandering about the area practicing her wicked craft of infanticide on Kamsa’s behalf. But whenever people chant and hear the Holy Name in devotional service, bad elements cannot manifest. Therefore, since the Supreme Personality of Godhead was personally present, King Nanda’s concerns for the residents of Gokula were groundless.

Once upon a time, demon Putana mystically transformed herself into a beautiful young lady before she reached the village of Gokula. With large breasts and full hips seeming to strain her slender waist, Putana was dressed gorgeously; her hair, decorated with a wreath of mallika flowers, encircled her beautiful face. She smiled graciously to everyone and in turn was welcomed by everyone, especially the men. The *gopis* thought that the blessed Goddess of Fortune had come to see Krishna, her husband. Looking for small children, baby-killer Putana entered King Nanda’s house unhindered, being directed by the Lord’s superior potency.

Even reposing on Devaki’s bed, Krishna was the omnipresent Supersoul and knew that Putana had come to kill Him. Playing like an ordinary child, Krishna cooed softly and closed His eyes as He allowed Putana to take Him upon her lap. Putana did not realize that she was taking Death Personified upon her lap, but did so just as surely as one who reaches for a cobra while thinking it to be a coil of rope. Despite her luminous appearance as an affectionate mother, the rotten heart of the wicked demoness Putana was cruel, like a deadly sword in a fancy case. Yasoda and Rohini watched her enter the room, overwhelmed by her beauty, and did not stop her. Rather, they were silent and respected

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her as a sincere mother.

Seating baby Krishna on her lap, the demoness offered the nipple of her breast into His mouth, smeared with a deadly poison. In a flash of transcendent anger, Krishna grabbed her breast and squeezed very hard, sucking out both the poison and her life air. Putana felt unbearably oppressed in her vital parts and screamed: "Leave me, leave me! Stop sucking my breast!" Wide-eyed, arms and legs ailing, she loudly cried again and again.

Putana's screams crashed and echoed throughout the Earth and even caused tremors in outer space and on the surrounding planets. People everywhere fell down, as if struck by a thunderbolt. In this way, Putana lost her life. As she lost her mystic potency, she opened her mouth and threw her arms wide, expanding into her true *Rakshasa* form. When that gigantic demon fell down, she felled all the trees for twelve miles. The demon's mouth had teeth like plows, her nostrils like mountain caves, and her craggy breasts were like giant boulders of stone. Her eye sockets looked like deep blind wells, her monstrous thighs like the banks of a river, her legs, feet and arms like large bridges, and her stomach as coarse as a dried up lake. The *gopis* and cowherds were already panic-stricken by the demon's screaming, but when they beheld her hideous, fierce nature, they became even more distraught.

Fearlessly, child Krishna joyfully played on the *Rakshasi's* breasts, but the *gopis*, upon seeing Him there, rushed forward and picked Him up in great anxiety and jubilation. Mother Yasoda and Mother Rohini immediately washed Him with cow urine and smeared Him with cow dust, waving about a cow switch, while chanting Lord Vishnu's Holy Names and simultaneously applying cow dung to the twelve parts of His body normally marked with tilaka. All this was done for the child's protection. All kinds of disturbances, especially for children, can be vanquished by Lord Vishnu's Holy Name, for wherever His Holy Name resounds, all bad elements cease.

Mother Yasoda and all the *gopis* were full of maternal love. After thus chanting the Holy Names for protection, Mother Yasoda allowed Krishna to suck her breast and then put Him down on His bed. Meanwhile, returning from Mathura, Nanda and the cowherds saw the gigantic dead body of Putana and were wonderstruck. They all exclaimed: "Vasudeva is a prophet, a great saint with mystic powers. Otherwise, how could he have foreseen this danger?"

The residents of Vraja then dismembered Putana's huge corpse and bore the pieces far away for burning. But when Krishna had sucked her breast, He had also sucked out all of her material impurities. Thus, when her body was burned, the smoke was fragrant like good incense. Putana, the infant blood-sucker, had come to Krishna to kill Him. Still, due to having offered her breast milk to the Lord, she achieved the highest perfection. What then can be said for those who intensely love Krishna like a son and offer their breasts for Him to suck, or as caring mothers offer Him something very dear with passionate motherly affection?

Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, always sits in the core of His pure devotee's heart. Even worshipable personalities, like Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma, offer Him prayers. Because Krishna embraced Putana's body and sucked her breasts, despite her being a vile witch, she achieved the position of a mother to the Supreme Being in the

transcendental world, thus attaining the highest perfection. What then is the position of the cows, whose teats He sucked with great happiness and who gave their milk gladly and with affection, just like a mother?

Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, bestows many benedictions, including oneness with the *Brahman* effulgence, liberation. For Him the *gopis* felt maternal love always, and He suckled their breasts with great pleasure. Due to this intimate relationship as mother and Son, despite their being engaged externally in mundane family affairs, one should know for certain that the *gopis* never returned to this material world after giving up their temporary bodies. When they smelled the fragrant smoke from the burning of Putana's body, the residents of Vrajabhumi were astonished. "Where is this sweet smell coming from?" they asked. Then they went to where Putana's body was burning. When they heard how Krishna had killed Putana, they were certainly amazed and praised the child for His wonderful deed. King Nanda felt much obliged to Vasudeva, who had foreseen the event, and mentally thanked him profusely.

Sukadeva Goswami concluded: "O best of the *Kurus*, King Pariksit, being simple and liberal, King Nanda immediately picked up his Son, Krishna, and placed Him on his lap. Smelling His head very affectionately, Nanda felt transcendental bliss, as if he had gotten his Son back from the dead. Anyone hearing with faith and devotion about how Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, killed Putana, surely attains transcendental attachment for the supreme original person, Govinda."

Commentary on Chapter Six

Hearing the pastimes of Krsna elevates a devotee to pure love of God. Especially Krsna's pastimes in Vrindaban reveal most exquisitely and profoundly this pure love. On the way to the highest expression of love, however, one encounters eighteen obstacles. These are all representatives of Kamsa the eternal enemy of Godhead. Fortunately, Krsna is very expert at killing all the demons standing in the way of pure devotion. Therefore, He is the real liberator of mankind. The 1st obstacle one meets on the path to pure love and devotion is the Putana witch. This master of the black arts is none other than the pseudo-guru, freely offering life's vital sustenance, but smeared with deadly poison. The conditioned soul, drowning in the material ocean, must find a guru to help him. But if he encounters a false guru, his predicament only worsens. The false teacher may pose as either the inwardly or outwardly manifested spiritual director. Usually this demoness dresses in the garb of the reasoning faculty. The human ability to reason offers to bolster eternal religion, but this proposal is like Putana's offering of poisoned milk. Wise devotees on the path of pure devotion must avoid all mental speculation in their attempt to realize

the Absolute Truth, the summum bonum. Genuine guidance, whether outward or inward, is to be found only in the spiritual succession that originates from Godhead Itself. As stated in the Bhagavatam:

“Real religious principles are enacted by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Although fully situated in the mode of goodness, even great rishis who occupy the topmost planets cannot ascertain the real religious principles, nor can the demigods or the leaders of Siddhaloka, to say nothing of the asuras, ordinary human beings, Vidyadharas and Caranas.” (Bhag. 6.3.19)

That person coming in discipular succession, who speaks the truth of Godhead, is the outwardly manifested Spiritual Master. The bona fide guru, taking into consideration the specific needs of his disciple, knows how to present the life-giving substance of eternal religion according to time and circumstance. One who presumes to instruct others without himself having realized the essence of pure devotion, or one who does not know how to present this essence for the proper understanding of the hearer, is a false teacher. Nothing on the path of pure devotion is more dangerous than the false teacher!

One should not think that he cannot question his spiritual master. Quite the contrary, Lord Krsna advises:

*Just learn of this truth from a spiritual master,
The self-realized soul is your real benefactor;
Humbly ask questions, render service in sooth;
Then he'll impart Dharma, the Absolute Truth.*

(Gita, Ch. 4)

The Lord says to ask questions humbly. There is no value in questioning the master challengingly, or with a mind already set. One has to approach the teacher with an open mind, ready to follow the Truth no matter where it leads. Bhaktivinode Thakur says that the student “is to read [or hear] the facts with a view to create, and not with the object of fruitless retention. . . .” He means that the Truth must be realized, not simply memorized. A tape recorder can also repeat perfectly. The great Thakur then explains, “Progress is certainly the law of nature and there must be corrections and developments with the progress of time. But progress means going further and rising higher. . . . Thus the shallow critic and the fruitless reader are the two great enemies of progress. We must shun them.” (The Bhagavata, p. 2)

A fruitless hearer or reader is like a parrot; he repeats without understanding. The shallow critic is one absorbed in surface detail; he never penetrates to the essence. Hearers who are a credit to their master strive to gain, through careful questioning, an understanding that penetrates to the depths. These good students, fruitful hearers, seek an understanding that harmonizes all spiritual viewpoints, not just those of their own scripture or tradition. Integrity is the quality we seek. The Absolute Truth is an Integral Whole, and it is Sanatan Dharma, Eternal Reality. Everything must t!

Chapter Seven: The Killing of the Demon Trinavarta

King Pariksit said: “O Master Sukadeva Goswami, certainly all the activities of the Lord’s various incarnations are pleasing to the mind and ear. Immediately upon hearing them, all the contaminations of one’s mind vanish. Generally we are ‘too busy’ to listen to narrations of the Lord’s Pastimes, but Krishna’s childhood activities are so attractive that one is instantly captivated. Then one’s attraction for hearing material things vanishes and in its place comes attachment for the Lord, His devotional service and friendship with His devotees quickly develops. If you agree, O Master, please narrate these Pastimes of the Lord. Please further narrate Krishna’s Pastimes after He killed the demon Putana, who came in the guise of a mother.”

Sukadeva Goswami said: “When baby Krishna was arching His back, trying to turn Himself up and turn over, this was marked with a *Vedic* ritual called *utthana*. This ceremony is performed at the time the child is first ready to leave the house. Krishna was about three months old at that time. The ceremony was held with all the neighborhood *gopis* in attendance and involved a ritual bathing for Him. At that time there was an auspicious conjunction of the constellation Rohini and the moon, which was honored by *Vedic* chanting accompanied by professional musicians.”

Having duly bathed the child, Mother Yasoda engaged herself in worshipping and serving the *brahmanas* respectfully. Seeing that baby Krishna was sleepy, she placed Him beneath a handcart on one side of the courtyard. Absorbed in the task of caring for the guests and distributing charity, she did not hear the child crying to be fed at her breast. In anger He kicked His delicate legs, accidentally striking the wheel of the cart, which then separated from the axle. The cart turned over and fell apart, scattering all the metal pots and utensils which were stored on it.

How the cart turned over and fell apart was a great mystery to Nanda and his guests. They investigated for a cause without a resolution. They all tried to understand how this had happened. “It must be the mischief of some demon or evil planet,” they speculated. The small children who had been playing nearby, however, insisted that it was due to having been kicked by Krishna. The assembled *gopis* and *gopas*, unaware of Krishna’s unlimited potency, could not believe the children’s assertions and accredited these claims to childish imagination.

Fearing the influence of some inauspicious planet, Mother Yasoda picked up baby Krishna, who was still crying, and allowed Him to nurse at her breast. Then she summoned expert *brahmanas* to chant *Vedic* hymns and execute auspicious rituals. When the cart was reassembled with the pots and other items arranged as before, the *brahmanas* performed a *re sacri ce* and other rituals to counter the supposed bad planet, and they worshiped the Supreme Lord with rice, Kusa, curd and water. The blessings of virtuous *brahmanas* are never in vain. Thus Nanda took Krishna on his lap and asked such virtuous and truthful *brahmanas* to bless his child. Then, while the *brahmanas* chanted hymns from the *Vedas*, Nanda bathed his child with herb-scented water. After that he made a *re sacri ce* and sumptuously fed *re* grains and other delicacies to the *brahmanas*.

Sukadeva Goswami continued: “For the sake of child Krishna’s prosperity and good fortune, King Nanda gave fully decorated cows, garlands and gold necklaces to the *brahmanas*. These high yielding cows were given as charity to the *brahmanas*, and they, in turn, gratefully accepted them and gave their blessings to Krishna and the whole family. These *brahmanas* were expert in chanting *Vedic* hymns, as well as mystic *yoga* performance. Their blessings are never fruitless.”

When Krishna was about one year old, Mother Yasoda was fondling her Son on her lap. Suddenly He felt as heavy as a mountain, and she could not tolerate His great weight. Fearing the child was being attacked by evil forces, concerned Yasoda put Krishna down on the ground and began to meditate on Narayana. She also called on the *brahmanas* to counter this attack. Then she returned to her household chores, having no alternative to thinking of Lord Narayana’s lotus feet. She did not know that Krishna Himself was the supreme and original source of everything.

While the child reclined on the ground, the demon Trinavarta, another servant of Kamsa, approached in the guise of a whirlwind and lifted Him high into the sky. All Gokula became shrouded in darkness due to the cloud of dust particles whipped up by the demon’s passage. The strong whirlwind also created a most fearful sound, and the dust and sand particles blocked everyone’s sight, preventing the villagers from even seeing themselves. Unable to hold her baby in her arms, Mother Yasoda became most disturbed, falling to the ground like a cow piteously crying for its lost calf.

When the wind subsided and Yasoda’s friends heard her sad lament, they came running. Not seeing their beloved Krishna present, they too felt much aggrieved and joined in the wailing. As a great whirlwind, Trinavarta bore Krishna high in the sky. But then Krishna made Himself much heavier than the demon, so that he could go no further. Krishna’s weight seemed to the demon like a great mountain, and because Krishna held tightly to his neck, the demon could not shake Him off. Due to Krishna’s tight hold on his throat, Trinavarta began to choke. He could move neither his hands nor legs, or make a sound. His eyes then popped out and the demon fell down dead, Krishna all the while giggling joyfully from the merry ride.

As the *gopis* cried for Krishna, the demon had fallen onto a big stone slab, as if pierced by the arrows of Lord Shiva. The *gopis* rushed to the spot and pulled baby Krishna off the demon’s breast and brought Him to mother Yasoda. Because Krishna was back unharmed, despite going through the heights with the demon, and was now free from all danger, the *gopis* and *gopas*, led by King Nanda, danced in jubilation. They cried: “How astonishing it is that despite being seized by this demon to be killed and eaten, Krishna has come back unharmed! Due to this demon’s sinfulness, cruelty and enviousness, he has been destroyed by his own wickedness. This is the law of *karma*. One who is innocent is ever protected by the Lord, while those who are sinful are always vanquished by their sinful deeds.”

King Nanda and the others exclaimed: “Previously we must have executed many great austerities and worshiped the Supreme Personality of Godhead, performed many pious activities, constructed public roads and wells, and given much charity, the results of which are that this child, although He was faced with death, has come back to us, making us all very joyful.”

Nanda was amazed by these occurrences, coincidentally remembering the warning spoken by Vasudeva in Mathura.

One day Mother Yasoda picked up Krishna and put Him on her lap, with maternal affection she began feeding Him the milk of her breast. When Krishna had almost had His fill and Mother Yasoda was embracing Him, gazing at His beautiful face, baby Krishna yawned. Startled, Mother Yasoda saw situated in His mouth the whole cosmos, the Earth and the heavenly planets, the stars in all directions, the sun, moon, air, fire, the seas and islands, the mountains, rivers and forests, together with all manner of living beings, both moving and nonmoving. The sight of the entire creation within her child's mouth caused her heart to palpitate and in bewilderment she closed her eyes.

Commentary on Chapter Seven

The path to divine love is ever blocked by various demons. The cart laden with housewares signifies the second obstacle—the constrictions of useless, rigid religious practices. When one has no understanding of the actual import of these practices, they become very cumbersome, like excess baggage. Mechanical regulations and sterile scriptural interpretation tend to smother baby Kṛṣṇa. Such a burden also smothers the immature person who, after his spiritual awakening, reads himself confined within meaningless restrictions. To instruct us how to handle this predicament, Baby Kṛṣṇa smashes the demon-cart. By doing so, He let us know that in the very beginning of our quest, with His help, we must smash the useless restrictions of vain tradition. As Kṛṣṇa Himself says:

*Abandon all kinds of pious speculation,
Surrender to Me, give Me your adoration;
Do not fear, I give My loving benefaction
To deliver you from all sinful reaction.*

(Gita, Ch. 18)

Vraja's natural and intuitive love for Kṛṣṇa is inaccessible to the mechanical pedant forever. To know the Absolute, our love must be spontaneous and real. Such love develops gradually by submissive oral reception accorded to Kṛṣṇa or His bona fide representative. We read bookstores filled with novels, dramas, stories, and histories, because the conditioned soul has a natural tendency to hear about the activities of others. When one uses this propensity to hear about the Supreme Person, one becomes completely successful and can immediately elevate himself to the transcendental position. Nothing can be more beautiful or pleasing to the mind's ear than the pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as described in the Vedic scriptures, the Christian Bible, and any other bona fide scripture. This is why the author, although a member of the Vaishnav order, promotes interfaith theology and dialogue. Of course, to the Vaishnav, the Pastimes of Kṛṣṇa are the most beautiful, because they describe the Godhead in His All-attractive feature of youth.

As previously explained, the immature person on the path of spiritual progress may encounter in various ways that poison his understanding of the Absolute Truth. The false guru, represented by the Putana witch, spreads this poison. Or, the neophyte may find that others are imposing religious practices on him that, if not properly understood, crush his spirit. The Demon-Cart represents this crushing burden of rigid practices undertaken without real comprehension. The third obstacle on the path of pure devotion comes in a cloud of deception and has the power of a whirlwind to whisk away a devotee of immature faith.

This whirlwind frequently appears in the form of speculative controversy. In Vraja, the realm of spontaneous love, the pure spiritual condition cannot manifest until the Trinavarta demon, all speculative controversy, is utterly destroyed. All mental speculations, rationales of the empiric school, and sceptical reasonings obstruct, like a giant whirlwind, the peaceful mood accompanying Vraja's pure love of God.

However detrimental these obstructions may be, proper hearing from the right source is more powerful. Indeed, authorized hearing is as powerful as Krsna. Therefore, Lord Caitanya assures us that simply by hearing Krsna's Name and Pastimes, all the contaminations of material existence fade away, and the cleansed soul returns to its original state of pristine, transcendental purity.

There is no difference between Krsna and His Name, or between the Lord and any of His other Names. To the Complete Whole, each Name is equal, full in all transcendental potencies. Thus, in this dark and dangerous hour of Kali, one should take advantage of God's mercy in the form of His Holy Name:

*Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna,
Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare;
Hare Rama, Hare Rama,
Rama Rama, Hare Hare.*

Chapter Eight: The Universal Form in Krishna's Mouth

Sukadeva Goswami resumed: "O King Pariksit, being greatly elevated by penances and austerities, Garga *Muni*, the priest of the *Yadu* dynasty, was urged by Vasudeva to visit Nanda's house. Pleased by the *Muni's* arrival, Nanda stood up with folded hands to greet him."

After being properly welcomed and comfortably seated, Nanda submissively said: "Kind sir, I know you are a self-satisfied devotee. Still, it is my duty to serve you. Please tell me what I can do for you. O my Master, persons of your caliber move from place to place, not for their own sakes, but for the benefit of poor-hearted *grihastas* (householders) like us. O great saint, by your expert astrological knowledge you can understand everything, especially how our past activities effect our present situation. O Master, foremost of *brahmanas*, one who has mastered the *jyotir shastra*, the scripture dealing with the

astrological science, is the Spiritual Master of everyone and now you have fortunately come to my home just to execute my two Sons' reformatory rituals."

Garga *Muni* replied: "Since I am well-known as the family priest of the *Yadu* dynasty, if I perform the purificatory ceremony for your Sons, Kamsa may suspect that They are the sons of Vasudeva and Devaki, and will then take steps to kill Them. That would be a terrible catastrophe."

Nanda said: "O great sage, if you are worried that your performing the ritual will make Kamsa suspicious, then chant the *Vedic* hymns and do the necessary rituals for Their second birth ceremony right here in my cowshed. No one need know, but this ceremony is essential for the children's purification."

Having thus been requested by Nanda to do what he had come to do, Garga *Muni* performed Krishna and Balarama's name-giving ceremony in secret. Garga *Muni* said: "The Son of Rohini's transcendental Qualities will bring great happiness to His friends and relatives. Thus He will be called 'Rama'. Furthermore, due to His unique bodily strength, He will be called 'Bala'. And for uniting the families of Vasudeva and Nanda, He will also be called 'Sankarsana'.

"In every millennium, your Son Krishna incarnates. In the past He has appeared in three colors – red, yellow and white. Now He has appeared in a very dark hue. This most beautiful boy appeared previously as Vasudeva's Son, and thus learned persons also call Him 'Vasudeva'. He has many Forms and Names, corresponding to His transcendental Pastimes and Attributes; while I know these, people in general do not. For the pleasure and transcendental bliss of Gokula's cowherdsmen, this Child will act most auspiciously. By His divine grace alone, you will overcome all difficulties.

"O King Nanda, history relates that when government becomes degraded and Indra dethroned, when people are disturbed by thieves and rogues, this Child comes to protect His devotees and allows them to flourish by destroying the thieves and rogues. The demigods always have Lord Vishnu on their side. How can any demon harass them? Indeed, any group or individual attached to Krishna is protected. Due to this affectionate relationship with Him, no demon – be they Kamsa and his associates, or their own internal demons, that is, their uncontrolled senses – can defeat them. In short, O Nanda, your child is equal to Narayana. His transcendental Qualities, Name, Fame, Opulence and Influence are exactly like those of Narayana. Raise Him very cautiously and carefully."

Having instructed King Nanda about Krishna, Garga *Muni* departed for his own abode. Nanda happily considered himself the most fortunate and blessed of fathers.

After a little while, the brothers Krishna and Rama started to crawl about on the ground of Vraja and thus enjoy Their childhood. As the brothers were crawling about, They became smeared by the puddles of cow dung and urine. In this condition, babies Krishna and Balarama looked very blissful, and when They crawled to Their mothers, Rohini and Yasoda picked Them up and affectionately embraced Them, giving Them their breasts to suck. While thus sucking milk from Their mother's breasts, Krishna and Balarama smiled sweetly, showing Their newly grown baby teeth. Upon seeing them, Mothers Rohini and Yasoda enjoyed transcendental bliss.

Sometimes these divine infants would grab the tail of a calf and the calf would pull Them hither and thither. When all the cowherd mothers saw these sweet Pastimes

of their Lords, they would drop their household chores and become blissful spectators of these transcendental events. Sometimes Mother Yasoda and Mother Rohini were unable to protect their Sons from various calamitous situations, like the claws and teeth of dogs and monkeys, or from thorns, knives and other dangers on the ground. Then they became overwhelmed with anxiety, and their domestic duties were disturbed. But then they experienced another kind of transcendental ecstasy, arising from the distress of maternal affection, which was absorbing their minds.

Soon Krishna and Balarama began to walk about Gokula on Their small legs and on Their own strength, no longer crawling. Soon thereafter, Krishna and Balarama began to play with all the neighboring children and thus expanded the transcendental happiness of the cowherd community. Seeing Krishna's beautiful and attractive childhood exploits and wanting to hear of them again and again, all the neighborhood *gopis* would gather at Mother Yasoda's place and speak as follows:

"O dear Yasoda, good friend, sometimes Krishna comes to our houses before the cows have been milked and lets loose the calves, and if the herdsmen become angry, your Son simply smiles. Often He devises some means whereby He can steal and consume tasty curd, milk and butter. If the monkeys gather around Him, He shares it with them, and when they are so full that they don't want anymore, He breaks the pot. And if He is thwarted in doing this, He becomes angry and takes revenge on the householder by harassing and pinching the small children. When the children start to cry, He runs away.

"If we hang the milk and curd high up on a swing, where Krishna and Balarama are unable to reach it, They put various machines and planks together to reach it. Sometimes They poke holes in the pots. And when the older *gopis* are engaged in their household chores, Balarama and Krishna sometimes go into a dark room and by means of the light from the valuable jewels and ornaments They wear, They see to steal our goodies. If Krishna is caught red-handed and confronted and charged by the householder, 'You are a Thief!' in mock anger, Krishna retaliates by passing stool and urine in a newly cleaned and sanctified place in our house. But just see, Mother Yasoda, how this Thief is now sitting before you like an innocent child!"

Then all the *gopis* would gaze at Him, seated there with eyes full of fear, hoping to allay Mother Yasoda's chastisement. When the *gopis* saw His enchanting face, instead of condemning Him, they enjoyed transcendental bliss by feasting their eyes on His divine Form. Neither could Mother Yasoda chastise Him and would simply smile in transcendental enjoyment at the fun.

On another day, while Krishna and His playmates were playing, they all came and complained to Mother Yasoda, "Krishna is eating dirt!." When Yasoda heard this, being full of anxiety for His health, she picked Him up and scolded Him: "Krishna, Krishna, why are You so naughty, eating dirt? All your playmates, including Your elder brother, Balarama, say this is so. What is the meaning of this?"

Lord Krishna replied, "I have never eaten dirt, mother. My friends are all lying. If you believe them, then just look in My mouth for yourself."

Mother Yasoda said, "If what you say is true, just open Your mouth and let me see."

Displaying His Pastimes as a human child, Krishna opened His mouth. Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is full of all opulences, and these opulences were never lost to Him at any time, but were automatically manifest at the proper time and place. On the order of His mother, Krishna opened His mouth and therein Mother Yasoda saw all entities, both moving and nonmoving, all directions and outer space, together with mountains, oceans, islands, the earth's surface, the blowing wind, the moon and stars. She also saw the planetary systems, light, air, the waters and sky; also goodness, passion and ignorance; and the time allotted to living entities, as well as natural instinct and *karma's* reactions. Seeing all aspects of cosmic manifestation, even herself and *Vrindavana-dhama*, she was bewildered.

She thought to herself: "Is this a dream or an hallucination of the external energy? Or is this a product of my mind? Is it the mystic power of my Child? Now let me surrender to the Supreme Personality of Godhead and offer Him my humble obeisances, for He is the original Cause of cosmic creation, by Whom it is maintained, and due to Whom we can even conceive of its being. He is beyond the material conception of mind and mere meditation or any other material activity. I simply offer my obeisances to Him. It is due to *maya* only that I wrongly think that Nanda is my husband, that Krishna is my Son, and since I am Nanda's queen, that everything is my possession and that all these cowherds and their wives are my subjects."

By the grace of the Lord, Mother Yasoda realized the truth. But then again, by the influence of the Supreme Master's *yogamaya*, she became absorbed in intense motherly affection for her Son. At once she forgot *yogamaya's* illusion that she had seen within His mouth. She picked up Krishna and placed Him on her lap as before, experiencing increased transcendental love for her all-attractive child. The glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead are described in the three *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Sankhya-yoga* literatures, as well as all *Vaishnava* literature; but Mother Yasoda thought that the Supreme Person was her Child.

Having thus heard of the great good fortune of Mother Yasoda, King Pariksit asked Sukadeva Goswami: "O great *Brahmana*, please tell me what great past pious activities Mother Yasoda and King Nanda did to attain such perfection of ecstatic love and to have Krishna as their Son?"

Sukadeva Goswami said: "Despite Krishna's being so satisfied with Vasudeva and Devaki that He became their Son, they were not able to enjoy His enchanting childhood Pastimes, which are so powerful that simply by chanting them, all contamination of material existence is immediately vanquished. Nanda and Yasoda relished these Pastimes fully. Thus their position is greater than that of Vasudeva and Devaki."

To execute Brahma's orders, the best of the Vasus, Drona, together with Dhara, his wife, spoke to Lord Brahma as follows: "O Brahma, permit us to take birth on Earth, so that the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Master and Controller of all, will then appear and spread the real goal of life, devotional service, for by devotional service those born in the material world can easily be saved from the degraded, miserable condition of material life." Then Brahma said: "Yes, I agree." Soon thereafter fortunate Drona appeared in Vrindavana as the illustrious King Nanda, and Dhara, his wife, accompanied him as Mother

Yasoda. As the mother and father of Krishna, Nanda and Yasoda exhibited constant, unswerving transcendental love in parental affection. By their association, all the residents of Vraja, both *gopis* and *gopas*, created the culture of *Krishna-bhakti*.

In this way, Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, together with Balarama, lived in Vrindavana, just to fulfill the promise of Lord Brahma. With his varied transcendental childhood pastimes, Krishna enhanced and enlarged the transcendental bliss of Nanda, Yasoda, and all the residents of Vrindavana.

Commentary on Chapter Eight

It is important to understand that the Srimad Bhagavatam, with its narrations of Krsna's Pastimes, is a sacred scripture. Like other scripture—the Bible, Koran, and Buddhist Sutras—the Bhagavata, as the Srimad-Bhagavatam is also known, contains religious truths that provide insights into the essence of man, nature, and the dualities in which we live. The Bhagavata's richness of thought and image conveys a wealth of religious enlightenment that until this century was available to only a few scholars. The Bhagavata contains such an abundance of material that the great Bhaktivinode Thakur commented, "If the whole stock of Hindu theological works which preceded the Bhagavata were burnt like the Alexandrian Library and the sacred Bhagavata preserved as it is, not a part of the philosophy of the Hindus except that of the atheistic sects would be lost. The Bhagavata, therefore, may be styled both a religious work and a compendium of all Hindu history and philosophy." (The Bhagavata, p. 23)

The Srimad-Bhagavatam is truly a storehouse of wealth that stimulates and enhances the appreciation and understanding of all religious traditions. Our sincere desire is that this present edition will open up the Bhagavata's treasure house of spiritual insight to people of all religious traditions. We hope that followers of other scriptures will take advantage of the Bhagavata's teachings. The people of India—no newcomers to the mood of ecumenism—have long appreciated the teachings of Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, and all others who serve the One Supreme Lord.

According to the Bhagavad Gita, the appearance of Krsna in the mortal world accomplishes three purposes. He defeats evil by killing the demons. He reestablishes dharma, the path of truth, and He enlivens His devotees through the pleasure He gives them by displaying His eternal pastimes here on earth. The pastime of Mother Yasoda's seeing the whole cosmos in Krsna's mouth is an example of this pleasure the Lord provides.

Lord Brahma awarded the best of the Vasus, Drona, along with his wife, Dhara, the privilege of having the Supreme Person as their son. They would take birth again within the material universe only for becoming absorbed in the Lord's childhood—His most attractive feature. Drona and Dhara further asked Brahma to grant that Krsna's childhood dealings with them would be so captivating that just by hearing them anyone can easily cross over the material ocean of birth and death. In fulfillment of Brahma's benediction, Drona appeared as Nanda Maharaj, and Dhara appeared as his wife, mother Yasoda.

We should carefully note that although Krsna's naughtiness caused all the village gopis to lodge many complaints, actually the village mothers did not want to restrict or punish Him. In fact, they enjoyed His mischievous behavior so much that if He had stopped, they would have asked Him to start again! Krsna is All-good! This is the difference between Krsna and an ordinary living being. Anything and everything Krsna does is good_for each part and for the Whole. Krsna is Absolute, and everything about Him is Absolute: His Name, His Form, even His mischievous activities.

Krsna, the Supreme Absolute, is so wonderful and perfect that every particle of Him, though quantitatively inferior, is qualitatively as good as the Whole. The part is in the Whole, and inconceivably, the Whole is in each part. The so-called New Physics offers a material understanding of this spiritual truth. It describes the physical universe as an integrated field of energies composing a single whole and postulates that the whole is present in every part. This perception of modern science opens new vistas for Krsna conscious preaching and helps us understand how Krsna and His Name are nondifferent. It also sheds light on how, with complete potency, He is present in His name and at the same time remains in His Eternal Abode! Truly, whatever you seek, whatever pleasure or happiness you want, you will find in the Holy Name. Chant Hare Krsna and be happy!

Chapter Nine: Mother Yasoda Binds Krishna

One day Mother Yasoda saw that all her household assistants were busy doing various chores, so she began personally to churn the yogurt. While so doing, she was remembering the activities of her Child, Krishna and she spontaneously and joyously composed and sang songs about His exploits. Dressed in a gold-threaded sari tied with a belt over her voluptuous hips, Mother Yasoda labored at pulling the churning rod, making her earrings and bangles shake and tinkle. Indeed, her whole body was shaking. Out of great affection for her Son, milk was oozing from her breasts. Her beautiful eyes, brows and face were wet with perspiration and the malati flowers in her hair were falling to the ground.

While Mother Yasoda was thus engaged, baby Krishna woke up wanted to drink milk from her breasts and thereby give her transcendental pleasure. Thus He came and grabbed the churning rod, putting a stop to the whole operation. Mother Yasoda warmly embraced her Son and tenderly set Him on her lap, gazing into His eyes and upon His face with intense love and affection. Due to the intensity of her love, milk was dripping from her breasts. Suddenly, she heard the milk on the stove boiling over. Quickly she set Him aside and ran to save the milk, although He had not finished drinking to His full satisfaction. Biting His lips in a show of anger, Krishna took a stone and, with mock tears in His eyes, broke the clay churning pot of yogurt. Then He ran away to a hiding place where He could eat the freshly churned butter He had stolen.

After rescuing the boiling milk, Mother Yasoda returned to her churn, which was now broken, and concluded that this was the work of her Son, for He was gone. By this time, Krishna was seated on a wooden grinding mortar turned upside down, giving milk, butter and yogurt to the monkeys. Being conscious of His naughtiness, He was looking all around, as if in great fear of His mother's chastisement. Upon spying Him, Mother Yasoda silently crept up from behind. When Krishna saw her coming with a stick in her hand, He jumped down and ran away. Great *yogis* try to capture Him by meditation and great penances and austerities, desiring to enter His effulgence. They never do!

Mother Yasoda also desired to capture Him! In spite of her slender waist, overburdened by large heavy breasts, she quickly followed Krishna and ~~mal~~ly caught Him. Being arrested by Mother Yasoda, Krishna admitted His offense. As a show of fear of her chastisement, tears were falling from His eyes, and as He rubbed them, His black cosmetic ointment was smeared all over His face. Taking her darling Son by the hand, Mother Yasoda affectionately chastised Him. Overwhelmed with intense love for Him, Mother Yasoda did not know Who He really was or how powerful He truly was, nor did she care to know. When she saw Him so visibly frightened of her, she cast aside her stick and decided to bind Him as a punishment, just to teach Him a lesson.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is without beginning or end, interior or exterior, front or back. He is omnipresent, all-pervading, present everywhere. Unaffected by Time, past, present and future are non-different for Him. He exists in his spiritual or transcendental Form always and everywhere. Beyond relativity, He is absolute and knows no cause or effect because He is the Cause of all causes and the Effect of everything. That Supreme Person, beyond the range of material senses, was now acting as an ordinary human child. Mother Yasoda considered Him as such and thus bound Him with ropes to the wooden grinding mortar. While trying to bind Him, however, Mother Yasoda found the ropes to be two inches too short, and the lack remained no matter how many ropes she joined together.

The neighborhood *gopis*, who were watching Mother Yasoda's desperate attempt to bind Krishna, were smiling and laughing, enjoying the fun. Even Mother Yasoda was smiling, enjoying transcendental bliss, despite her hard labor and frustration. All of them were wonderstruck! Due to her intense effort, Mother Yasoda's whole body was covered with perspiration, and the ~~owe~~rs in her ~~hair~~were scattered. Seeing H ~~s~~m ~~o~~t ~~h~~er ~~t~~hus ~~f~~atigued and frustrated, Krishna showed His mercy upon her and agreed to be bound.

Sukadeva Goswami concludes: Krishna is the controller of the whole cosmos, including its exalted demigods like Lord Brahma, Lord Shiva and Lord Indra. He Himself, however, is controlled by His pure devotee. This is the teaching of this Pastime. Neither Lord Shiva nor Lord Brahma, nor even Laksmi, the Goddess of Fortune, can experience such mercy from the Supreme Personality of Godhead as was enjoyed by Mother Yasoda. Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Son of Mother Yasoda, is likewise readily available to pure devotees rendering spontaneous loving service today! But He is not so accessible to those pursuing Self-realization by mental speculation or severe penances and austerities, or to those who think that the body and the Self are the same.

Once again Mother Yasoda became busy with household chores, and Krishna, the

Supreme Lord, still tied to the mortar, saw a pair of Arjuna trees nearby. In a former time, they had been demigod Kuvera's sons. In that birth, these two boys, Nalakuvera and Manigriva, were exceedingly opulent and materially fortunate. Due to pride and false ego, however, they were selfish and uncaring for others. Thus they were cursed by sage Narada *Muni* to become trees.

Commentary on Chapter Nine

This is certainly one of Kṛṣṇa's sweetest childhood Pastimes, and one of the most meaningful. The name Damodar is given to Kṛṣṇa in recognition of the unfathomable Love He shows in allowing His pure devotee to bind Him. Certainly, the name Damodar proclaims His incomprehensible personality and boundless nature. Yet, these qualities alone would not greatly attract us to Damodar. We are so attracted to Him because He is controlled by His devotee's love, and not by any thing else. Out of Love, Kṛṣṇa comes to His devotee Yasoda in an apparently helpless condition and appears to depend on her for His very existence!

Mother Yasoda was busy churning butter, but Kṛṣṇa wanted to drink her milk. In this way, Kṛṣṇa indicates to Yasoda that her first business is fulfilling His every desire, not in churning milk. In other words, the devotee must put God first in his life, **before** tending to worldly matters!

Notice how the drama of the story focuses on milk. Kṛṣṇa wants to drink His mother's milk; she is engaged in churning milk; and everything is disrupted by over-boiling milk. Milk, of course, is fundamental. It is one's first food and the basis of the Vedic economy. Furthermore, milk denotes spiritual culture, for it creates the finer brain issues conducive to spiritual realization. In Vedic culture, milk has many of the same symbolic connotations as do bread and wine for the Christians, or bread and salt for the Jews. Some ascetics live on nothing but a small quantity of milk each day.

While mother Yasoda was breast-feeding Kṛṣṇa, everything in this intimate scene was harmonious, natural and perfect. But when she put Kṛṣṇa down to tend to the milk on the stove, everything went awry. The over-boiling milk symbolizes the material concerns that seem so important in our daily lives. They are not wrong in themselves; indeed, ordinarily they are good. But when these concerns come between us and Kṛṣṇa, we are setting ourselves up for disaster. Still, Kṛṣṇa's Love does not cease, even when we interpose something between ourselves and Him. Rather, He enacts a pastime with us: He arranges special circumstances - sometimes distressful circumstances - that bring us back to the perfect point where everything centers on Him again.

In this story we read that Kṛṣṇa broke the butter pot and distributed butter in charity to the monkeys. Sometimes Kṛṣṇa also has to break our "butter pots," our stores of material enjoyment, even those that seem harmless in themselves. Very cunningly, Kṛṣṇa may appear to be from us, but this is just a play, an expression of His Love. No one can catch

Krsna, except in the way mother Yasoda caught Him. Krsna is not captured, fathomed, understood, or contained, even by great yogis and philosophers trying for many years. He is captured by neither asceticism nor scholarship, mysticism nor mental speculation. There is no material means of attaining Him. Krsna Himself says:

Only by undivided devotional love
Can I be known as I am in heaven above.
Only by loving service am I known in truth;
Only by devotion am I won forsooth. (*Gita, Ch. 11*)

Only when mother Yasoda surrendered to Krsna did He surrender to her. Only when we surrender completely to Him will He surrender to us. Again, Krsna says:

In the same measure that one surrenders to Me,
I reciprocate with each accordingly. (Ch. 4)

Still, one should never think that he has captured Krsna, or that Krsna is surrendering to Him. Our position is to surrender to Him - eternally, unconditionally. This alone will make us happy and satisfy the longing of our heart.

O Arjuna, surrender to Me utterly.
By My grace, you'll enjoy peace, wealth and victory. (*Ch.18*)

Chapter Ten: Deliverance of Nalakuvera & Manugriva

King Pariksit asked Sukadeva Goswami: "Why, O great sage, were Nalakuvera and Manigriva cursed by Narada *Muni*? How were they so offensive that even a great sage became angry with them? Please narrate all about this."

Sukadeva Goswami said: "Blessed by the association of Lord Shiva, O King Pariksit, these two sons of Kuvera were allowed to roam in the gardens of Kailasa Hill, and they were very proud of this. Once upon a time in these gardens they drank *Varuni*, a potent liquor. Accompanied by sweetly singing damsels, they wandered about in those flower gardens, their eyes rolling from intoxication. Within the flowing waters of the Mandakini Ganges, in dense expanses of lotus ~~owers~~, these two sons of Kuvera sported with those young girls in the same way young bull elephants enjoy in the water with cow elephants.

"By good fortune, O noble Pariksit, the great saint amongst the demigods, Narada, chanced to pass by. Seeing the boys so intoxicated that their eyes were rolling, he lamented their degradation. When they saw Narada arrive there, the naked damsels felt shame and quickly covered themselves with clothing, fearing a curse. The two sons of Kuvera, however, did not care about Narada's presence and remained naked. Narada realized that it was due to excessive opulence and false pride that they were so degraded and unconcerned."

To show them special mercy, he cursed them saying: "Among all material attractions, the attraction of excessive wealth bewilders the intelligence more than aristocratic birth,

bodily beauty or learning. Those who become falsely proud of their wealth, engage their wealth in sensuously enjoying wine, women and gambling. With uncontrolled senses, such fools are mistakenly proud of their aristocratic birth and material opulence and become so cruel that to sustain their temporary bodies, which they imagine will last forever, they slaughter innocent animals mercilessly, sometimes just for the fun of it. While alive, one may be proud of his body, thinking himself an important man – the president, or even a demigod – but after death, his body will become worms, stool and ashes.

“Why should one risk suffering in his next life, or go to hell to reap the results of his sinful activities, just to satisfy the whims of this temporary body? Even while alive, to whom does this body really belong – to its employer, to its mother or father, to himself? Does it belong to the conqueror who subdues it by force, to its purchaser at a slave market, to the children who burn it after death? Or, if not burned, does the body belong to the animals who eat it? Among all the possessors, who is the real owner? Not to answer this question and simply go on maintaining the body by sinful activity is most foolish. The body is produced by, and again merged into, material nature. Thus, it is the common property of all. In this light, who but a cheater will claim it as his own and for its maintenance commit violence to satisfy its whims? Only a rascal would commit such sinful deeds.

“By good fortune, these two men, Nalakuvera and Manigriva, are sons of demigod Kuvera. But due to the intoxication of liquor, pride and madness, they have become so degraded that they cannot even appreciate that they are naked. They have been blinded by the pride of their heavenly opulence and have become addicted to women. Now I shall cure them of their pride. Because they are already living like trees, which are also naked and not conscious of it, they shall get the bodies of trees. Nevertheless, despite being trees, by my mercy they will retain their memory of their past sinful deeds until their deliverance. Moreover, as a special favor, after a hundred celestial years they will see Vasudeva, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, face to face, and thus revive their real nature as His eternal servants.”

Having spoken this pronouncement, sage Narada *Muni* returned to his *ashrama*, and Nalakuvera and Manigriva became two Arjuna trees. Sri Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, just to substantiate the words of His great devotee, Narada, proceeded slowly to the spot where the two Arjuna trees were standing. The Lord said: “Although these sons of Kuvera have nothing to do with Me, sage Narada is My very dear devotee. Since he wanted Me to see them personally, face to face, let Me do so and thus deliver them.”

Having said this, Krishna crawled between the two Arjuna trees, pulling the big grinding mortar behind Him. He easily passed through the two trees growing close together, but the mortar turned sideways and got stuck. Krishna gave a strong tug on the rope, and by the strength of this Person Supreme, little Krishna uprooted the trees, causing their trunks, leaves and branches to fall down with an ear-splitting crash.

Immediately two perfect personalities came out of the trees. Their effulgence and beauty illumined all directions. With bowed heads and folded hands they offered obeisances to Krishna and spoke as follows: “Dear Lord Krishna, Your mystic opulence is inconceivable. You are the original person, the Supreme, the Cause of all causes, both near and remote. You are transcendental to this material creation. You are everything,

and this cosmic manifestation, both gross and subtle, is Your Form. You are the controller of everything, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The life, body, ego and senses of all living beings are Your very self. You are Vishnu, the Supreme Personality and imperishable controller. You are the Time factor, the primal cause, material nature and its three modes – goodness, passion and ignorance. You are the original source of the cosmic manifestation. You are the Supersoul, and thus You know everything from within the heart of everyone.

“O Lord, You are before creation. Who within the prison of material nature can know You? O Lord, Who has covered His glories with His own energy, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, You are Sankarsana, the source of creation, and You are Vasudeva, the first of the *chatur-vyuha*. Because You are the Supreme *Brahman*, we humbly offer our respectful obeisances to You. Appearing in bodies resembling an ordinary sh, tortoise and hog, You perform activities impossible for ordinary animals to perform – supernatural, incomprehensible, transcendental activities exhibiting in rite power and strength. Your bodies, therefore, whether human or animal in appearance, are truly incarnations of Your Supreme Personality. You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, again appearing with full potency for the welfare of all living beings within this world.

“O supremely auspicious one, we offer our humble obeisances to You, the Supreme Good. O foremost descendant and master of the *Yadu* dynasty, O Son of Vasudeva, O Prince of Peace, we offer our humble obeisances at Your lotus feet. From now on, may our words describe only Your Pastimes, may our ears hear only Your glories, may our hands, legs and senses engage only in acts pleasing to You, and may our minds think only of Your lotus feet. We bow our heads in homage to all things because all things are but Your different Forms. May our eyes always see the beautiful forms of *Vaisnavas*, who are all reflections of You.”

Thus offering their prayer to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the two young demigods became silent. Although Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the Lord and Master of all and was surely *Gokulesvara*, the Lord and Master of Gokula, He was tied to a wooden mortar by the ropes of the *gopis*.

Smiling broadly, He spoke to Kuvera’s sons: “Narada *Muni* is a great saint and very merciful. He bestowed the greatest favor upon you two by his curse, for you had become blinded by your lust for material opulence. Even though you fell down from Svargaloka to become trees, you were, indeed, blessed by him. I knew all these things from the start. In the presence of the sun, there is no darkness. Similarly, in the presence of a *sadhu*, a devotee who is totally surrendered and dedicated to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one is freed from all material bondage. O Nalakuvera and Manigriva, you may now both return to your home. Your desire to develop love and devotion for Me and be absorbed always in My devotional service will be fulfilled. You will never fall down from that position.”

Nalakuvara and Manigriva represent those who have no interest in spiritual life and lack the self-discipline necessary to attain it. In contrast to the milk of Chapter Nine, which is inherently good, Varuni is a very potent intoxicant, representing all the excesses that dull the senses and make one incapable of recognizing the holy. Nalakuvara and Manigriva were so intoxicated from drinking Varuni that they could recognize neither the great saint Narada nor their own rampant degeneracy.

These two prodigal demigods, therefore, are typical of every conditioned soul who forgets his real identity: eternal part and parcel, servant of Kṛṣṇa. Intoxicated with bodily sense gratification, forgetful soul's performance acts detrimental to society and their own self interest.

Out of compassion, Narada cursed Kuvera's ribald sons to become trees, a form of life that inhibits further degradation while providing natural benefits to other living beings. Not only did Narada temper the curse with this redemptive quality, but also he coupled it with the benediction that when the two prodigals had attained sufficient wisdom, they would meet the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself, face to face.

Every soul who falls to this material world is cursed to transmigrate through repeated births and deaths. Yet, like the two sons of Kuvera, the conditioned souls also have the blessing of Kṛṣṇa consciousness awaiting them, whenever they come to a state of consciousness in which they can recognize their true nature as eternal servants of the Lord.

In the intoxication of material life, things are often just the opposite of what they seem. Material vision says that wealth is good and poverty is bad. Transcendental vision sees differently. In the Gita, Lord Kṛṣṇa compares the illusions of this world to the reflection of a tree in water: what is highest is lowest. Lord Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 19:24) Narada could see that Kuvera's sons were suffering from their wealth. It increased their spiritual blindness and caused them to think, "I am this body and whatever I possess is mine."

On the one hand, material vision says that poverty is unfortunate and undesirable. On the other hand, transcendental vision says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matt. 5:3, 5, 8) A poor man is often more sympathetic to the woes of others than a rich man is. A man who has accepted his state of poverty as God's loving kindness and mercy—even though his poverty may have originally been involuntary—is better equipped than a rich man to manage any earthly wealth that comes his way. This greater qualification derives from his renouncing personal possession based on sense gratification. He recognizes that everything comes from God and is meant for His service. A soul who has attained this state of spiritual purity is in a position to perceive the presence of God in his life. Then he will know and follow the will of God. Nalakuvera and Manigriva underwent this progressive spiritual development, from the point when Narada cursed them to become trees to the point when Lord Kṛṣṇa delivered them from the curse of their material condition.

Vedic tradition recognizes that poverty is wealth for a real Brahmin, one who knows

the Absolute Truth. Of course, a real Brahmin can use any quantity of material wealth in the Lord's service. But he never thinks that it is his! This detachment is the essence of real renunciation. Rupa Goswami instructs us that to renounce things useful for Kṛṣṇa's service is artificial, false renunciation. No matter how much wealth one may have, real renunciation sees it not as one's own, but as God's.

Chapter Eleven: Krishna's Childhood Pastimes

All the neighborhood cowherd men heard the thundering, crashing sound from the fallen trees and feared the worst. They hurried to the place from where the noise came. There they saw the fallen trees, but could not figure out how or why it happened. Krishna was still bound by a rope to the mortar, but how could He have pulled down such stout, healthy trees? The cowherd boys were not bewildered or doubtful: "Krishna did it!" they cried, "He pulled the mortar between the two trees and when it got stuck, he yanked on the rope and the trees fell down and these two beautiful men popped out of the trees! We saw the whole thing with our own eyes."

Despite intense parental affection, Nanda and his cowherd friends could not believe this wonderful tale. Some, however, questioned, "Did not Gargacharya say He would be equal to Narayana? Perhaps it is true!" Seeing his dear Son still bound to the wooden mortar, Nanda smiled as he untied Him from the mortar.

Sometimes a *gopi* would entice, "If You dance for us, Krishna, I'll give You a sweetball." Saying this and clapping their hands, all the *gopis* made a game of coaxing Him in different ways. Then the Supreme, Almighty Personality of Godhead would smile and dance as they desired, like a puppet in their hands. Sometimes at their urging He would sing very exuberantly, placing Himself completely under their control. Sometimes they would order Him, "Do this" or "Do that." At times they would request Him to fetch a wooden plank, shoes, or other such things, and Krishna, just like an ordinary child, would try to do as they requested. Sometimes, however, to appear as if He were unable to do it, the object being too big or heavy for an ordinary child, He would simply bow to them and remain standing. Or, for their pleasure, He would flex His little muscles and grin. For devotees, both in Vraja and throughout the world, He thus demonstrated for their understanding how the Supreme Personality of Godhead can be captured and subdued by the love of His unalloyed servants.

Once a female vendor came to the village, calling to the Vrajabhumis, "Fresh fruits! Fresh fruits! Come and purchase fresh fruits!" Hearing this, Krishna grabbed a handful of grains and ran to the vendor, as if He were in need of fruits. While thus hurrying along, most of the grains in His tiny hands fell along the way. Offering what He had left to the vendor, she smiled and happily held His hands with fruits. When she turned back to her

basket, she saw that it was full of gold and jewels.

Again, soon after the Arjuna trees fell down, Mother Rohini went to call Krishna and Rama, who were immersed in Their play with the other children. Being too attached to Their play, Krishna and Balarama did not return home as Mother Rohini requested. So Mother Yasoda came. Although it was very late, Krishna and Balarama did not want to go, but in great affection, Mother Yasoda pleaded: “My dear lotus-eyed Krishna, come drink my breast milk. You must be very tired and hungry by now, my darling. My dear Balarama, please come quickly and bring Your little brother, Krishna. You have not eaten since early morning. Come have some lunch. King Nanda is waiting for You before He eats. Tell all Your friends to go home for lunch. Dear Krishna, due to so much play, Your body is now dirty. Come home and bathe. Today the auspicious star Rohini is conjoint with the moon, marking Your birthday. Come, purify Yourself and give cows in charity to the *brahmanas*. See how Your playmates are all clean and nicely dressed and decorated by their mothers. Come home, take Your bath, eat lunch, decorate and ornament Yourself and then come and play with Your friends again.”

Due to intense love and affection, Mother Yasoda thought Krishna, Himself the totality of opulence, to be her Son. Taking Krishna and Balarama by the hand, Mother Yasoda led Them home, where she bathed, dressed and fed Them.

Once all the residents of Vraja held a meeting to discuss how to stop all the great disturbances that were happening in Gokula. At that meeting, one very senior and experienced member, Upananda, who was Nanda’s brother, suggested that for the welfare of Krishna and Balarama, they should move. He said: “For everyone’s good we should leave this place, since there have been so many attempts to kill Krishna and Balarama here. Simply by God’s mercy child Krishna was saved from the Putana witch and again from the handcart falling upon Him. Then again, the whirlwind, who was actually the demon Trinavarta, swept baby Krishna high in the sky to kill Him, but by God’s grace, the demon himself fell down dead on a stone slab and thus the child was saved.

“Miraculously, just the other day, Krishna and His friends escaped death from the falling Arjuna trees. It was only God’s mercy that no one was hurt. All these catastrophes are caused by evil forces. Before it happens again, and until we can end the disturbances, let us take the Boys somewhere else that is safe. Nearby is a place called Vrindavana. It is very lush with grass, creepers and plants well suited to our cows and calves. There are nice gardens and big mountains there, a place of great facility for our happiness and well being. Let us go there immediately. Why wait? If you agree, let us pack up our things, put the cows in front, and go!”

Everyone present agreed with this suggestion from Upananda. “Very good,” they said. “That’s right. Let’s go!” Thus they packed up all their household things on bullock carts and immediately left for Vrindavana. Putting the elderly men, women, children and household goods on the carts, and with the cows up front, the cowherd men walked in the rear carrying bows and arrows while loudly sounding bullhorns. The women on the carts were dressed with excellent garments, and their breasts were adorned with fresh *kumkum* powder. While they traveled along, they sang of Krishna’s Pastimes with great pleasure. In this way they entered Vrindavana, where it is pleasant to live in any season. By placing

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their bullock carts in a semicircle, they made a temporary shelter.

When Krishna and Rama saw Govardhana Hill and the Yamuna River, They both experienced great pleasure. Krishna and Balarama, acting like ordinary young boys, chattered excitedly in broken speech and were a joy to all the inhabitants of Vraja. In time They grew big enough to tend the calves. Loaded with all sorts of playthings and not venturing too far from Their house, Krishna and Balarama played with Their friends while tending the small calves.

Sometimes They would play on Their trees, throw stones or ropes to knock down the ripe fruits from the trees, or just for fun They would throw stones or fruit in a game of "ball." Sometimes for sport They would drape Themselves with a blanket, imitating cows and bulls, and challenge each other, roaring ferociously. Sometimes They would mimic various animal sounds. Thus They enjoyed play just like ordinary children do.

Another day when Krishna and Balarama and Their playmates were tending the calves near the Yamuna river, a demon came there to kill Them. Seeing that the demon had taken on the form of a calf, mingling with the other calves, Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whispered to Balarama, "Here comes another demon." Then He Himself approached the demon very casually, as if He had no idea of the demon's plan. Suddenly Lord Krishna caught hold of the demon's hind legs, whirling the demon's body round and round until he gave up his life. Then, Krishna threw him on top of a Kapittha tree, which then fell over from the weight of the demon's original gigantic form. Seeing the huge corpse of the demon, all His cowherd friends joyfully cried, "Well done, Krishna! Great job! Thank you very much." Up above, all the demigods were watching with great excitement and pleasure, showering flowers on Krishna's head.

On another day, Krishna and Balarama and all the other cowherd boys each took his own calves and led them to water so they could drink. After the calves finished drinking, the boys also drank of the sparkling water. Nearby the watering hole, the boys saw a ghastly duck. The boys were afraid even to look at the monster. That monstrous duck's name was Bakasura. Having assumed the body of a giant duck with a sharp beak, he immediately swallowed Krishna. When the boys saw Krishna devoured by the duck demon, they almost fainted and their senses froze. Although Krishna is the father of Lord Brahma, He was sporting as the Son of a cowherd man. Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, now made Himself like the scorcher the demon's throat. Bakasura at once disgorged Him, but seeing that Krishna remained unharmed, he attacked Him with his sharp beak.

When Krishna, the guardian of *Vaishnavas*, saw that demon Baka, brother of Putana and friend of Kamsa, persisted in his efforts to kill Him, He seized the upper and lower parts of the demon's beak and, in the presence of and for the pleasure of His cowherd friends, He bifurcated the demon, as easily as a child splits a blade of grass. When He killed the demon, the heavenly denizens who were watching were very much satisfied. The celestial beings showered mallikowars on Krishna, the killer of Bakasura and they praised Him with joyful blasts of conchshells, by the deep rumbling of heavenly kettledrums, and by offering sweet prayers. The cowherd boys were wonder struck by this spectacle. Just as one's senses are soothed when one's consciousness and life return, so when Krishna appeared to be out of all danger, all the boys, including Balarama, thought

that they had gotten their lives back. They embraced Krishna in great joy. Returning to Vrajabhumi, each with his own calves, they excitedly related the particulars of this incident to their parents and neighbors. When the villagers heard what Krishna had done, they were amazed, and welcomed Krishna lovingly, thinking that He and the other cowherd boys had been saved from the jaws of death. They could not take their gaze off Krishna and His cowherd friends, now that they were all safely home.

King Nanda and his cowherd associates began to think: “It is truly wonderful how Krishna has so many times faced deathly situations, but by the grace of the Almighty Supreme Personality of Godhead, it was the demons that were killed and not Him! Despite these demons being so very fierce, they could not harm Krishna. Indeed, due to their having come to kill this innocent boy, as soon as they approached Him, they were killed themselves, just like insects in a fire. The words of one in complete knowledge can never become false. How wonderful it is that whatever Garga *Muni* predicted is now being fulfilled in every detail.”

Sukadeva Goswami concluded: “King Nanda and all his cowherd men enjoyed narrations of the Pastimes of Krishna and Balarama with great transcendental pleasure. It was so blissful that they no longer perceived material difficulties. Thus did Krishna and Balarama spend Their childhood years in Vrajabhumi by playing in youthful sports, such as games of hide and seek, building an imaginary bridge over the ocean, or jumping about like the monkeys of Vrindavana.”

Commentary on Chapter Eleven

It is interesting how easily the residents of Gokula could leave their little village. They simply packed a few belongings on an ox cart and within a few hours arrived at the site of their new home. Though they possessed nice clothing and jewelry, as described in Chapter Seven, they did not allow material wealth to burden them unnecessarily. Their lifestyle reminds one of Lord Jesus’s admonition to take no thought for what one eats, where one sleeps, or what one wears, but “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matt. 6:33)

For truly God conscious people - those who focus on God and keep Him and His service in the center of their lives - worldly possessions are not particularly important. They are not necessarily shunned, but are used with detachment, and always for His service. In His service, these possessions can then be related to family, friends, neighbors, and so forth. Chapter Eleven shows us how all the devout people of Gokula and Vrindaban centered their lives on Krsna, even though they did not realize He is the Supreme Godhead.

Krsna’s childhood pastimes manifest the normal, human nature of a child - for example, when He fetches things for the grown-ups and when He flexes His muscles. Yet, at the same time, His childhood pastimes display His supernatural, transcendental nature. This dual nature can be seen when He bestows special blessings on those around

Him - for instance, the fruit vendor.

Like other little boys, Krsna did things that were childish. Unlike other boys, Krsna always creates an atmosphere of auspiciousness and blessing. He can do this because He is the All-attractive Supreme Personality of Godhead. The residents of Vrindaban - whether cowherd boys and girls, merchants, or parents - all love Krsna supremely. His uncommon activities simply charm them, and they are all-auspicious for His devotees. Controlled by their love and devotion, Krsna is subject to His pure devotees' every desire.

The pure devotees think only of Krsna's welfare and service, and He thinks only of theirs. We can see this in Upananda's proposal that, for the sake of Krsna, the cowherd men and women move to Vrindaban. Demons had repeatedly attacked Krsna at Gokula. In the material world, however, demons are everywhere. Therefore, Upananda's tactic of moving did not diminish the demons' harassment. Nevertheless, wherever Krsna is, the demons are exposed and destroyed. To annihilate the demons is one of the reasons why Krsna descends:

*When pure goodness declines, and the godly are rare,
And evil increases, and foul is deemed fair;
I come to kill demons and restate the Dharma,
And thus please devotees and save them from karma.*

(Gita, Ch. 4)

Let us return to considering the eighteen obstacles on the path of pure devotion. Each impediment is represented by a particular demon that Krsna kills. The Putana Witch represents the false guru; the Demon Cart represents the excessive and useless trappings of religious formalism; and Trinavarta, disguised as a whirlwind, represents mental speculation. The fourth obstacle on the path of pure devotion is the juvenile offense, symbolized as the Vatsasura demon. He entered the cow herd disguised as a calf - a wolf in sheep's clothing, we might say.

Vatsa means "calf," and asura, of course, means "demon." No personal name for this demon is given in the text, so it is simply known as the Calf Demon. The image of a calf with its large trusting eyes suggests innocence, particularly that of youth. This innocence, however, is just a facade. Lurking beneath is the danger of inexperience and lack of realization in spiritual matters, a danger that often characterizes youth. Those under the spell of Vatsasura try to lose themselves in the herd. Youths especially are apt to accept the untested opinions and attitudes of their peers, rather than following the time-honored instructions of guru, sadhu, and shastra (one's spiritual teacher, saintly persons, and scripture). For succumbing to peer pressure and neglecting spiritual authority, youths are subject to the frailties and inconsistencies that plague infant children.

By comparing the Calf Demon's behavior to the reality he was trying to imitate, Krsna detected the impostor's presence, despite his disguise. A serious devotee must judge by the infallible rule of guru, sadhu, and shastra, and accept guidance from them. Mental speculation is always an obstacle. But when a devotee weighs everything according to the genuine known by the testimony of a bona fide discipular succession, then success is guaranteed.

The fifth obstruction on the path to pure devotion is symbolized by Bakasura, a giant duck with a huge pointed bill. Since ducks generally have rounded or blunt bills, the

sharpened point of this demon's beak suggests a significant deviation. When considered along with the giant duck's mannerisms, the unique beak suggests that he represents untruth or more specifically, religious hypocrisy.

Often those who have fallen under the influence of a false guru deceive themselves and others by imitating a level of spiritual consciousness far beyond what they have actually realized. Some of these inauthentic devotees even know that they lack qualifications of advanced spirituality, but still they persist in their imitation for the sake of material prestige and profit. Thus they commit the sin of religious hypocrisy.

Under the banner of fanatical sectarianism and pseudo-renunciation, these hypocrites may deceive the world with their show of piety, but their pretentious rites and rituals do not impress or please Kṛṣṇa. This critical assessment is not meant to demean external acts of piety. The true devotee, however, must be careful to understand how the external act furthers the essence of worship - devotion to Krishna or God. Sincere devotees are simultaneously detached from external acts and attached to loving Krishna. We are neither attached to things in themselves nor repulsed by them. We seek only to understand what furthers the goal of pure devotion to the Lord. Our concern is how to best use everything for God's service.

In attempting to swallow Krishna, the hypocritical demon deceives himself, thinking that he knows better than anyone else, even God, Krishna. He thinks that he has no need for a standard of truth other than himself. He has no respect for guru, sadhu, and shastra. Kṛṣṇa, as the Absolute Truth Personified, burns away or cauterizes any untruth that attempts to conceal or annihilate Him. In regurgitating his concoctions, the hypocrite espouses false knowledge of God, whom he attempts to pin down with sharp, biting words. But Kṛṣṇa, the Absolute Truth, rips apart hypocrisy as easily as a child splits a blade of grass.

Chapter Twelve: The Killing of the Demon Agha

One day, Krishna wanted to eat His breakfast in the forest as a picnic. Having gotten up very early that morning, He blew His bull horn to rouse His cowherd boy friends and the calves with its transcendental sound. After that, Krishna and His friends, each with his own group of calves in front of him, proceeded to the forest from Vrajabhumi. The boys all looked very beautiful carrying their bugles, lunch bags, utensils and sticks used for tending the calves.

In the forest, Krishna and all His friends played games and sported merrily. Although their mothers had all decorated them with valuable ornaments, when they came to the forest they added leaves, flowers and peacock feathers, as well as the colorful minerals that were available there. In play they used to steal each other's lunch bags. When a boy would try to get his bag back, the boy who had it would throw it to someone else in great amusement. When the owner of the bag became so frustrated that he cried, the bag would be returned.

When Krishna would go exploring to some distant place, all the boys would run after Him, declaring, “I shall touch Krishna first!” In this manner did they enjoy transcendental bliss with Krishna. Each boy sported differently. Some played flutes, others blew cowhorn bugles. Some mimicked the buzzing of bumblebees, others the sound of a cuckoo, some swooped gracefully like swans, or waddled like ducks, or sat silently like a sleeping duck. Some imitated monkeys by making “monkey faces,” or jumped from branch to branch as monkeys often do. They would also mock the echo of their voices, calling them bad names. Thus did Krishna – the source of *Brahman* for the *jnanis*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead for devotees who are His eternal servants, and an ordinary child for unenlightened beings – play with the cowherd boys. Having accumulated the reward of the pious activities of many lifetimes, the cowherd boys were able to thus associate with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Who can fathom their great good fortune?

Yogis may undertake many lifetimes of difficult and severe austerities and penances; nevertheless, when they gain the perfection of complete control of the mind, are still incapable of receiving even one particle of the dust of the Supreme Personality of Godhead’s lotus feet. How can we estimate the great fortune of Vrajabhumi’s residents, who lived personally with and saw that same Supreme Personality of Godhead face to face?

Thereafter the great demon, Agha, arrived. The demigods drink nectar daily for immortality. Still, they feared this demon and were anxious to see him killed. The demon was very envious of the transcendental pleasure enjoyed by the cowherd boys in the forest. Demon Agha was the younger brother of Baka and Putana. Also sent by Kamsa, he saw Krishna leading all the cowherd boys and thought: “If I can make Krishna and His friends serve as a sacrifice for my brother and sister’s departed souls, then the residents of Vraja, for whom Krishna and the cowherd boys are the life and soul, will also die automatically. No one wants the body after the life air is gone. Similarly, when their sons are killed, all the residents of Vraja will die too.”

Having thus determined, Aghasura took the shape of a huge python, broad as a mountainside and eight miles long. Then he opened his mouth wide like a mountain cave and lay at on the road, hoping to trap Krishna and the cowherd boys. When the cowherd boys saw this wonderful form, resembling a giant python, they took it as another interesting feature of the Vrindavana landscape. In other words, they considered it a creation of nature made to look like a great python, just for their amusement and pleasure.

Some of the boys asked, “Dear friends, is this a dead monster, or a real python with an open mouth wanting to swallow us all?”

Others said, “This is surely a live animal wanting to eat us. Its upper lip is like a cloud made reddish from sunshine, and its lower lip is like the reddish shadow of that cloud. Right and left of the corners of its mouth are two depressions like mountain caves, and the tall mountain tops are its teeth. The broad roadway is really its tongue, and that cave-like darkness within is the inside of its mouth. That very hot breeze is his breath, and the bad smell comes from all the dead bodies he has eaten and are now rotting in his intestines. Has he come here to eat us too? If he does, he will be killed without delay by Krishna, as was demon Baka.” Then they gazed at the beautiful face of Krishna, the slayer of Baka, and with loud laughter and hand clapping, they

entered the demon's mouth.

Sri Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the Supersoul in everyone's heart, listened to the boys describing the supposed python sculpture. Although they did not know it, it was actually demon Agha, appearing in the form of a python. Knowing this, Krishna wanted to stop them from entering his mouth. While Krishna was considering what to do to stop them, all the boys entered the demon's mouth. But the demon did not swallow them immediately, for he was waiting for Krishna to enter.

Seeing that all His friends, who had no other shelter than Himself, were now beyond His reach, having fallen like straws into the re of Agha's abdomen, He could not tolerate this. He could not bear to be separated from His friends, and by the influence of His own internal potency, He became momentarily struck with wonder and appeared unsure what to do. What was to be done? He wanted to simultaneously kill the demon and save His devotees. After a little thought, Krishna entered the demon's mouth, too. As He did so, the demigods who were hiding behind the clouds became alarmed, exclaiming, "Alas! Alas!" But Kamsa and Agha's friends were jubilant.

When Krishna, the Almighty Personality of Godhead, heard the demigods exclaiming, "Alas! Alas!," from within the clouds, He at once expanded Himself within Agha's throat, and thus saved Himself and His friends from the demon who was trying to kill them. Despite his attempt to extend himself to a very great size, the demon, nonetheless, could not breathe, and due to suffocation his eyes rolled and then popped out. The demon's life air being unable to pass through any outlet, rally burst out through a hole in the top of his head.

The demon now dead, Krishna turned His gaze on the expired calves and cowered boys, bringing them immediately back to life. Then Mukunda, Krishna, the giver of liberation, came out of the demon's mouth with all His friends and their calves. Simultaneously, from out of the monstrous body of the giant python there rose up in the sky a glaring effulgence, illuminating every direction. It remained individually distinct up above until Krishna emerged from the demon's mouth. Then, while all the demigods watched, that effulgence entered into the body of Krishna.

Everyone being most pleased and satisfied, the demigods showered flowers, the celestial dancing damsels danced, the *Gandharvas* – renown for their singing – sang songs of praise, drummers beat kettledrums and *brahmanas* offered prayers. Thus on Earth and in the heavens, everyone glorified the Lord. Even Lord Brahma, hearing the great celebration, came down to add to the glorification. When the python-shaped body of the demon rally dried up and was only a hollow skin, it became a place of interesting sightseeing for the Vrindavana inhabitants, and remained so for a long time.

The episode of Krishna liberating Aghasura and simultaneously saving Himself and His friends from death, happened when He was ve years old. It was made known in Vrindavana one year later, as if it had happened on that very day. Krishna is the Cause of all causes. Whatever appears to be a cause or an effect in this material world, whether higher or lower, is a creation of the Supreme Lord, the original Cause of all that be. Krishna's appearance as King Nanda and Yasoda's Son was His causeless mercy. For Him to display His unlimited opulences is not very wonderful. He showed such mercy even to demon Agha, a most sinful miscreant, who was then elevated to become one

of His associates and achieve *samipyā-mukti*, which is never available to materially contaminated persons.

If but once, even by force, one holds the transcendental form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead in one's mind, he attains salvation, the supreme mercy of Krishna, as happened to the demon Agha. What can we say then about those who welcome the Supreme Personality of Godhead into their hearts when He comes as an incarnation, or those who lovingly meditate upon the Lord's lotus feet, the fount of transcendental bliss and the transcendental agent for removing all material illusion?

Sri Suta Goswami related to the gathered sages: "O learned saints, Sri Krishna's childhood Pastimes are very wonderful. After hearing them, King Pariksit's mind became steady and he inquired from Sukadeva Goswami again."

Maharaja Pariksit asked: "How could things which happened in the past, O great Sage, be spoken of as happening in the present? Lord Krishna enacted the Pastime of slaying Aghasura in His *kaumara* period (one to five years old). How then could the boys speak of this incident in His *pauganda* period (six to ten years old) as having just happened? O my Spiritual Master, great *yogi*, please tell me why this happened. I am very curious about this. Was it nothing but Krishna's illusion? O my Spiritual Master, my lord, although we are but lowly *kshatriyas*, we are blessed by hearing from you the nectar of the Supreme Personality of Godhead's pious activities."

Suta Goswami said: "O great saint and devotee, Saunaka, when thus questioned by King Pariksit, Sukadeva Goswami immediately remembered the Pastimes of Krishna within his heart and externally his senses became inert. Slowly and with great effort he regained his sensory perception and began to narrate Krishna's Pastimes to King Pariksit."

Commentary on Chapter Twelve

This chapter ends with a cliffhanger. To appreciate the full impact, it is necessary to know that Vedic culture divides boyhood into three distinct stages. Until the age of five, a boy is called *kaumara*. From six to ten he is called *pauganda*, and from eleven to fifteen he is known as *kaisora*. At the time of Aghasura's death, Krishna was the leader of the *kaumaras*. Yet, at the time the residents of Vrindaban began to discuss the marvelous incident, Krishna was the leader of the *paugandas*. Unless one is familiar with the Vedic concept of boyhood, the existence of this mysterious gap in time is lost in translation.

Vrindaban was a society based on herding cows. When the calves were ready for weaning, the herdsmen grazed them separate from their mothers for part of the day, and when the little boys were old enough to perform chores without their mother's presence, the men gave them progressive responsibilities for taking care of the calves. Though the idyllic setting of Vrindaban with its forests and river was not without natural dangers, the

safety of the group sufficed for each boy's protection. The more resourceful a boy added to the safety, comradeship, and amusement of the group, the more likely the group was to single him out as its leader. Kṛṣṇa was the recognized leader of the kaumara cowherd boys. When He signalled them by blowing on His buffalo horn, all the boys would respond.

The competition of the cowherd boys for Kṛṣṇa's affections further revealed their high regard for Him. Each boy wanted to be the first to touch Kṛṣṇa upon His return from a solitary jaunt deeper into the forest. Eagerness to be with Kṛṣṇa after His absence is symptomatic of the intimate relationship between Kṛṣṇa and His devotee. Later, in Kṛṣṇa's dealings with the gopis, this eagerness and intimacy becomes even more prominent. In Vrindaban everyone loves Kṛṣṇa. Souls of all ages naturally love Him, and this love achieves its highest expression during His apparent absence. Then the soul experiences what Lord Caitanya calls love in separation.

As a religious truth, love in separation means much more than the old adage "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." As a prerequisite mystical state akin to Saint John of the Cross's "dark night of the soul," love in separation is a preparatory condition for union with the Divine Spouse.

Those who are mere professional religionists or academicians may be surprised to hear that the Supreme Absolute Truth sportively plays with His devotee-friends. The Supreme Person, however, lacks none of the qualities of His parts and parcels. Because we have a sportive propensity, it must also be present in the Complete Whole. The realization of this truth is proportional to our surrender to Kṛṣṇa. As He Himself says in the Gita:

*In the same measure that one surrenders to Me,
I reciprocate with him accordingly. (Ch. 4)*

On the lowest level of spiritual realization, one realizes the Supreme Absolute Truth as the all-pervading Brahman, described in the scriptures by terms such as the unmanifest, unlimited, unfathomable, unknown, and incomprehensible. Rising above this impersonal Brahman, one comes to the next higher level, localized Paramatma. At this stage one realizes the presence of the Supersoul in the heart of oneself and every living being. Finally, one realizes the existence of Bhagavan, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Consciousness of Bhagavan reveals the qualities of the previous two levels, but also something more. That something more manifests as the Supreme Person—the Supreme Enjoyer and Lover.

Some may query, "How can you say that one realization is higher than another?" We would give the same answer to a person asking why we insist that the mathematical quantity 3 is more than 2. At issue is the degree of inclusiveness. In 3, 1 and 2 are included. Brahman realization reveals the primary quality of sat: eternity, or pure existence beyond space or time. The Paramatma realization reveals two primary qualities: sat and chit, eternity and knowledge. At this stage, one experiences something more than existence. There is cognition, self awareness. Bhagavan realization, however, adds another quality to these two: ananda, bliss.

Certainly one who knows Brahman is liberated from material existence. But even demons killed by Kṛṣṇa attain this benediction—a boon quite easily achieved. Very rarely,

however, one becomes Krsna's pure devotee, His intimate friend. To see the Supreme Absolute face to face and to sport with Him on friendly terms of equality is a boon the greatest yogis seek through severe austerities and great penances. The most erudite Vedic scholars search for it through hard study and philosophic discrimination. Yet, the intimacy known by Krsna's pure devotee can be found only through pure devotion. If one is fortunate enough to meet a pure devotee and serve him in humble submission, he can see Krsna face to face immediately.

The sixth obstacle on the path to pure love of God manifests in a form of cruelty and violence, here called Aghasura. Also sent by Kamsa, this demon is the younger brother of Putana and Baka. As we are seeing, all demonic obstacles come from Kamsa, envy personified. Every demonic manifestation is a facet of envy, the original sin. Therefore, until envy of Krsna has been thoroughly destroyed, there will be no peace in Vrindaban! On the other hand, Krsna Himself tells Arjuna in the Gita:

*Because you are never envious of Me,
I'll impart this confidential wisdom to thee. (Ch. 9)*

As long as we are envious of Krsna, we have no love for Krsna. If we have no love for Krsna, we certainly have no knowledge of Him. If we actually knew Him, as He is, we could not help but love Him, because He is The Supreme Good and The All-attractive. He is All-together Lovely!

Kindness and compassion for all sentient beings cannot be separated from love of Krsna. To dishonor or harm the part is to dishonor or harm the Whole. Aghasura's cruelty and violence must be transformed before one can reach the lovers' land of Vrindaban. There is no substantive difference between love of Krsna and true compassion for every living being

Chapter Thirteen: Lord Brahma's Theft of the Boys & Calves

Sukadeva Goswami resumed: "O foremost of devotees, blessed Pariksit, you have inquired most intelligently, for while hearing the Lord's Pastimes, you become more enthusiastic and perceptive. *Paramahamsas* – those who have realized life's essence – are attached to Krishna in their heart of hearts, and He is the goal of their lives. By nature, they talk only of Krishna, as if the subjects were ever new. Their eagerness for such topics is equal to that of a sensualist for hearing about women and sex. O King, listen carefully. The Supreme Lord's activities are very confidential. No ordinary person can understand them. Still, I shall tell them to you, for a submissive disciple is allowed to hear even very confidential and hard to comprehend subject matters from his Spiritual Master."

After rescuing the calves and boys from death in the mouth of the demon Agha, Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, led them all to the riverbank and spoke as follows: "My dear comrades, savor the pleasant atmosphere here on this beautiful

riverbank. See the blooming lotus flowers, attracting birds and bees with their sweet aroma. Their buzzing and chirping sound is echoing throughout the forest. Note also how clean and soft the sand is. This is a perfect place for us to play. But since we are all hungry, and it is past our eating time, let us take our lunch here now. We can let the calves loose to drink water and eat grass by themselves.”

Agreeing to Krishna’s proposal, they untied the calves. Then the boys opened their lunch bags, and together with Krishna, ate with transcendental delight. Like the whorl of a lotus, Krishna sat in the center, and like its petals, His friends surrounded Him. All eyes focused on Krishna, hoping He would look at them. Some boys placed their lunch on flowers, others on leaves or rocks or the bark of trees, imagining them to be plates. In this way, they enjoyed lunch with Krishna, sharing bites of the various delicacies they had with each other. Laughing and joking, they experienced great fun. The demigods watched from above, awestruck to see that Supreme Personality of Godhead, Who generally eats only through great sacrifices, was eating joyously with His friends in the forest.

While Krishna and the boys were thus engaged, the calves wandered deep into the forest, being allured by newer and fresher grass. “I’ll go look for the calves,” Krishna told His friends. “Don’t stop eating.” Carrying a ball of rice and yogurt in His hand, Krishna walked into the forest searching for the errant calves. He looked in the mountain caves and bushes – everywhere. Lord Brahma, who lives in the higher planetary system, had seen the prowess of Krishna in killing and liberating demon Agha, and was amazed. To show his own powers, and also to witness more wonderful exploits of Krishna, Brahma whisked away all the boys and calves while Krishna was gone. He would now, indeed, see just how great Krishna is and how insignificant he himself was.

Being unable to find the calves, Krishna returned to the riverbank, only to find His friends missing as well. He at once realized that this was the action of Brahma. For everyone’s pleasure – including Brahma and the mothers of all the boys and calves – Krishna expanded Himself as all the missing boys and calves. These expansions had the exact bodily features, clothing and paraphernalia as the original boys and calves. In the evening, Krishna Himself and all His new expansions entered Vrajabhumi, His father’s place, just as if nothing had happened.

Krishna in His expansions as calves and cowherd boys entered the various cowsheds as their own calf and the different homes as their own Son. Upon hearing the cries and bugles of their Sons, the mothers of the Boys left their household tasks and placed their Boys on their laps, embracing Them warmly and offering Them their breast milk, which they loved very dearly for their great love for Krishna. Krishna drank the milk of all these mothers as if it were pure nectar. Cleansing and decorating Their bodies with tilak and sandalwood pulp, and then feeding Them with food, in these and other ways the mothers of Vrajabhumi all served Krishna personally. Similarly the calves went to Their respective sheds, where Their mothers licked Them again and again, and profusely fed Them with their milk, which freely flowed from their milk bags.

Previously, the *gopis* all had great maternal loving affection for Krishna. It even exceeded their affection for their own sons. Thus they distinguished their love for Krishna from their love for their sons. But now that distinction was no longer there. Indeed, their affection for their sons increased unlimitedly, for Krishna was now their Sons. Everyday

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they experienced new reasons for loving their own sons as much as Krishna. In this way, Lord Krishna – Himself the cowherd Boys and Calves – maintained Himself by Himself. He continued this Pastime for one year. Five or six days before the end of that year, Krishna entered the forest, tending His Calves, together with Balarama. It so happened that while grazing on Govardhana Hill, the mother cows, higher up on the hill, looked down and saw their Calves grazing below. Forgetting themselves and their herders, they ran very swiftly, despite the very rough path, down towards their Calves and fed Them their milk. These cows had new Calves, but due to intense affection for These older Calves, they allowed Them to drink their milk and simultaneously licked Their bodies, as if desiring to swallow Them.

Being frustrated in their efforts to stop the cows from running to their Calves, the cowherdsmen felt angry and ashamed. They ran down the rough path in pursuit, with great difficulty, but when they reached their Sons, they became overwhelmed with affection. Their minds and thoughts were all merged in parental love, which was sparked by seeing their Sons. Feeling great love and affection, their frustration and anger disappeared. Lifting their Sons, embracing Them and smelling Their heads, they enjoyed the highest pleasure. With great reluctance and difficulty, the elderly cowherd men stopped their loving displays and returned to the forest. Thinking of their Sons, tears were falling from their eyes.

In a similar way, the cows were feeling intense affection for their Calves, even though They were mature and weaned from sucking milk. When Balarama saw this unusual attachment, He was amazed and thought as follows: “What is going on here? All Vraja’s residents, including Me, are experiencing affection for these Boys and Calves, just like our affection for Krishna, the Supersoul of everyone. What is this mystic power and where has it come from? It must be the illusion of My Lord, Krishna, for no one else can bewilder Me!”

Thinking thus, Lord Balarama saw with the eye of transcendental vision and realized that all the Calves and Boys were expansions of Krishna. Lord Balarama said: “O Supreme Lord! Previously I thought these Boys were great demigods and these Calves great sages, such as Narada. That, I now see, is incorrect. Now I see that You Yourself are manifesting Yourself in all these varieties of different Forms. Although You are One, You have expanded Yourself into many different Forms of the Boys and Calves. Please, tell me what is going on and why You are doing this.” Being thus asked by Lord Baladeva, Krishna explained the real truth and Baladeva understood it.

When Lord Brahma came back after a year’s time by our measurement, but only a moment of time by his calculation, he saw that the scene had not changed – that Krishna was still playing with His Friends and Calves. Perplexed, Lord Brahma thought: “I know

I took all of Gokula's boys and calves and put them to sleep on my mystic bed and as of yet they have not awakened. Who then are these Boys and Calves who have been playing with Krishna for a whole year? Where have They come from?"

Fascinated, Lord Brahma tried to comprehend these two sets of boys and calves, who were separately existing. He tried to figure out which was real and which was illusion, but he could not tell any difference at all. No one can mystify the Lord, but on the contrary the whole creation is mystified by Him. Thus, due to Brahma's trying to mystify the omnipresent Lord Krishna, he himself became bewildered by his own mystic attempt. The light of a glowworm is insignificant in the daytime, and in the same way the mystic potency of a lesser person trying to use it against a much greater power is trying. Indeed, the position of that lesser person is diminished.

Then, as Lord Brahma looked on, all the Boys and Calves were revealed to have bodies with the hue of a bluish rain cloud, clothed in yellow silk. They all had four arms and held a conchshell, mace, disc and lotus over in Their hands. On Their heads were helmets, and on Their ears were earrings, and around their necks were garlands of wild flowers. Emblems of the Goddess of Fortune marked the right side of Their chests. Besides that, They wore armlets on Their arms, *Kaustubha* jewels hung from Their necks which were marked like a conchshell with three lines, and bracelets graced Their wrists. Their ankles sported bangles, Their feet ornaments and Their waists sacred belts. Thus They looked very beautiful. From Their feet to the tops of Their heads, every part of Their bodies was adorned with tender, fresh garlands of Tulasi leaves.

With Their pure smiles, these Vishnu Forms, shining like the waxing moon, fulfilled all the desires of Their devotees. All moving and nonmoving entities, from Brahma down to the microbe, were variously worshiping these *Vishnu murtis*, according to their capacity. Time, nature, the forces of reformation, desire, fruitive activity, as well as the three modes of material nature – all had taken Forms, which were worshiping these *Vishnu murtis*, whose unlimited Forms are eternal, full of knowledge and bliss. No one can estimate Their great glory.

Indeed, it was the Supreme *Brahman* that Lord Brahma saw, by whose potency this whole cosmos, with its varied living beings, is manifest. Thus he could see that all the boys and calves were really the Lord's direct expansions. Lord Brahma, his senses dazed with astonishment and stunned by transcendental bliss, became silent when confronted with the power of the effulgence of those *Vishnu murtis*. The Supreme *Brahman* is self-manifest, beyond mental calculation, eternally existing in His own bliss, and thus is far beyond the material energy. In relation to this Supreme *Brahman*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose greatness and glory was displayed in all the four-armed Vishnu Forms, Lord Brahma was perplexed. "What is this?" he thought in bewilderment. Lord Krishna, having mercy on Brahma's confusion, at once drew the curtain of His *yogamaya*.

His external consciousness then returned. Brahma stood up, much like a dead man returning to life. Opening his eyes, he saw the cosmos, together with himself. Looking in all directions, Brahma saw Vrindavana before him, full of trees, which were the source of livelihood for its residents and were pleasing in all seasons. Vrindavana is the Lord's transcendental abode, free from hunger, anger and thirst. Both human beings and ferocious animals, though innately inimical, there live together in transcendental peace. Then Lord

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Brahma saw the Truth Absolute, One without a second, possessing perfect knowledge and always unlimited, playing the part of a cowherd child, standing all alone exactly as He had one year before with a lump of food in His hand, looking everywhere for His cowherd boyfriends and calves.

Upon seeing this, Brahma quickly descended from his swan carrier, falling like a golden stick and touching the Lord's lotus feet. Thus offering obeisances by bowing his four heads at Lord Krishna's lotus feet, he bathed the Lord's feet with the water of his tears. Falling and rising again and again for a long time at Lord Krishna's lotus feet, Lord Brahma pondered over the greatness of the Lord that he had just witnessed. Then, gradually rising and wiping his eyes, Lord Brahma gazed up at Mukunda, Krishna. His head bowed low, his mind fixed and steady and his whole body shaking, Lord Brahma humbly began to offer prayers of praise to Lord Krishna.

Commentary on Chapter Thirteen

The questions asked by Maharaj Pariksit greatly enlivened Sukadev Goswami. The inquisitiveness demonstrated to Sukadev that Pariksit was engaging his mind, words, and energy in thinking of Krsna. Absorption in thinking of Krsna is the essence of Krsna consciousness. Unlike material subject matter, topics concerning Krsna never become old or stale. Krsna is navayauvana, ever-fresh. On the battlefield of Kuruksetra, although Krsna was one-hundred twenty-five years old, He still looked like a youth of not more than sixteen. God is eternal, but He is not an old man. Old age is a stage of disintegration. God never disintegrates. He is eternally new and fresh. Yet He is always complete. That is God!

Some devotees do not like the pastime of Lord Brahma's illusion. They think it is demeaning to the creator of the universe. Their fears, however, stem from misunderstanding the meaning of the pastime. In Vrindaban, Krsna's dealings with His devotees—whether His parents, the gopis, or Lord Brahma—are all pastimes of love. After all, Brahma stole the calves and cowherd boys just to see Krsna perform more of His wonderful feats. Brahma's expression of love attained its fulfillment when out of love the Supreme bewildered him and then to alleviate that bewilderment, drew the curtain of Maya over him.

To please His devotees and to further enlighten Brahma about the unlimited potency of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krsna expanded Himself into many calves and cowherd boys. Actually, this feat should not amaze us, for originally the entire creation is an expansion of Krsna. The Vishnu Purana states:

Whatever we see in the material creation—
Be it matter or the activities of the living entities—
Is simply an expansion of the energies of the Lord,
As much as heat and light are but fire's energies.

Expanding Himself to create another set of calves and boys is not at all difficult for

the Lord. It is the infinitesimal living being who has the duty, because he either does not understand or has forgotten the unlimited potency of God. Krsna can do anything and He doesn't work hard to do it! Simply by His Word, universes appear.

In the whole cosmos, the only lack is faith in Krsna by His finite particles. Enlightenment is nothing more than the realization, through faith, of Krsna's greatness. We must become aware of His omniscience, His omnipotence, His omnipresence, and His perfect benevolence. Simultaneously we must realize our own riddle, weakness, and utter dependence upon Him. In ourselves we can do nothing, but with His empowerment we can do anything.

Even Lord Brahma cannot comprehend the infinity of the personality of Godhead. Krsna is the origin and rest for everyone and everything. Whatever quality we see in His creation, His part, cannot be absent from Him, the Whole. We have senses and self-identity; therefore, He must have senses and self-identity too. But where our senses are limited and imperfect, His senses are unlimited, complete, and perfect. According to the Brahma Samhita, the Lord's senses are so perfect that with any one sense He can perform every function of all the others. In other words He can eat with His toes, see with His fingers, and talk with His belly!

One may say that such a conception is inconceivable. Indeed it is! Inconceivability is God's nature. Everything about Him is unfathomable! Therefore the Vedas and Upanishads tell us that God can never be known by endless mental speculation or the most careful academic research. He is not understood by reason, logic, or any other function of the human brain. We can know Him only by the heart, through unalloyed love.

*Only by undivided devotional love
Can I be known as I am in heaven above.
Only by loving service am I known in truth;
Only by devotion am I won forsooth.*

(Gita, Ch. 11)

The best process for knowing Krsna is to give up mental speculation and to hear submissively about Krsna consciousness from genuine authorities, from pure lovers of God. We do not need to change our social position. Simply surrender to Krsna by hearing attentively and submissively. Never conquered by material means, God gladly reveals Himself to a surrendered soul who conquers the misunderstandings ofnescience through careful hearing.

There is no previous qualification for such hearing—only a sincere desire to serve the Supreme Whole Personality of Godhead. Sometimes the Supreme Person is described in the scripture as nirguna. Nir means “without,” and guna means “quality.” Impersonalists use this term to assert that the Absolute has no qualities. But how can that be? The Absolute is the source of all qualities. Whatever is present in the part must be present in the whole. What nirguna actually indicates is that His qualities are without or beyond estimation. Even if one tries to estimate them, during his attempt His qualities will increase.

The Absolute is ever-expanding. Understanding this allows us to perceive Brahma's real mistake in stealing Krsna's calves and boyfriends. He was trying to test Krsna, to see how He would recover them. The Creator admitted his presumption and, in the

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next chapter, will beg forgiveness.

Unfortunately, Brahma is not the only one to commit the sin of presumption. We are all guilty of trying to measure our energy against the Personality of Original Energy. Brahma's powers exceed ours to an almost in rite degree. If his attempts look ludicrous, then how foolish our attempts must appear to those who know! If Brahma's power is insignificant in comparison to Krsna's, then what is our position?

Still, we make our foolish plans and try to implement our childish schemes. When one grows up spiritually and knows truly who he is and Who Krsna is, he surrenders:

*He who knows truly these opulences of Mine
Serves Me in devotion, with pure love divine.
From Me come both mundane and spiritual worlds;
In truth, from Me only all existence unfurls.
An enlightened soul keeps this truth in his heart;
He is æd in My service and never departs.*

(Gita, Ch. 10)

Don't make Lord Brahma's mistake. Don't think that you can fathom the greatness of Krsna. In pure love just surrender to Him, and know His mercy in delivering you from all sinful reaction.

*Chapter Fourteen: Prayers of Lord Brahma to Lord
Krishna*

Lord Brahma exclaimed: "O my dear Lord! You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the only worshipable Lord. I therefore offer my respectful obeisances unto You, just for Your pleasure. O Son of the cowherd King, Your transcendental form is deep blue, like a rain cloud, Your apparel is as brilliant as lightning, and the beauty of Your face becomes more beautiful due to Your gunja earrings and the peacock feather in Your hair. Decorated with wild œer garlands and carrying a herd of stid, a ut eand a buf fal oh or n You l œk mo st beaut ifd , even down t ot læ l un p of f œd You hold in Your hand.

"O Lord, the transcendental potency of Your body cannot be estimated by me, or by anyone else. Appearing to fulfill Your pure devotee's desires, You have shown the greatest mercy upon me. Despite my mind being unattached to material affairs, I still cannot comprehend Your Personal Form, nor can I comprehend the bliss You experience in Yourself. Although You are unconquerable by anyone in the three worlds, You are conquered and controlled by those who, though acting as householders, abandon mental speculation and with their minds, words and bodies honor the descriptions of Your activities and supreme personality, devoting their whole existence to the words spoken by You or about You by Your pure devotees.

“O my Lord, Your devotional service is the supreme path for Self-realization. To give up this path and take to the pursuit of speculative knowledge is to undergo a very troublesome endeavor with no chance of success – like a person beating the empty husk of wheat, hoping to get grain. Such is one’s chance for Self-realization through mental speculation. His only result is the endeavor he makes. In the past, O Almighty Lord, great *yogis* achieved the boon of devotional service by carefully executing their prescribed duties, and by surrendering all their activities to You. By such devotional service, purified by hearing and chanting about You, they gained understanding of You, and could thus surrender to You and be elevated to Your Supreme Abode. But non-devotees cannot know You in Your perfect personal Form. They may realize Your impersonal feature by meditation on the Self within the heart. But to do this they must purify the mind and senses of all distinctions and attachment to material sense objects. Only then will Your impersonal feature manifest to them. Great scientists may, in time, count the earth’s atoms or its snowflakes, or even the light waves of all the stars and heavenly luminaries. Still they can never count Your unlimited transcendental Qualities, O Supreme Personality of Godhead.

“O Lord, if one patiently waits for Your causeless mercy to be bestowed upon him, patiently accepting the reactions of his past offenses, humbly offering You obeisances from the heart, he becomes eligible for liberation, since liberation has become his rightful claim. O Lord, just see my savage impudence! To measure Your potency I attempted to use my imaginary potency to bewilder You, the in rite and primeval Supreme, Who can bewilder even the greatest illusionist. What is my position when compared to You? I am but a tiny spark of You, the original and Supreme Personality of Godhead.

“Therefore, O Lord, please excuse my transgression. I am born in the mode of passion and thus am innately foolish, thinking myself independent of You. I am blinded by the darkness of ignorance, which causes me to think of myself as the unborn creator of the universe. Since I am Your humble servant, please have compassion on me. O Lord, does a mother become angry when her yet unborn child in the womb kicks his legs? Is there anything existing which is outside of You? You are the original Narayana because You are the Soul of all souls and the eternal witness of everything. Lord Narayana, in fact, is Your expansion, and is called Narayana due to His being the source of the water of the universe. He is Real and not a product of *maya*. In this incarnation, O Lord, You have shown that You are *maya*’s master. Despite Your now appearing within this universe, the whole cosmos is within Your transcendental body – a truth You demonstrated to Your mother, Yasoda. Even as the whole universe, including Yourself, was displayed within Yourself, so here, externally, it is now manifested in the exact same way. How could this be, except by Your inconceivable energy? You have demonstrated today that both everything created and You Yourself are displays of Your inconceivable potency. At first, You were one, and then You showed Yourself as all the cowherd boys and calves. Then You became as many *Visnu murtis*, Who were adored by all living entities, including me, and then again You manifested as so many complete universes. At last You have returned to Your in rite Form as the Supreme Absolute Truth, the One without a second.

“O Supreme Master and Creator, my Lord, You have no mundane birth, but to slay the proud demons and simultaneously be merciful to Your humble devotees, You take

birth amongst demigods, sages, humans, animals and even aquatics. O supremely great One, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, Supersoul and Master of all mystic power, Your Pastimes are ever-existing everywhere in the three worlds. Who can measure how, when or where You employ Your internal potency to perform these unlimited Pastimes? No one can comprehend Your spiritual potency.

“This whole universe – which is innately unreal, like a dream – nevertheless seems real, and thus it deludes one’s consciousness and assaults one with repeated material miseries. This created universe seems real due to its being manifested by Your illusory potency. You are the primeval Supreme Personality, the one Supreme Soul, the Absolute Truth – Self-manifest, eternal, infallible, perfect and complete. You have no rival and are free from material contamination. Indeed, You are the Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent nectar of immortality. Those receiving the perfect knowledge of the sun-like Spiritual Master always see You like this, the Soul of all souls, the Supersoul of all *jiva* souls. By this understanding one crosses the ocean of illusory material existence. One mistaking a rope for a snake becomes fearful, but when he realizes the supposed snake to be imaginary, he gives up his fear very easily. Similarly, those who do not recognize You as the Supreme Soul suffer material miseries, but when they know You, all miseries vanish. Both the conception of liberation and the conception of material bondage are ignorance. Not being ultimately true, they become meaningless when one perfectly understands that the spirit soul is different from matter and is full of consciousness and bliss. Liberation and bondage have no more significance for the pure soul than the concepts of day and night on the sun.

“As a person of discrimination sees a rope as a rope and not a snake, and thus has nothing to fear or destroy, so a saintly devotee finds You everywhere, including their own body, due to finding nothing separate from You. O Lord, if one is blessed with only a trace of the mercy of Your Lotus Feet, he immediately understands the greatness of Your personality. Those, however, who try to understand You by mental speculation never do, even if they study the *Vedas* for hundreds of years. My dear Lord, I simply pray that I may be so fortunate that whatever body I may take, however many times I may have to take birth – whether in the body of Brahma, a demigod, a human or an animal – that I may engage in Your devotional service and be counted amongst Your devotees.

“How fortunate are the cows and damsels of Vraja, for they have fed You their breast milk to Your full satisfaction as their calves and sons. All the *Vedic* sacrifices, from creation’s dawn up to the present moment, have not so completely satisfied You. How unspeakably fortunate are King Nanda, the cowherd men and other residents of Vrajabhumi! Their good fortune knows no limit, for the Absolute Truth, the Fount of transcendental bliss, the Supreme *Brahman*, has become their child. Although Vrindavana’s residents are all inconceivably fortunate, the eleven deities of the senses, beginning with Lord Shiva, are also eternally fortunate, since these devotees’ senses are the vessels through which we continually drink the intoxicating nectar of Your Lotus Feet. The greatest boon to me would be to take birth in any form in the forest of Gokula, where my head would be blessed with the dust of the lotus feet of its residents. Their whole being, life and soul, is Mukunda, Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the dust of Whose Lotus

Feet is life's ultimate goal. Your presence is the greatest reward, the embodiment of all benedictions, and You have bestowed this upon the cowherd community of Vraja. Indeed, You have already given Yourself to Putana and her brothers, simply because she disguised herself as Your devotee. Now what remains to give these Vrajabhasis, whose wealth, homes, friends and relatives, children, even their own bodies and their very hearts and souls, are all dedicated completely to You?

"O dear Krishna, without becoming Your devotee, material desires and attachments simply act like thieves, one's home is a prison and affectionate feelings act like foot shackles. O Master, despite Your having nothing to do with mundane existence, You come here and mimic material life only to increase the ecstatic pleasure of Your surrendered devotees. Some people say, 'I know all about Krishna.' They may think so, but as far as I am concerned, Your opulences are beyond my powers of conception, what to speak of description.

"I now humbly request permission to leave, my dear Lord. You are the seer and knower of everything. You are the Lord of all universes, still, I humbly offer this one to You. O Supreme Personality of Godhead, for as long as this universe lasts and for as long as the sun continues to shine, I want to offer humble obeisances to You."

Sukadeva Goswami resumed his narration: "Having thus prayed, Brahma circumambulated the Lord three times, fully falling prostrate at His Lotus Feet. Then he returned to his own abode. After giving His son Brahma permission to go, the Supreme Personality of Godhead then brought the calves back to the riverbank where He and His cowherd friends were taking lunch, just as it had been one year before. Although they had been away from their Lord for one whole year, due to Krishna's illusory potency, they thought it to be merely half a moment. By the Lord's illusory potency, anything can be forgotten. By His *maya*, this whole universe is perpetually bewildered and no one understands His real identity."

The boys said to Krishna: "You are back so soon! We have not taken even one bite in Your absence. Now come and eat Your lunch in peace." Lord Hrishikesh then joyously ate His lunch with His friends. On their way back to Vraja, Krishna showed them the dried-up carcass of Aghasura. Upon reaching Vraja village, the cowherd boys sang, "Krishna saved us today by slaying a monstrous serpent!"

King Pariksit asked: "Great *Brahmana*, why did the cowherd women have such intense pure love for Krishna, a love even greater than they had for their own sons?"

Sri Sukadeva Goswami answered: "For every living being, O King, one's own Self is most dear. Attachment for anything – family, wealth or whatever – is only due to one's attachment to the Self. Although, O foremost of kings, being Self-centered, the conditioned soul Unfortunately misidentifies himself with the body and thus is more concerned for his own bodily self than for possessions such as children, home or wealth. For those who identify with the body, O King, the body itself is most dear, more dear than anything connected to but external to it. When one realizes the body to be "mine" but not "me", the body is no longer as dear as the real Self. The body will grow old and become useless, but one's desire for living is perpetual, because the real Self is eternal.

"Thus, it is one's real Self that is most dear, and only for His satisfaction does the

whole creation exist. Krishna is the Soul of all souls, the Self of all selves. Out of His causeless mercy and by His own internal potency, He has now appeared as an ordinary human child for the welfare of the entire universe. Those who understand Krishna truly, as He is, see everything, whether moving or nonmoving, as visible Forms of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They see no Absolute Reality apart from Krishna. Krishna is the Divine Ground, the Source of everything, whether gross or subtle. What is there that is separate from Him?

“One who is in the boat of the Lotus Feet of the Lord, Who is known as Murari, the slayer of the demon Mura and the Shelter of the whole cosmos, easily crosses the ocean of material existence which is thereby reduced to the size of a puddle formed by a calf’s hoof-print. Thus he escapes material existence, the place where there is danger at every step, and reaches *Vaikuntha*, the place of no anxiety or material misery. Whatever you have asked me I have now fully described. Although all these things occurred in His fifth year, they were not known in Vrajabhumi until His sixth. Anyone who chants or hears these Pastimes of Krishna – from His killing of the demon Agha, to the picnic lunch, to the Lord’s display of innumerable Transcendental Forms, to the wondrous prayers of Brahma – certainly attains all his spiritual desires. Thus did the boys experience childhood in Vrindavana, playing hide and seek, constructing play bridges, leaping about like monkeys and sporting in many other ways.”

Commentary on Chapter Fourteen

Chapter Fourteen, is the first hiatus in the narration of Krishna’s pastimes that is integral to the narrative’s flow. Certainly, at many points King Pariksit interrupted Sukadev Goswami to ask a question, and the answer served as a catechetical device. But here the break is very prominent and necessary. The prayers of Lord Brahma are a summary of Vaishnav theology, especially in regard to the multifaceted qualities of the Godhead. Although these qualities are many, yet they are one.

While far from complete in the details of Vaishnav catechism, Brahma’s prayers cover the major divisions: Impersonal Brahman_God’s all-pervading, inconceivable energy; Paramatma, the Supersoul residing in the heart of every living being; and Bhagavan, the Personality of Godhead. The prayers also mention many incarnations of Godhead, including the Guna Avatars: Lord Brahma, the universal creator; Lord Vishnu, the cosmic maintainer; and Lord Siva, the annihilator, who winds up the whole show at the end in his dance of destruction. Lila Avatars such as Vamanadev, Parashurama, and Ramachandra are mentioned, as well as various demigods, sages, and animals.

Despite our comprehending so many particularities, Brahma makes the point that the Godhead, as He is, is essentially incomprehensible in His entirety. If Brahma, the chief of the demigods and the creator of the universe, cannot comprehend the Personality of Godhead, surely none of his creations can do it. His actual intent,

however, more than pointing out the limitations of creatures, is to point out the limitless grandeur of Krsna.

It is significant that, despite his humility, Lord Brahma is the first guru of the parampara, the line of discipular succession descending from Krsna through our Vaishnav order even to the present day. Near the close of the thirteenth chapter, Lord Brahma had experienced a bewilderment in which he lost contact with his own personality. Krsna kindly restored Brahma's comprehension when he pulled His curtain of yogamaya over the scene. This restoration allowed Brahma to experience his individuality separate from and one with his Creator simultaneously.

*He also saw Him as Truth Absolute,
Who had incarnated to contribute
His presence to the lives of cowherd men.
And play at pastimes with His cowherd friends.*

This vision of the Absolute Truth represents a level of transcendent realization that exceeded Brahma's awareness as chief of the demigods. Now he is a guru, a transparent media or clear channel between the world of Absolute Truth and the world of mortal beings. He has now become a bona fide representative of Godhead, qualified to present the message and will of Godhead to others.

"Guru is One" is a statement of truth often misunderstood. When properly grasped it removes the major stumbling block most Western minds have about the practice of Guru Puja_worship of the guru. Correct understanding of guru worship is crucial to bhakti in general and Vaishnavism in particular. However real worship is offered, it is all really meant for Krsna, Godhead. Even worship of demigods is actually for Krsna. As He says in the Gita:

*Whatever is offered to the demigods duly
Is meant for Me only, but not offered truly. (Ch. 9)*

Worship of the Spiritual Master is not demigod worship; it is the most authorized form of Godhead worship. Lord Krsna instructs Uddhava: "One should know the acarya as Myself and never disrespect him in any way. One should not envy him, thinking him an ordinary man, for he is the representative of all the demigods." (Bhag 11:17:27). Demigods are confidential servants of God, and the guru is the foremost servitor. Whatever worship we offer the guru immediately passes to the Lord. As Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati explains in Sri Caitanya's Teachings (p. 311): "God Himself appears as the Guru in order to teach how to serve Himself. My Gurudeva is also in the same way one body with God. There is God Who is to be served, there is also God Who serves_God as Object and God as support. Mukunda is God to be served, He is object-God. The

best beloved of Mukunda_Sri Gurudeva_is serving-God, God the Support. There is no one so dearly loved by God as my Gurudeva. He alone is the best beloved of the Lord."

In other words God is loving God, His very own Self by which He is manifest to the disciple. Therefore, He is worshipable in the guru. Furthermore, by this love_God loving God_the guru instills the will of God in his disciple, and the disciple experiences that same presence in himself. In the same way that the guru is a clear channel for this world, it is

hoped that each disciple will also become a clear channel, experiencing the love of God directly in his life. God loving His individual creatures is merely God loving God, for it is His presence in each creature that is lovable.

Anyone can become guru, if he has realized his own true nature as part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa. As Kṛṣṇa's part, the guru's duty is to serve the Whole, which includes the entire creation as well as its Creator. In so doing, a real guru becomes one of the humblest of creatures. He knows that only by emptying himself of all false, bodily identification can he become a fit instrument for the Godhead.

While feeling himself to be the lowest of creatures, he must at the same time allow others to reach out to Godhead through him. This allowance includes accepting worship meant for God, even when the disciples offer it in a manner that to those with improper understanding appears as if they are worshipping the guru's physical being. For example, the disciples strew flowers at the guru's feet. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhanta explains: "In order to carry out the command of the Vaisnava Guru I have to be arrogant, to be brutish, to suffer eternal perdition, I am prepared to welcome such eternal damnation and even sign a pact to that effect. I will not listen to the words of other malicious persons in lieu of the command of the Gurudeva. I will dissipate with indomitable courage and conviction the currents of all the rest of the world, relying on the strength derived from the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva. I confess to this arrogance." (Śrī Chaitanya's Teachings, p. 313) It is, therefore, with grave submission that one consents to be a guru. One does it only because of the order of the previous acharya and for the benefit of others. One's humility must be so great that he may have to act in such a way that others may not perceive it—for instance, when he is required to be "the heavy" in leading others to full consciousness of Godhead. Guru means "heavy." Certainly, there is a danger here, if one is falsely posing as a guru. Recognizing this peril, Lord Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." He also provided a sure check: "Ye shall know them by their fruits." (Matt. 7:5-16) He went on to point out that grapes do not come from thornes, nor figs from thistles. In other words, a bona fide guru is known by the quality of his disciples. If the disciples are displaying the symptoms of love of God and detachment from the world, obviously their guru is one with The Guru, Who is God Himself.

Chapter Fifteen: The Killing of Dhenuka, the Ass Demon

When Lord Rama and Lord Krishna reached the age of *pauganda* [six to ten] while living in Vrindavana, the cowherd men allowed Them to take charge of herding the cows. Engaging thus in the company of Their friends, the Two Boys made the land of Vrindavana

very auspicious by marking it with Their Lotus Feet. Wanting to enjoy Pastimes, Lord Madhava, played upon His flute surrounded by the other cowherd boys who were singing His glories. Accompanied by Lord Baladeva, He kept the cows before Him as He entered the Vrindavana forest, which was full of flowers and rich with pasture for the animals.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead glanced over that forest, which reverberated with the pleasing sounds of animals, bees and birds, and was beautified by a pond whose water resembled the clear minds of great souls, with the fragrance of hundred-petaled lotuses wafting on a gentle breeze. Seeing this, Lord Krishna decided to enjoy the lovely atmosphere. The primeval Lord saw that the tall trees, with their fresh reddish buds and their heavy loads of fruits and flowers were bowing down to touch His feet with the ends of their branches. Thus He smiled happily and addressed His Older Brother.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: “O Greatest of Lords, just see how these trees are bowing their heads at Your Lotus Feet, which are worshipable by the eternal demigods. The trees are offering You their flowers and fruits to illuminate the dark ignorance that has occasioned their birth as trees. O Original Person, these bees must all be great philosophers and advanced devotees of Yours, for by following You along the path, they worship You and chant Your glories, which are themselves a place of pilgrimage for the whole world. Though within this forest You are disguised, O perfect One, they refuse to abandon You, their most worshipful Lord.

“O worshipable one, these peacocks and peahens are dancing before You in great joy, these doe are casting affectionate glances at You, just like the *gopis* do, and these cuckoos offering You excellent prayers. All these inhabitants of the forest are greatly fortunate, and their treatment of You certainly benefits great souls receiving another great soul in their home. The Earth has now become fortunate, because You have touched her bushes and grass with Your Feet and her trees and vines with Your fingernails, and You have graced her rivers, mountains, animals and birds with Your merciful glances. Above all, You have embraced the young *gopis* between Your two arms – a favor desired by the Goddess of Fortune Herself.”

Sukadeva Goswami said: “Thus expressing His satisfaction with the beautiful land of Vrindavana and its inhabitants, Lord Krishna enjoyed herding the cows and other animals with His friends on the banks of the Yamuna River below Govardhana Hill.

“Sometimes the honeybees in Vrindavana became so ecstatic that they closed their eyes and began to sing about Lord Krishna, Who roamed along the forest paths with His cowherd friends. Baladeva, would then respond to the bees by imitating their singing, while His friends sang about His Pastimes. Sometimes Lord Krishna would imitate the raucous chatter of a parrot, and sometimes with a soft voice the call of a cuckoo or the cooing of swans. Sometimes He imitated the dancing of a peacock, causing His cowherd friends to roar in laughter. Sometimes, in a voice as deep as the rumbling of clouds, He would affectionately call out the names of His cows who had wandered away from the herd, thus enchanting the cowherd boys and cows.

“Sometimes He would loudly imitate the cries of birds such as the chakoras, kraunchas, chakrahvas, bharadvajas and peacocks, and sometimes He would scamper away with small animals in mock fear of tigers and lions. When His older brother, tired from

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playing, would lie down with His head on the lap of a cowherd boy, Lord Krishna would soothe Him by personally massaging His feet with His own hands and offer other services. Sometimes, as the cowherd boys sang, danced, jumped about and playfully fought with one another, Krishna and Balarama would stand nearby hand in hand, praising Their friends' activities and laughing. Sometimes Lord Krishna grew fatigued from fighting and lay down at the base of a tree, relaxing on a bed made of soft twigs and buds with the lap of a cowherd friend as His pillow. Some of the cowherd boys, all exalted souls, would then massage His Lotus Feet, and others, qualified by their pure devotion, would gently fan the Supreme Lord.

"My dear King, other boys would sing sweet songs just suitable for the occasion, and their hearts would melt in love for their Lord. In this way the Supreme Lord, Whose soft Lotus Feet are personally cared for by the Goddess of Fortune, concealed His Supreme Opulence by His internal potency and acted like the simple Son of a cowherd. Yet, while yet enjoying like a village boy in the fellowship of other village boys, He often performed feats only God could display."

Once, a few of the cowherd boys – Sridama, the very close friend of Balarama and Krishna, along with Subala, Stokakrishna and others – lovingly spoke as follows: "O Rama, Rama, mighty-armed one! O Krishna, destroyer of evil! Not far from here is a big forest filled with rows of palm trees. In that Talavana forest many fruits are dropping from the trees, and many already lie on the ground. Unfortunately, all these fruits are being guarded by the wicked Dhenuka. O Rama, O Krishna! Dhenuka is very powerful demon and has assumed the form of an ass. He is surrounded by many friends who have assumed similar shapes and who are every bit as powerful as he.

"The demon Dhenuka has even eaten men alive, and therefore all the animals and people are terrified of getting near the Talavana forest. O Killer of enemies, even the birds are too frightened to fly here. In that Talavana forest are delicious smelling fruits never tasted by anyone. Indeed, even now we can smell the sweet fragrance of the Talavana fruits all around. O Krishna! Please get those fruits for us. We are so attracted by their aroma! Dear Balarama, our hankering to have those fruits is very strong. If You agree it's a good idea, let's go now to that Talavana forest."

Hearing the words of Their dear friends, Krishna and Balarama laughed loudly and, wanting to please their friends, set off for the Talavana forest surrounded by Their cowherd friends. Lord Balarama entered the forest of Talavana first, and immediately began shaking the trees with the power of a maddened elephant, causing many talav fruits to fall to the ground. Hearing the fruits fall to the ground, the ass demon Dhenuka ran forward to attack, causing the earth and trees to shake.

The powerful demon ran up to Lord Baladeva and wildly kicked the Lord's chest with the hooves of his back legs. Then Dhenuka began to run here and there, braying noisily. Rushing again toward Lord Balarama, O King, the infuriated ass stood with his back toward the Lord. Then, screaming in anger, the demon threw his two hind legs at Him. Lord Balarama grabbed Dhenuka by his hooves, and with one hand whirled him about and threw him into the top of a palm tree. The violent circling motion killed the demon. When Lord Balarama threw the dead body of Dhenukasura into the top

of the tallest palm tree in the forest, the tree shuddered from the great stress. Finally falling under the weight of the huge demon, the tree created a domino effect and knocked over many nearby trees.

Because of Lord Balarama's wonderful Pastime of throwing the ass demon's body into the top of the giant palm tree, all the other trees began to shake and strike against one another as if blown about by heavy winds. That Lord Balarama killed Dhenukasura is not such an amazing thing, since He is the unlimited Personality of Godhead, Controller of the whole universe. Indeed, the entire cosmos rests upon Him just as woven cloth rests upon its own vertical and horizontal threads.

The other ass demons, all good friends of Dhenukasura, when they saw his death were enraged and immediately rushed forward to kill Krishna and Balarama. As the demons attacked, Krishna and Balarama easily grabbed them one after another by their hind legs and whirled them all into the tops of the palm trees.

The Earth then appeared beautifully covered with heaps of fruits and the dead bodies of the ass demons, which were entangled in the broken tops of the palm trees. Indeed, the Earth shone like the sky decorated with clouds. Hearing of this impressive Pastime of the Two Brothers, the demigods and other higher beings showered down flowers and offered music and prayers in glorification. Now everyone felt free to return to the forest where Dhenuka had been destroyed, and they fearlessly ate the fruits of the palm trees to their full satisfaction. Also, the cows could now pasture freely upon the grass there.

Then lotus-eyed Lord Krishna, whose glories are most enlightening to hear and chant, returned back to Vraja with His elder brother, Balarama. Along the way, the cowherd boys, His faithful friends, sang His glories. Lord Krishna's hair, powdered by the dust raised by the cows' hooves, was decorated with a peacock feather and wild flowers. The Lord looked about charmingly and, smiling sweetly, played upon His flute. The *gopis*, all together, came forward to greet Him, their eyes anxious to see Him. With their bee-like eyes, the damsels of Vrindavana drank the honey of the lovely face of Lord Mukunda, and thus they gave up the anxiety they had felt during the day because of separation from Him. The young Vrindavana damsels cast sidelong looks at the Lord – looks filled with shyness, laughter and surrender – and Sri Krishna, completely accepting these looks as a proper offering of love, entered the cowherd village.

Mother Yasoda and Mother Rohini, behaving very affectionately toward their Two Sons, gave Them all the choicest things and responded to Their every desire at the appropriate time. By being bathed and massaged, the two young Lords were relieved of the fatigue caused by walking the country lanes. They were then attired in attractive, clean clothing and decorated with transcendental fragrances and garlands.

After dining sumptuously on the delicious foodstuffs offered to Them by Their mothers and being pampered in many ways, the Two Brothers lay down upon Their beds and happily fell asleep in the village of Vraja.

The Supreme Lord Krishna would thus wander about the Vrindavana area, performing His enchanting Pastimes. Once, accompanied by His boyfriends, He left without Balarama for the River Yamuna. At that time the cowherd boys and cows were

feeling distressed by the glaring summer sun. Feeling thirsty, they drank the water of the River Yamuna, but the water was poisoned. As soon as they drank the poisoned water, all the cows and boys lost consciousness and by the divine plan of the Lord, fell down dead at the edge of the water.

Seeing them in such a pitiful condition, Lord Krishna, the master of all masters of mystic power, felt compassion for His devotees, who had no other shelter than Him. Thus He immediately brought them back to life by showering them with His nectarean glance. Regaining full consciousness, the cows and boys stood straight up out of the water and began looking at one another in wonder. The cowherd boys then considered that although they had drunk poison and had died, simply by the merciful glance of Lord Govinda they had regained their lives and stood up.

Commentary on Chapter Fifteen

In this chapter, Balarama comes into the limelight for the first time. Significantly, Krsna is the first to bring out the importance of His older brother, by noting how all creatures adore and honor Him. Godhead, the Absolute, is an integral and inseparable Whole in the nondualistic unity of eternity. Furthermore, Balarama is a plenary portion of Krsna. An apparently self-contradictory and paradoxical term, “plenary portion” is an attempt to describe the indescribable nature of Godhead. A portion is not the whole; still, a plenary portion encompasses all the qualities and the entire nature of the whole. In one sense, Balarama and Krsna are identical. Yet, in another sense, in the world of duality, They interact as the subject and the object of Their own communication.

Although for Krsna to sing His own praises would not be improper, His pastimes become more attractive and comprehensible to mortals when different aspects of Godhead’s Personality can be perceived as separate Persons. In the narration of Krsna’s pastimes, this chapter is not the first to present a plenary portion of Krsna. The chapter covering the birth of Krsna declares Ananta Sesh to be the snake-shaped plenary portion of Krsna. Just as Krsna is Vishnu, Balarama is Ananta Sesh. He represents the qualities of masculine strength. You will recall that Gargamuni awarded Balarama His name to indicate that quality. Thus, we should not be surprised that Balarama’s first noteworthy exploit demonstrated great physical strength—picking up an ass by its hind legs and throwing it into the trees.

Dhenukasura represents the seventh obstacle on the path of pure devotion. The image of an ass connotes stupidity and stubbornness. The ass-demon prevents others from enjoying the luscious fruits of Talavan, although he himself cannot enjoy them. He is comparable to dull-witted souls who, failing to understand that the ultimate religious principle is loving surrender to God, engage their narrow sectarianism to prevent others from relishing love of God.

Krsna, both in the literal meaning of His name and in actual fact, is all-attractive. At

the same time, He is beyond the ability of the mortal mind to pen or scan. He is unlimited and inconceivable. Therefore, though His descriptions are many and diverse, He remains undescribed. One who truly understands this knows that His many and varied descriptions are always complementary. Only small-minded persons see them as contradictory. Unintelligent persons, instead of relishing nectar by understanding the Truth, derive satisfaction from an egotistical addiction to rules, regulations, formulas, and rituals.

These dim-witted persons are content to be confused and bound up by chains of literalism. Thereby they neglect to relish the real nectar of spontaneous and unconditional love of God. In this way they become indistinguishable from gross materialists and sense enjoyers, because they are attached to what is temporary and illusory rather than to what is eternal and permanent.

True Vaishnavism, unalloyed devotion to God, cannot be tasted until Dhenukasura, the demon of sectarianism, is utterly obliterated. God is one, and the path to divine knowledge is one: unfathomed, unalloyed, unlimited love.

Chapter Sixteen: Krishna Chastises the Serpent Kaliya

Lord Sri Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, seeing that the Yamuna River had become contaminated by the black snake Kaliya, determined to purify the river by banishing Kaliya.

King Pariksit inquired: “O learned Sage, please explain how the Supreme Personality of Godhead chastised the serpent Kaliya within the transcendental waters of the Yamuna, and how it was that Kaliya had been living there for many years. O *Brahmana*, the unlimited Supreme Personality of Godhead acts freely according to His own desires. Who could be satiated when hearing the nectar of the magnanimous Pastimes He performed as a cowherd boy in Vrindavana?”

Sri Sukadeva Goswami answered: “Within the river Kalindi [Yamuna] was a lake inhabited by the serpent Kaliya, whose very poison constantly heated and boiled its waters. Indeed, the vapors thus created were so poisonous that birds flying over the contaminated lake would fall down dead. The wind blowing over that deadly lake carried droplets of water to the shore. Simply by coming in contact with that poisonous breeze, all vegetation and creatures on the shore also died.

“Lord Krishna could understand that the Kaliya serpent had polluted the Yamuna River with his extremely lethal poison. Since Krishna had descended from the spiritual world specifically to subdue envious demons, the Lord immediately climbed to the top of a tall *kadamba* tree and prepared Himself for battle by tightening His belt and slapping His arms. He then dove head first into the poisonous water. When the Supreme Personality of Godhead landed in the serpent’s lake, the Kaliya snake became extremely agitated, and his heavy breathing further polluted the waters with volumes of poison. The force of the Lord’s entrance into the lake caused it to overflow on all sides, and poisonous, fearsome

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waves flooded the surrounding lands up to a distance of one hundred bow-lengths. This is not at all amazing, however, for the Supreme Lord possesses in rite strength.

“Krishna began sporting in Kaliya’s lake like a lordly elephant – swirling His mighty arms and making the water boil and heave in various ways. Kaliya was enraged by the sounds of this trespasser and immediately swam up from the depths. He saw that Krishna, Who wore yellow silken garments, was very delicate, His attractive body shining like a glowing white cloud, His chest bearing the mark of *Srivatsa*, His face smiling beautifully and His feet resembling the whorl of a lotus flower. The Lord was playing fearlessly in the rank waters. Despite His wonderful appearance, the envious Kaliya furiously bit Him on the chest and then quickly enveloped Him in his coils.

“When the members of the cowherd community, who had accepted Krishna as their dearest friend, saw Him motionless, enveloped in the snake’s coils, they were terribly distressed. They had offered Krishna everything – their very selves, their families, their wealth, wives and all pleasures. At the sight of the Lord in the clutches of the Kaliya snake, their intelligence became deranged by grief, lamentation and fear, and thus they fell to the ground. The cows, bulls and calves, in great anxiety, called out piteously to Krishna. Fixing their eyes on Him, they stood motionless

, as if ready to cry but too shocked to shed tears.

“In the Vrindavana area there were then seen three types of fearful omens – those on the Earth, those in the sky, and those in the bodies of living creatures – which announced imminent danger. Seeing the inauspicious omens, Nanda Maharaja and the other cowherd men were fearful, for they knew that Krishna had gone to herd the cows that day without His elder brother, Balarama. Although they had dedicated their minds to Krishna, accepting Him as their very life, they were still unaware of His great power and opulence. Thus they concluded that the inauspicious omens indicated He had met with death, and they were overwhelmed with lamentation. All the inhabitants of Vrindavana thought of Krishna just as a cow thinks of her helpless young calf, and thus these poor, suffering people rushed out of the village, intent upon finding Him.

The Supreme Lord Balarama, the Master of all transcendental knowledge, smiled and said nothing when He saw the residents of Vrindavana in such distress. He understood the extraordinary power of His younger brother., but the residents did not. They hurried toward the banks of the Yamuna in search of their dearest Krishna, following the path marked by His footprints, bearing the unique signs of the Personality of Godhead: “lotus flower, barleycorn, elephant goad, thunderbolt and æ My dear King Pariksit, seeing His footprints on the path among the cows’ hoof prints, the residents of Vrindavana rushed along in great haste.

“As they hurried along the path to the Yamuna River’s bank, in the distance they saw Krishna in the poisonous lake, motionless within the coils of the monstrous black serpent. They furthermore saw that the cowherd boys had fallen unconscious and that the herds were standing on all sides, crying out for Krishna. Seeing all this, the residents of Vrindavana were overwhelmed with anguish and confusion. When the young *gopis*, whose minds were constantly attached to Krishna, the unlimited Supreme Lord, saw that He was now within the clutches of the serpent, they remembered His loving friendship, His smiling glances, and His talks with them. Burning with great sorrow, they saw

the entire universe as void.

“Although the elder *gopis* were feeling just as much distress as Krishna’s mother and were pouring forth a flood of sorrowful tears, they had to forcibly hold back Yasoda, whose consciousness was totally absorbed in her Son. Standing like corpses, with their eyes fixed upon His face, these *gopis* each took turns recounting the Pastimes of the Darling of Vraja. Lord Balarama then saw that Nanda Maharaja and the other cowherd men, who had dedicated their very lives to Krishna, were intent on entering the serpent’s lake to rescue Krishna. As the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Balarama knew fully well Lord Krishna’s actual power, and therefore He restrained them.

“Krishna remained for some time within the coils of the serpent, imitating the behavior of an ordinary mortal. But when He understood that the women, children and other residents of His village of Gokula were in acute distress because of their love for Him, their only shelter and goal in life, He immediately broke loose from the bonds of the Kaliya serpent by expanding Himself. The serpent’s coils, tormented by the expanding body of the Lord, left Kaliya no choice but to release Him. In great anger the serpent then raised his hoods high and stood still, breathing heavily. His nostrils appeared like vessels for cooking poison, and his glaring eyes like rebrands. Thus the serpent looked at the Lord.

“Again and again Kaliya licked his lips with his bifurcated tongues as He stared at Krishna with a glance full of terrible, poisonous ire. But Krishna playfully circled him, just as Garuda teases a snake. In response, Kaliya also circled, looking for an opportunity to bite the Lord. Having depleted the serpent’s strength with His relentless circling, Sri Krishna, the Origin of Everything, pushed down Kaliya’s raised shoulders and mounted his broad serpentine heads. Then Lord Sri Krishna, the Original Master of all arts, began to dance, His Lotus Feet deeply reddened by the touch of the numerous jewels upon the serpent’s heads. Seeing the Lord dancing, His servants in the heavenly planets – the *Gandharvas*, *Siddhas*, sages, *Charanas* and wives of the demigods – immediately gathered there to see this wonder. With great pleasure they started to accompany the Lord’s dancing by playing drums such as *mridangas*, *panavas* and *anakas*. They also made offerings of songs, flowers and prayers.

“My dear King, Kaliya had one hundred and one prominent heads, and when one of them would not bow down, Lord Sri Krishna, Who inflicts punishment on cruel evil-doers, would smash that stubborn head with a striking blow from His foot. As Kaliya entered his death throes, he began wheeling his heads around and vomiting ghastly blood from his mouths and nostrils. Experiencing extreme pain and misery and exuding poisonous waste from his eyes, Kaliya occasionally would dare to raise up one of his heads, which would breathe heavily with anger. Then the Lord would dance on it and subdue it, forcing it to bow down under His foot. The demigods took each of these exhibitions as an opportunity to worship Him - the primeval Personality of Godhead - with showers of flowers.

“My dear King Pariksit, Lord Krishna’s wonderful, forceful dancing trampled and

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broke all of Kaliya's one hundred and one hoods. The serpent, now vomiting blood from his mouths continuously, fully recognized Sri Krishna to be the eternal Personality of Godhead, the Supreme Master of all moving and nonmoving beings, Sri Narayana. Thus within his mind Kaliya took shelter of the Lord. When Kaliya's wives saw how the serpent had become so fatigued from the limitless weight of Lord Krishna, Who carries the entire universe in His abdomen, and how Kaliya's umbrella-like hoods had been shattered by the striking of Krishna's heels, they felt great distress. With their clothing, ornaments and hair scattered in disarray, they humbly approached the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

"Their minds very disturbed, those saintly ladies placed their children before them and bowed down to the Lord of all creatures, laying their bodies upon the ground. They desired liberation for their sinful husband under the shelter of the Supreme Lord, the giver of Ultimate Shelter, and thus they folded their hands in supplication and approached Him."

The wives of the Kaliya serpent said: "The punishment this offender has been subjected to is certainly just. After all, You have incarnated within this world to curb envious and cruel persons. You are so impartial that You look equally upon Your enemies and Your own Sons, for when You impose a punishment on a living being, You desire it to be for his ultimate benefit. What You have done here is actually mercy for us, since the punishment You give to the wicked certainly drives away all their sinful contamination. Indeed, because this conditioned soul, our husband, is so sinful that he has assumed the body of a serpent, Your anger toward him is obviously to be understood as Your mercy.

"Did our husband carefully perform austerities in a previous life, with his mind free of pride and full of respect for others? Is that why You are pleased with him? Or did he in some previous existence carefully execute religious duties with compassion for all living beings, and is that why You, the Life of all living beings, are now satisfied with Him? O Lord, we do not know how the serpent Kaliya has attained this great opportunity of being touched by the dust of Your lotus feet. For this end, the Goddess of Fortune performed austerities for centuries, giving up all other desires and taking austere vows.

"Those who have attained the dust of Your Lotus Feet never hanker for the kingship of heaven, limitless sovereignty, the position of Brahma or rulership over the Earth. They are not interested even in the perfections of *yoga* or in liberation itself. O Lord, although this Kaliya, the King of the serpents, has taken birth in the mode of ignorance and is controlled by anger, he has achieved that which is difficult for others to achieve. Embodied souls, who are full of desires and are thus wandering through the cycle of birth and death, can have all benedictions manifested before their eyes simply by receiving the dust of Your Lotus Feet.

"We offer our obeisances unto You, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Although present in the hearts of all living beings as the Supersoul, You are all-pervasive. Although the Original Shelter of all created material elements, You exist prior to their creation. And although the cause of everything, You are Transcendental to all material cause and effect, being the Supreme Soul.

“Obeisances unto You, the Absolute Truth, Who are the reservoir of all transcendental consciousness and potency, and the possessor of unlimited energies. Although completely free of all material qualities and transformations, You are the Prime Mover of material nature.

“Obeisances unto You, Who are Time Personified, the Shelter of Time and the Witness of Time in all its phases. You are the Universe, and also its separate observer. You are its Creator, and also the totality of all its causes.

“Obeisances unto You, Who are the ultimate Soul of the physical elements, of the subtle basis of perception, of the senses, of the vital air of life, and of the mind, intelligence and consciousness. By Your arrangement the infinitesimal spirit souls falsely identify with the three modes of material nature, and their perception of their own true Self thus becomes clouded.

“We offer our obeisances unto You, the unlimited Supreme Lord, the supremely subtle one, the omniscient Personality of Godhead, Who is always fixed in unchanging transcendence, Who sanctions the opposing views of different philosophies, and Who is the power upholding expressed ideas and the words that express them.

“We offer our obeisances over and over again to You, Who are the basis of all authoritative evidence, Who are the Author and Ultimate Source of the revealed scriptures, and Who have manifested Yourself in those *Vedic* literatures encouraging sense gratification as well as in those encouraging renunciation of the material world.

“We offer our obeisances to Lord Krishna and Lord Rama, the Sons of Vasudeva, and to Lord Pradhymna and Lord Aniruddha. We offer our respectful obeisances unto the Master of all the saintly devotees of Vishnu.

“Obeisances unto You, O Lord, Who manifests varieties of material and spiritual Qualities. You disguise Yourself with the material Qualities, and yet the functioning of those same material qualities ultimately reveals Your existence. You stand apart from the material qualities as a witness and can be fully known only by Your devotees.

“O Lord Hrishikesh, Master of the senses, please let us offer our obeisances unto You, Whose Pastimes are inconceivably glorious. Your existence can be inferred from the necessity for a creator and revealer of all cosmic manifestations. But although Your devotees can understand You in this way, to the non-devotees You remain silent, absorbed in Self-satisfaction.

“Obeisances unto You, Who know the destination of all things, superior and inferior, and Who is the presiding regulator of all that be. You are distinct from the universal creation, and yet You are the basis upon which the illusion of material creation evolves, and also the witness of this illusion. Indeed, You are the root cause of the entire world. O Almighty Lord, although You have no reason to become involved in material activity, still You act through Your eternal potency of Time to arrange for the creation, maintenance and destruction of this universe. You do this by awakening the distinct functions of each of the modes of nature, which before the creation lie dormant. Simply by Your glance You perfectly execute all these activities of cosmic control in a sporting mood.

“Therefore all material bodies throughout the three worlds — those that are peaceful, in the mode of goodness; those that are agitated, in the mode of passion; and those that

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are foolish, in the mode of ignorance — all are Your creations. Still, those living entities whose bodies are in the mode of goodness are especially dear to You, and it is to maintain them and protect their religious principles that You are now present on the Earth. At least once, a master should tolerate an offense committed by his child or subject. O Supreme Peaceful Soul, You should therefore forgive our foolish husband, who did not understand Who You are.

“O Supreme Lord, please be merciful. It is proper for the saintly to feel compassion for women like us. This serpent is about to give up his life. Please give us back our husband, who is our life and soul. Now please tell us, Your maidservants, what we should do. Certainly anyone who faithfully executes Your order is automatically free from all fear.”

Sukadeva Goswami resumed: “Praised by the *Naga-patnis* in this satisfactory manner, the Supreme Personality of Godhead released the serpent Kaliya, who had fallen unconscious, his heads battered by the Lord’s Lotus Feet. Kaliya slowly regained his vital force and sensory functions. Then, breathing heavily and painfully, the grave serpent addressed Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in humble submission.”

The serpent Kaliya said: “Our very birth as a snake has made us envious, ignorant and constantly angry. O my Lord, it is so difficult for people to give up their conditioned nature, by which they identify with that which is unreal. O Supreme Creator, You Who generates this universe, composed of the variegated arrangement of the material modes, and in the process You manifest various kinds of personalities and species, varieties of sensory and physical strength, along with varieties of mothers and fathers with variegated mentalities and forms.

“O Supreme Personality of Godhead, among all the species within Your material creation, we serpents are by nature always angry. Being thus deluded by Your illusory energy, which is very difficult to surmount, how can we possibly give it up on our own? O Lord, since You are the omniscient Lord of the universe, You are the actual cause of freedom from illusion. Please arrange for us whatever You consider proper, whether it be mercy or punishment.”

After hearing Kaliya’s words, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Who was acting the role of a human being, replied: “O serpent, you may not remain here any longer. Return to the ocean immediately, accompanied by your retinue of children, wives, relatives and friends. Let this river be enjoyed by the cows and humans. If a mortal being attentively remembers My command to you – to leave Vrindavana and go to the ocean – and narrates this account at sunrise and sunset, he will never be afraid of you.

“If one bathes in this place of My Pastimes and offers the water of this lake to the demigods and other worshipable personalities, or if one observes a fast and duly worships and remembers Me, he is sure to become free from all sinful reactions. Out of fear of Garuda, you left Ramanaka Island and came to take shelter of this lake. But because you are now marked with My Footprints, Garuda will no longer try to eat you.”

Sukadeva Goswami continued: “My dear King, having been released by Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Whose activities are wonderful, Kaliya joined

his wives in worshipping Him with great joy and reverence. Kaliya worshiped the Lord of the universe by offering Him rare garments, along with necklaces, jewels and other valuable ornaments, wonderful scents and ointments, and a large garland of lotus flowers. Having thus pleased the Lord, Whose flag is marked with the emblem of Garuda, Kaliya felt satisfied. Receiving the Lord's permission to leave, Kaliya circumambulated Him and offered Him obeisances. Taking his wives, friends and children, he returned to Ramanaka Island. The very moment Kaliya left, the Yamuna was immediately restored to her original pristine purity, with gently lapping waves of nectar free from poison. This happened by the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Who was manifesting a human-like Form to enjoy His Pastimes."

Commentary on Chapter Sixteen

The tenth obstacle on the path to Vraja's pure devotion is implacable brutality and treachery, personified by the foul demon Kaliya. Although this demon could see the supermundane beauty of Krsna, he could not appreciate it. Rather, it angered him. With great brutality he tried to crush Krsna in his coils and then bite Him with his bifurcated tongues. But no matter how enviously Kaliya acted, Krsna responded in love, jumping atop his many hoods and subduing them with the purifying kicks of His lotus feet in a dance of love.

Brother Balarama, possessing perfect knowledge of Krsna, was not disturbed by the fracas. The residents of Vraja, however, fell into faints, swooning out of love for Him they thought they would lose. Krsna was their life and soul. The mere thought of separation from Krsna caused them to faint.

Lord Chaitanya has taught us that these deep feelings of separation, an ecstatic expression of pure love, are the highest stage of Krsna consciousness. Actually, separation from Krsna is impossible, but forgetfulness isn't. To forget Krsna is to be, in effect, separated from Him; to think of Him, though physically apart, is to be intimately united with Him!

The Nagapatnis, the wives of Kaliya, reveal another very important understanding: all problems are solved by surrender to Krsna. Appealing to the Lord, they prayed,

*Therefore, it is auspicious, Lord, that You
Punish our husband. This is blessing, too;
Always Your ways are glorious, O Lord,
And we do praise You now with one accord;*

To have complete faith in Krsna and then to demonstrate that faith by loving obedience is the greatest benediction. This faith and obedience will save one, even if he has been as sinful as the Kaliya snake.

The Bhagavatam graphically describes that the Kaliya snake and his habitat in the Yamuna River had become the epitome of material contamination. Envy, lust, and anger

corroded the demon's heart internally. Externally, the snake's polluted lifestyle destroyed the beautiful environment of the Yamuna region. Kaliya had venom enough to constantly boil the Yamuna's waters. Consequently, day and night the river exuded toxic vapors that rendered a large tract of Vrindaban completely uninhabitable, except by other demons.

*Not only was the water polluted
But poison in the air distributed,
Killing trees, even birds as they flew by
Nothing was safe, not on land or in the sky!*

In spite of this extraordinarily dangerous situation, Krsna did not hesitate to take action. After reviving His friends, who had apparently died drinking poisonous water, He immediately dove into the midst of Kaliya's deadly aquatic home to root him out. A sincere devotee, longing to escape the clutches of material desires, should take heart: place your life at Krsna's beck and call, live for his pleasure only, and surely He will manifest His presence in your life, regardless of your sinful past. To those who center their thoughts on Him, rather than lust, greed, and rage, He promises:

*Out of mercy for them, I, the Lord in the heart,
Dispel Maya's darkness with the truth I impart.
(Gita, Ch. 10),*

Krsna will surely vanquish all the demons of one's past conditional life. The scripture says that although a fallen soul has the ability to perform countless sinful acts, still he is unable to commit more sins than the chanting of Krsna's name can counteract. Snakes like Kaliya threaten by exuding poisonous venom and fumes, but the bona fide spiritual master manifests Krsna's merciful protection. Through the guru, Krsna rescues His devotee. Guru and Krsna work hand-in-hand to reestablish the repentant soul in his original, natural position as pure servant of Godhead. The authorized representative of the Lord receives divine empowerment to know whatever is necessary about the disciple whatever is necessary for guiding him to perfection.

Sometimes immature devotees on the path of devotion shudder and falter at sudden onslaughts of maya. Although wariness of maya is certainly healthy, one should not forget that maya, illusion, is also Krsna's energy. Krsna is one-hundred percent in control; when one remembers Him, maya disappears. The true representative of God shows his disciple that nothing is apart from Krsna. In this way the disciple develops expertise in thinking of Krsna always. The guru can demonstrate to his attentive follower how temptation itself can be a boon for increasing spiritual muscles and conviction. There is no sin in temptation. Sin begins when one consents to temptation. Directing the disciple's life so that he can see Krsna in everything, the spiritual master evokes in his spiritual child the vision of Ultimate Reality. Krsna explains:

All states of existence come only from Me;
Although I'm the cause, I am separate and free.
Confused and then covered by nature's modes three,
The world knows Me not, nor My mystic quality.
Though My energy divine is hard to subdue,
If you surrender to Me, I'll liberate you.

(Gita, Ch 7)

In Kaliya's prayers of surrender, he declares his newfound but incontrovertible faith in the Lord's redeeming grace. He knows that the body of a serpent has offered nothing but disadvantages for spiritual life, yet owing to his wives sincere appeal, Krsna forgave his heinous offenses. With purified intelligence, Kaliya recognizes that all varieties of conditioned mentalities have Krsna as their cause, and that the Lord's mercy allows one to transcend any acquired material nature and tendency.

*"Without your mercy I could not release
Those misconceptions that kept me from peace;
To nothing but your grace can I aspire;
Save me or rish me, as You desire!"*

In a fully surrendered state, we can once again humbly offer ourselves to Krsna for His service and clearly understand His desire.

Chapter Seventeen: The History of Kaliya

Having thus heard how Lord Krishna chastised Kaliya, King Pariksit inquired: "Why did Kaliya leave Ramanaka Island, the abode of the serpents, and why did Garuda become so antagonistic toward him?"

Sukadeva Goswami explained: "To avoid being preyed upon by Garuda, the serpents had made an arrangement with him whereby they would each make a monthly tribute at the base of a tree. Thus every month on schedule, O mighty-armed King Pariksit, each serpent would duly make his offering to that powerful carrier of Vishnu as a purchase of protection. Although the other serpents were dutifully making offerings to Garuda, one serpent – the arrogant Kaliya, son of Kadru – rebelled by eating all these offerings before Garuda could claim them. Kaliya directly deæd the carrier of Lord Vishnu.

"O King, the greatly powerful Garuda, who is very dear to the Supreme Lord, was angered when he heard this. Desiring to kill Kaliya, he descended toward the serpent with tremendous speed. As Garuda swiftly fell upon him, Kaliya, who had the weapon of poison, æd his numerous hoods to counterattack. Showing his ferocious tongues and expanding his horrible eyes, Kaliya brandished the weapons of his fangs. The angry son of Tarksya evaded Kaliya's attack with overwhelming speed. That terribly powerful carrier of Lord Madhusudana struck the son of Kadru with his left wing, which shone like gold.

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Beaten by Garuda's wing, Kaliya was extremely distraught, and thus he took shelter of a lake adjoining the river Yamuna. Garuda could not enter this lake and indeed, could not even approach it. In that very lake Garuda had once desired to eat a *śh* – *śh*being, after all, his normal food. Although forbidden by the sage Saubhari, who was meditating there within the water, Garuda took courage and, feeling hungry, seized the biggest *śh*. Seeing how the unfortunate *śh* in that lake had become most unhappy at the death of their leader, Saubhari uttered the following curse under the impression that he was acting mercifully for the benefit of the lake's residents: 'If Garuda ever again enters this lake and eats the *śh* here, he will meet a dreadful end to his life. What I am saying is the truth.' Of all the serpents, only Kaliya came to know of this affair, and in fear of Garuda, he took up residence in that Yamuna lake. Later Lord Krishna, the Master of Garuda, drove him out."

Resuming his description of Krishna's chastisement of Kaliya, Sukadeva continued: "Krishna rose from the lake wearing divine garlands, fragrances and garments, decorated with many *ra* jewels, and adorned with gold. When the cowherds saw Him they all stood up immediately, just like an unconscious person coming back to life. Filled with great joy, they affectionately embraced Him. Having regained their vital functions, Yasoda, Rohini, Nanda and all the other cowherd women and men went up to Krishna and embraced him. O descendent of *Kuru*, even the dried-up trees came back to life."

Lord Balarama also embraced His Infallible Brother and laughed, knowing the extent of Krishna's potency. Out of great feelings of love, Balarama lifted Krishna up on His lap and repeatedly smiled at Him. The cows, bulls and calves also achieved the highest pleasure. All the respectable *brahmanas*, together with their wives, came forward to greet Nanda Maharaja and declared: "Your Son was in the grips of Kaliya, but by the grace of Providence He is now free!"

The *brahmanas* then advised Nanda Maharaja: "To assure that your Son Krishna will always be free from danger, you should give charity to the *brahmanas*." With a satisfied mind, Nanda Maharaja very gladly gave them gifts of cows and gold. The greatly fortunate Mother Yasoda, having lost her Son and then regained Him, placed Him on her lap. That chaste lady cried torrents of tears as she repeatedly embraced Him.

Because the residents of Vrindavana were feeling weak from hunger, thirst and fatigue, they and the cows spent the night where they were, lying down near the banks of the Kalindi. During the night, while all the people of Vrindavana were asleep, a great fire blazed up within the dry summer forest. The resurrounded the inhabitants of Vrindavana on all sides and began to scorch them. Then the residents of Vrindavana woke up, extremely distressed by the great fire that surrounded them. Thus they took shelter of Krishna, the Supreme Lord, Who by His spiritual potency appeared like an ordinary human being.

Vrindavana's residents said: "Krishna, Krishna, O Lord of all opulence! O Rama, possessor of unlimited power! This most terrible fire is about to devour us, Your devotees! O Lord, we are Your true friends and devotees. Please protect us from this insurmountable fire of death. We can never give up Your Lotus Feet, which drive away all fear!" Seeing His devotees so disturbed, Sri Krishna, the infinite Lord of the universe and possessor of

in rite power, then swallowed the terrible forest re

Commentary on Chapter Seventeen

The attentive inquiries of Maharaja Pariksit concerning Kṛṣṇa's pastimes are the perfect example of how a disciple should question the guru. Sometimes devotees naively put forward picayune questions motivated by what the guru knows is idle curiosity. To such inquiries, the spiritual master may reply, "Your question does not lead to enlightenment." Pariksit's inquiries, however, always deepen our spiritual penetration.

This chapter reveals that Kālīya's problems began with an offense against Garuda, the winged carrier of the Lord. Forced to fight with Garuda after stealing his sacrificial offerings, Kālīya was soundly defeated and had to flee to Nagalaya, his native abode. One should never steal the property of another, especially what belongs to a great devotee of the Lord. Garuda, a direct associate of God, is divinely empowered to render very personal service. Therefore his status is special. His behavior has nothing to do with mundane reality and its temporary affairs. The Chaitanya-Charitamrita warns that no one should try to understand the activities of an advanced Vaishnav by scrutinizing him with material sense perception and logic.

Kālīya relocated to a cove in the Yamuna River because he thought he would find safety there due to someone else's Vaishnav aparāda. Previously, Saubhari Muni, a reputed sage and ascetic who should have known better, had become angry at Garuda's unconcern with the way Saubhari thought things should go on in his locale. Overwhelmed by material attachment for his surroundings and his dear friends, Saubhari dared to curse Garuda to die if he ever returned. Although immune to mundane curses, Garuda stayed away. Because of his offense, however, Saubhari Muni lost his yogic power, and fell down into a life of sense gratification; then Kālīya came there and turned the area into a wasteland.

Anyone aspiring to advance in spiritual life should beware: avoid Vaishnav aparāda. Its disastrous effects are complex and far-reaching. In *The Nectar of Devotion*, Srīla Prabhupada explains that just as humble association with pure devotees can bless one with attachment for Kṛṣṇa, so offenses to pure devotees can snuff out any attachment for the Divine. He compares the extinctive effect of offenses to the waning of the full-moon, which gradually decreases and at last disappears. Even being in the vicinity of Vaishnav blasphemy is extremely dangerous. Later in the narration of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, Sukadeva Goswami informs Pariksit, "My dear King, if a person, after hearing blasphemous propaganda against the Lord and His devotees, does not go away from that place, he becomes bereft of all pious activities." (Bhag. 10:74:40)

After Kṛṣṇa purified the Kālīya snake and triumphantly emerged from the Yamuna, the residents of Vrindaban decided to rest for the night on the riverbank. While they were sleeping, a great forest fire threatened to envelop them. The blaze suddenly appeared, without anyone having set it. It is analogous to the conditioned soul's

existence in the material world:

*The blazing fire of samsara
Affects us all, life after life,
But Gurudev is gentle rain,
Extinguishing this mortal strife.*

(Sri Guruvastaka, 1)

*In these words, Srila Visvanath Chakravarti Thakur
gives both the diagnosis and the remedy.
Automatically, without extraneous effort, the fire of
sense gratification engulfs a conditioned soul, and only
the mercy of Guru and Krsna puts out*

Chapter Eighteen: Lord Balarama Slays the Demon Pralamba

Surrounded by His blissful companions, who constantly chanted His glories, Sri Krishna then entered the village of Vraja, which was filled with herds of cows. While Krishna and Balarama were thus enjoying life in Vrindavana in the guise of ordinary cowherd boys, the summer season gradually unfolded. This season is not usually very pleasing to embodied souls. Nevertheless, because the Supreme Personality of Godhead was personally residing in Vrindavana along with Balarama, summer manifested the qualities of spring. Such are the wonders of the land of Vrindavana.

In Vrindavana, the constant cascade of waterfalls masked the crickets' noise, and the many trees constantly misted by those waterfalls beautified the entire area. Lotus-scented

breezes wafted over the waves of the lakes and flowing rivers carried away the pollen of many varieties of lotuses and water lilies, cooling the entire Vrindavana area. Thus the residents there did not suffer from the heat generated by the blazing summer sun and seasonal forest fires. Indeed, Vrindavana was resplendent with fresh green grass.

With their flowing waves the deep rivers washed their banks, making them damp and muddy. Thus the harsh rays of the sun, which were as fierce as poison, could not evaporate the earth's sap or parch its green grass. Flowers profusely decorated the forest of Vrindavana, and many varieties of animals and birds filled it with sound. The peacocks and bees sang, and the cuckoos and cranes cooed sweetly.

Intending to engage in Pastimes, Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, accompanied by Lord Balarama and the cowherd boys and cows, entered the forest of Vrindavana to the sound of His flute. Decorating themselves with newly grown leaves, along with peacock feathers, garlands, clusters of flower buds, and colored mirrors, Balarama, Krishna and Their cowherd friends danced, wrestled and sang in great fun. As Krishna danced, some of the boys accompanied Him by singing, and others by playing flutes, hand cymbals and buffalo horns. Others praised His dancing. Demigods, disguising themselves as members of the cowherd community, worshiped Krishna and Balarama, Who were now appearing as cowherd boys. Krishna and Balarama played with their cowherd boyfriends by whirling about, leaping, hurling, playing and fighting. Sometimes Krishna and Balarama would pull the hair on a boy's head. Or, when the other boys were dancing, Krishna and Balarama would sometimes accompany them with Their singing and instrumental music, and sometimes the Two Lords would praise a boy's, saying, "Very good! Very good!"

Sometimes the cowherd boys would play with *bilva* or *kumbha* fruits, and sometimes with handfuls of *amalaka* fruits. At other times they would play a game of "Tag" or "Blind Man's Bluff", and sometimes they would imitate the animals and birds. They would jump around like frogs, play various jokes, ride on swings, and or play "King of the Mountain.". In this way Krishna and Balarama played all sorts of well-known games as They wandered over Vrindavana's transcendental landscape.

While Rama, Krishna and Their cowherd friends were thus tending the cows in that Vrindavana forest, the demon Pralamba entered their midst. He had assumed the form of a cowherd boy with the intention of kidnapping Krishna and Balarama. Since the Supreme Lord Krishna knows everything, He understood who the demon was. Still, the Lord pretended to accept the demon as a friend, while seriously considering how to kill him. Krishna, Who knows all sports and games, then called together the cowherd boys and spoke as follows: "Hey, cowherd boys! Let's play now! We'll divide ourselves into two even teams."

The cowherd boys chose Krishna and Balarama as the leaders of the two teams. Some of the boys went on Krishna's side, and others joined Balarama's. The boys played various games involving carriers and riders. In these games the winners would climb upon the backs of the losers, who would have to carry them. Thus carrying and being carried by one another, and at the same time tending the cows, the boys followed Krishna to a banyan tree known as Bhandiraka.

When Sridama, Vrisabha and the other members of Lord Balarama's party were victorious in these games, Krishna and His followers had to carry them. Defeated, the Supreme Lord Krishna carried Sridama. Bhadrāsena carried Vrisabha, and Pralamba carried Balarama, the Son of Rohini. Considering Lord Krishna invincible, that powerful demon [Pralamba] quickly carried Balarama far beyond the spot where he was supposed to put Him down.

As the great demon carried Balarama away, Lord Balarama became as heavy as Mount Sumeru, and Pralamba had to slow down. He then resumed his actual form of an effulgent body that was covered with golden ornaments, resembling a cloud flashing with lightning and bearing the moon. When Lord Balarama, Who carries the plow weapon, saw the gigantic body of the demon as he moved swiftly in the sky, with his eyes blazing, his terrible teeth reaching toward his scowling brows, and his dazzling effulgence – the Lord seemed to become a little frightened.

But remembering the actual situation, the fearless Balarama understood that the demon was trying to kidnap Him and take Him away from His companions. The Lord then became furious and struck the demon's head with His hard fist, just as Indra, the King of the demigods, strikes a mountain with his thunderbolt weapon. Thus smashed by Balarama's fist, Pralamba's head immediately cracked open, and the demon vomited blood and lost all consciousness, falling lifeless to the ground, like a mountain devastated by Indra.

The cowherd boys were most astonished to see how the powerful Balarama had killed the demon Pralamba, and they exclaimed "Well done! Well done!" They offered Balarama profuse blessings and glorified Him, Who deserves all glorification. Their minds overwhelmed with ecstatic love, they embraced Him as if He had returned from the dead. The sinful Pralamba having been duly killed, the demigods felt extremely happy, showering over garlands upon Lord Balarama and praising His excellent deed.

Commentary on Chapter Eighteen

In Kṛṣṇa's Vrindaban, the abode of unalloyed love, summer is never too hot. Owing to the many waterfalls, a delightful mist always cools the resident's bodies. Transcendental Vrindaban is such a nice place. Forest flowers continuously bloom and exotic animals ever sing, dance, and play in complete peace and harmony. This is the transcendental atmosphere of pure love of God.

Entering the delightful forests of Vraja, Kṛṣṇa, Balaram, and Their friends sported, enjoying the camaraderie of childhood. Sukadev Goswami remarked to Parikṣit, "My dear King, Kṛṣṇa is the source of the Brahman effulgence

for impersonalists desiring to merge into that effulgence, He is the Supreme Worshipable Deity for devotees who have accepted eternal servitorship, and to persons under the spell of maya He is but another ordinary child. Yet just imagine these cowherd boys are now playing with the Supreme Person as though they were on an equal level! They must have accumulated the results of pious activities for many lives to be able to associate in such intimate friendship. How can one explain their great fortune?" (Bhag. 10:12:11)

*Theavor of the friendly relationship between Krsna and the cowherd
That they could not be far, there was no doubt -*

And soon, indeed, they heard them crying out.

When Krsna called out to each cow by name,

They answered with relief, but all the same

They could not come to where they heard Him shout,

For by then a fire-wall was all about.

The wind blew fiercely and the flames leapt high;

It surely looked as if they all would die.

The cowherd boys feared for their own lives, too,

And turned to Krsna, asking what to do.

Friend Krsna, speaking to them through His eyes,

Assured them that faith in Him was most wise.

Then they knew that they had nothing to fear -

For Krsna and Balarama were near!

Krsna then pursed His lips and sucked in air,

And pulled the blazing flames from everywhere.

When Krsna swallowed each and every one,

The cowherd boys marveled how this was done,

Except for Balaram, Who knew that He

Was Godhead's Supreme Personality.

The other cowherd boys thought, secretly,

That Krsna was a demigod, likely.

The gopis had been weeping all that day,

Longing for Krsna while He was away;

But when they heard His sweet flute playing near

They ran to embrace Him, ending their tears.

Tales of the death of Pralambasura,

And of the forest devoured by Lord Krsna,

Convinced all those who heard the Two Boys lauds

That these Brave Brothers were really great gods.

Chapter Nineteen: Swallowing the Forest Fire

While the cowherd boys were completely absorbed in playing, the cows wandered far away. Hungry for more grass, they entered the dense forest while none of the boys were watching. Passing from one part of the great forest to another, the goats, cows and buffalo eventually entered an area overgrown with sharp canes. The heat of a nearby forest made them thirsty, and they cried out in distress. Not seeing the cows before them, Krishna, Balarama and Their cowherd friends suddenly felt very sorry for having neglected them. The boys searched all around, but could not find them.

Then the boys began tracing the cows' path by noting their hoof prints and the blades of grass the cows had broken or been cut by their hooves and teeth. All the cowherd boys were in great anxiety because they had lost their source of livelihood. Within the Munja forest the cowherd boys rallied and their much loved cows, who had lost their way and were now crying. Though thirsty and tired, the boys, herded the cows onto the path back home.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead called out to the animals in a voice that resounded like a rumbling cloud. Hearing Krishna calling their names, the cows were overjoyed and called to Him in reply. Suddenly a great forest reappeared on all sides, threatening to destroy them all. Like a chariot driver, the wind swept them onward, and terrible sparks shot out in all directions. Indeed, the great forest extended its tongues of fire toward all moving and nonmoving creatures. As the cows and cowherd boys stared at the forest reapproaching from all sides, they became fearful, so they went to Krishna and Balarama for shelter, just as those who are disturbed by fear of death cry out to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The boys cried:

"O Krishna! Krishna! Most powerful One! O Rama! You Whose prowess never fails! Please save Your devotees, who are about to be burned by this frightful forest fire and have come to take shelter of You! Krishna! Certainly Your dear friends should not be destroyed. O Knower of the nature of all things, we have accepted You as our Lord, and we are souls surrendered unto You!"

Hearing these desperate words from His friends, the Supreme Lord Krishna soothed their distress by saying, "Just close your eyes and do not be afraid."

With unshakeable confidence in their Lord, the boys replied, "All right," and immediately closed their eyes. Then the Supreme Lord, the Master of all mystic power, opened His mouth and swallowed the terrible fire, saving His friends from danger. The cowherd boys opened their eyes and were amazed to find not only that they and the cows had been saved from the blazing fire, but that they had all been brought back to the Bhandira tree as well.

When the cowherd boys saw that they had been saved from the forest fire by the Lord's mystic power, manifested by His internal potency, they began to think that Krishna must be a great demigod. It was now late in the afternoon, and Lord Krishna, accompanied by Balarama, turned the cows back toward home. Playing His flute in a uniquely beautiful way, Krishna returned to the cowherd village in the company of His friends, who chanted His glories. The young *gopis* took the greatest pleasure in Govinda's homecoming; for them even a moment without His association seemed like endless ages.

COMMENTARY ON CHAPTER NINETEEN

This chapter reveals the sublime loving relationship that existed between Krishna and His cowherd boy friends, who are symbolic of His pure devotees. The Supreme Absolute - the Supreme Personality of Godhead by whatever name you call Him - displayed Himself as He is: an eternally young and blissful cowherd boy called Krishna. Seeing His dear friends terrified by the forest reard coming to Him for shelter, He merely told them to shut their eyes and have no fear. Telling them to close their eyes is very significant, for until a devotee shuts his eyes to all material perceptions and places his faith in Krishna alone, He will never be able to experience Krishna's marvelous mystic grace in His swallowing up every material distress.

Here we find that the cowherd boys were hungry, fatigued and about to be devoured by the fast approaching forest re. But due to their intense love for Krishna and faith in Him, the only object of devotion, they did just what He said to do. And Krishna, Who loves His devotees equally, wanted to increase their ecstasy and so displayed His supreme mystic power, saving them from the terrible forest re.

The ecstatic loving relationship between Krishna and His dear friends or pure devotees can never be broken. As Krishna promises in the *Gita*:

In the same measure that one surrenders to Me
I reciprocate with Him accordingly. (4)

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In order not to disturb this intimate relationship of love, when the cowherd boys saw the supernatural power of Krishna, they did not consider Krishna to be God, but rather a great demigod. And since they were His friends - on a level equal to Him - they concluded that they too must be demigods. So thinking they became ecstatic with love for Krishna, which was just what He wanted.

Chapter Twenty: The Rainy Season & Autumn in Vrindavana

The cowherd boys excitedly related in great detail to the residents of Vrindavana all about Krishna and Balarama's wonderful activities of delivering them from the forest re and killing the demon Pralamba. The cowherd men and women were amazed to hear their account, and they concluded that Krishna and Balarama must be exalted demigods who had come to live in Vrindavana.

Then the rainy season started, giving life and sustenance to all. The sky rumbled with thunder, and lightning flashed on the horizon. Covered by dense dark clouds and accompanied by lightning and thunder, the sky's natural illumination was covered in the

same way that the spirit soul is covered by the three modes of material nature. By its powerful rays, the sun had for eight months drunk up the earth's wealth of water, and now that the proper time had arrived, the sun released this accumulated wealth.

Flashing with lightning, great clouds were swept about by fierce winds, and just like merciful persons, the clouds gave their lives for the pleasure of the world. The earth had become emaciated by the summer heat, but she became fully nourished again when moistened by the god of rain. Thus the Earth was like a person whose body has been emaciated by austerities undergone for a material purpose, but who again becomes fully nourished when he achieves the fruits of those austerities.

In the twilight during the rainy season, the darkness allowed the glowworms but not the stars to shine forth, just as in the age of *Kali* the predominance of sinful activities allows atheistic doctrines to overshadow the true knowledge of the *Vedas*. The frogs, who had all along been silent, suddenly began croaking when they heard the rumbling of the rain clouds, in the same way that *brahmana* students, who perform their morning duties in silence, begin reciting their lessons when called by their teacher.

With the advent of the rainy season, the insignificant streams, which had become dry, began to swell and then strayed from their proper courses, in the same way that the body, property and money of a man are diverted by the uncontrolled urges of his senses. Newly grown grass made the earth emerald green; the *indragopa* insects added a reddish hue; and white mushrooms added further color and circles of shade. Thus the earth appeared like a person who has suddenly become rich. With their wealth of grains, the gods gave joy to the farmers. But those same gods created sadness in the hearts of those who were too proud to engage in farming and who failed to understand how everything is under the control of the Supreme, like speculators who gamble on others' misfortune.

As all the land and aquatic creatures took advantage of the newly fallen rain, their forms became attractive and pleasing, just as devotees become beautiful by engaging in the service of the Supreme Lord. Where the rivers met the ocean they became agitated, their waves blown about by the wind, just as the minds of immature *yogis* become agitated because they are still tainted by lust and attached to the objects of sense gratification. But devotees, whose minds are absorbed in the Personality of Godhead, remain peaceful even when attacked by all sorts of dangers, even as the mountains in the rainy season are not disturbed by the repeated striking of the rain-bearing clouds.

During the rainy season the roads, not being much used or cleansed, became overrun with grass and debris, and were thus difficult to make out. They are like religious scriptures that *brahmanas* no longer study and thus become corrupted and covered over by mental speculation in the course of time. Though the clouds are the well-wishing friends of everyone, the lightning, dwelling in its festivities, moved from one group of clouds to another, like a lusty woman unfaithful to her virtuous husband.

When the curved bow of Indra [the rainbow] appeared in the sky, it was unlike an ordinary bow because it did not rest upon a string. Similarly, when the Supreme Lord appears in this world — which is nothing more than the interaction of His material qualities — He is unlike ordinary persons because He remains free from all material qualities and

independent of all material conditions, being their Source.

During the rainy season the moon's illuminating rays outlined the dense cloud cover, but could not pierce the darkness with its own appearance. Similarly, the living being in material existence is never directly seen as he really is, due to the covering of the false ego, which is itself illumined by the consciousness of the pure soul. At that time the peacocks also became festive and cried out a joyful greeting when they saw the clouds arrive, just as people distressed in household life feel pleasure when the pure devotees of the infallible Supreme Lord visit them.

During the summer season the trees had grown thin and dry, but after drinking the newly fallen rainwater through their feet, their bodily features blossomed. Similarly, one whose body has grown thin and weak from austerity again exhibits his healthy bodily features upon enjoying the results of that austerity. The cranes continued dwelling on the shores of the lakes, although the shores were often disturbed during the rainy season, even as persons with materially contaminated minds remain at home, despite the many disturbances there.

When Indra sent forth his rains, the clouds frequently broke through the irrigation dikes in the agricultural lands, just as in *Kali-yuga* the atheists' false theories break down the boundaries of *Vedic* injunctions. The clouds, driven by the winds, freely released their nectarean water for the benefit of all living beings, just as kings, guided by qualified *brahmana* priests, dispense charity to the citizens.

When the Vrindavana forest had thus become resplendent, filled with ripe dates and *jambu* fruits, Lord Krishna, surrounded by His cows and cowherd friends and Sri Balarama, entered that forest to enjoy the season's muni cence. The cows moved slowly because of their weighty milk bags, but they quickly ran to the Supreme Personality of Godhead when He called them. Their great affection for Him caused their udders to weep. The Lord also gladly saw the joyful aborigine girls of the forest, the trees dripping sweet sap, and the mountain waterfalls, whose resounding indicated that there were caves nearby.

When it rained, the Lord would sometimes enter a cave or the hollow of a tree to play, or to eat roots and fruits. Lord Krishna would there take His lunch of boiled rice and yogurt, sent from home, in the company of Lord Sankarsana [Balarama] and the cowherd boys, who regularly ate with Him. They would all sit down to eat on a large stone near the water. Lord Krishna watched the contented bulls, calves and cows sitting on the green grass and grazing with closed eyes, the cows tired from the burden of their heavy milk bags. Thus observing the beauty and opulence of Vrindavana's rainy season, a perennial source of great happiness, the Lord offered all respect to that season, which was, in fact, expanded from His own internal potency.

While Lord Balarama and Lord Krishna were thus dwelling in Vrindavana, the fall season arrived. Then the sky is cloudless, the water clear and the wind gentle. The autumn season regenerated the lotus flowers and also restored the various bodies of water to their original purity, just as the process of devotional service purifies the minds of fallen *yogis* when they return to it. Autumn cleared the sky of clouds, let the animals get out of their crowded lairs, cleaned the earth of mud, and purified the water of contamination, even as loving service rendered to Krishna frees the members of the four spiritual orders

from their respective troubles.

The clouds, having given up all they possessed, shone forth with purified effulgence, just like peaceful sages who have given up all material desires and are thus free of all sinful propensities. During this season the mountains sometimes released their pure water and sometimes did not, just as experts in transcendental science sometimes give the nectar of transcendental knowledge and sometimes do not. The fish swimming in the increasingly shallow water did not understand that the water was diminishing, even as foolish family men cannot see that the time they have left to live is diminishing with every passing day.

Just like a miserly, poverty-stricken person overly absorbed in family life suffers because he cannot control his senses, the fish swimming in the shallow pools and puddles had to suffer the heat of the autumn sun. Gradually the land gave up its muddy condition and the plants grew past their immature stage, in the same way that sober sages give up egotism and possessiveness. These are based on what is not the Real Self – namely, the material body and its by-products.

With the arrival of autumn, the ocean and the lakes became silent, their water still, just like a sage who has desisted from all material activities and given up his recitation of *Vedic mantras* for fruitive results. In the same way that the practitioners of *yoga* bring their senses under strict control to prevent their consciousness from flowing out through the agitated senses, the farmers erected strong mud banks around their rice fields to keep the water within from draining out. The autumn moon relieved all creatures of the suffering caused by the sun's scorching rays, just as wisdom relieves a person of the misery caused by identifying with the material body and as Lord Mukunda relieves Vrindavana's ladies of the distress caused by their separation from Him when He comes home.

Free of clouds and filled with clearly visible stars, the autumn sky shone brilliantly, like the spiritual consciousness of one who has personally experienced the descriptions of the *Vedic* scriptures. The full moon shone in the sky surrounded by stars, even as Sri Krishna, the Lord of the *Yadu* dynasty, shone brilliantly while on the earth, surrounded by all the *Vrishnis*. Except for the *gopis*, whose hearts had been stolen by Krishna, the people could forget their suffering by embracing the breeze coming from the over-illuminated forest. This breeze was neither hot nor cold.

Under the influence of the autumn season, all the cows, deer, female birds and women became fertile and were chased by their respective mates in search of sexual enjoyment, just as activities performed for the devotional service of the Supreme Lord are automatically followed by their beneficial results. When the autumn sun rose high, all the lotus flowers blossomed happily, except the night-blooming *kumut*, just as in the presence of a strong ruler everyone becomes fearless, except the thieves. In all the towns and villages people held festivals, performing the *Vedic* sacrifices for honoring and tasting the first grains of the new harvest, as well as similar celebrations that followed local custom and tradition. Thus the earth, rich with newly grown grain and especially beautified by the presence of Krishna and Balarama, shone beautifully – as an expansion of the Supreme Lord should. The merchants, sages, kings and *brahmachari* students, constricted by the rain, were at last free to go out and pursue their desired objects, just

as those who achieve perfection in this life can, when the proper time comes, leave the material body and attain their spiritual forms.

Commentary on Chapter Twenty

The beautiful and pleasant autumn season follows the purifying monsoon rain. Even those drenching rains, however, are a relief from the scorching summer sun, which symbolizes the blazing fire of material existence. The miseries of mortal life—birth, old age, disease, and death—cause us to appreciate the refreshing and purifying waters of spiritual practice. Before the waters of the monsoon come, the earth is almost lifeless and barren, just like our material life before we partake of the purifying waters of austerity and penance.

In the autumn, everything is beautiful, because water and heat are in balance. Then the sky is clear—a picture of the unlimited Brahman. Although there are clouds, they cannot cover the whole sky. A cloud may cover an insignificant portion of the Brahman sky, just as maya, the illusory energy of the Supreme, may cover an infinitesimal portion of the consciousness of the Whole. In other words maya may cover us little living beings, but it cannot cover the Supreme Lord the whole.

Clouds are the product of accumulated water that the sun has drawn up from the earth. After amassing as clouds, this water is then redistributed in the form of life-giving rain. The activity of clouds provides an interesting symbol for good government, which collects taxes everywhere and then redistributes the wealth for the public welfare. These taxes, obviously, are not meant for the high living of greedy government officials.

Good government, like clouds carrying life-sustaining water, very liberally distributes charity when needed. If water becomes too concentrated on a limited area, there is flooding and disaster. Similarly, when wealth is too concentrated, God's natural system becomes out of balance. Then disaster ensues, in the form of artificial shortages, economic dislocation, and depression.

What is true about hoarding economic wealth applies equally to spiritual wealth also. Spiritual knowledge is meant for distribution to the needy. Therefore, Lord Kṛṣṇa says :

*No one is more dear to Me, I guarantee,
Than one who teaches this truth to My devotee.
(Gita, Ch. 18)*

If we are truly conscious of Kṛṣṇa and what He desires, we cannot neglect the spreading of His knowledge—the remedy for all material ills.

Chapter Twenty-One: The Gopis Glorify Krishna's Flute

Thus the Vrindavana forest was filled with transparent autumnal waters and cooled by breezes perfumed with the fragrance of the lotuses growing in the clear lakes. The infallible Lord, accompanied by His cows and cowherd boyfriends, set out for the Vrindavana forest. The surrounding countryside of Vrindavana resounded with the buzz of maddened bees and chattering corks of birds moving about the flowering trees. In the company of the cowherd boys and Balarama, Madhupati [Sri Krishna] entered that forest, and while herding the cows He began to vibrate His flute.

When the young ladies in the cowherd village of Vraja heard the song of Krishna's flute which arouses the influence of Cupid, some of them privately began describing Krishna's Qualities to their intimate friends. The cowherd girls would begin to speak about Krishna, but when they remembered His activities, the power of Cupid confused their minds and thus they could not speak.

Wearing a peacock feather ornament upon His head, blue *karnikara* flowers on His ears, a yellow garment the color and brilliance of gold, and a *Vaijayanti* garland, Lord Krishna exhibited His Transcendental Form as the greatest of dancers as He entered the forest of Vrindavana, beautifying it with the marks of His footprints. He lled the holes of His flute with the nectar of His lips, and the cowherd boys sang His glories. When the young *gopis* in Vraja heard the sound of Krishna's flute, which captivates the minds of all living beings, they all embraced one another and began describing it.

The cowherd girls said: "O friends, those eyes that see the beautiful faces of the Sons of Maharaja Nanda are certainly fortunate! As these Two Sons enter the forest, surrounded by Their friends, driving the cows before Them, They hold Their flutes to Their mouths and glance lovingly upon the residents of Vrindavana. We think there is no greater object of vision for those who have eyes. Dressed in a charming array of garments and garlands, and decorating Themselves with peacock feathers, lotuses, lilies, newly grown mango sprouts and clusters of flower buds, Krishna and Balarama shine forth magnificently among the assembly of cowherd boys! They look just like the best of dancers appearing on a dramatic stage, and sometimes They sing.

The *gopis* said: "What auspicious activities must that flute have performed to enjoy the nectar of Krishna's lips independently and leave only a taste for us *gopis*, for whom that nectar is actually meant! The forefathers of the flute, the bamboo trees, shed tears of pleasure. His mother, the river on whose bank the bamboo was born, feels jubilation, and therefore her blooming lotus flowers are standing up like hair on her body. Of riend, Vrindavana is spreading the glory of the earth, having obtained the treasure of the lotus feet of Krishna, the Son of Devaki. The peacocks dance madly when they hear Govinda's flute; and when other creatures see them from the hilltops, they all become stunned.

"Blessed are all these foolish deer because they have approached Maharaja Nanda's Son, Who is gorgeously dressed and is playing on His flute. Indeed, both the doe and the bucks worship the Lord with looks of love and affection. Krishna's beauty and character create a festival for all women. Indeed, when the demigods' wives ying in airplanes with their husbands catch sight of Him and hear His resonant flute song, their hearts are shaken by Cupid, and they become so bewildered that the flowers fall out of their hair and their belts loosen.

"Using their upraised ears as vessels, the cows drink the nectar of the flute-song

owing out of Krishna's mouth. The calves, their mouths full of milk from their mothers' moist nipples, stand still as they take Govinda within themselves through their tear-lled eyes and embrace Him within their hearts. O mother, in this forest all the birds have risen onto the beautiful branches of the trees to see Krishna. With closed eyes they are simply listening in silence to the sweet vibrations of His flute, and they are not attracted by any other sound. Surely these birds are on the same level as great sages.

"When the rivers hear the flute-song of Krishna, their minds begin to desire Him, and thus the flow of their currents is broken and their waters are agitated, moving around in circles. Then with the arms of their waves the rivers embrace Murari's Lotus Feet and, holding onto them, present offerings of lotus flowers. In the company of Balarama and the cowherd boys, Lord Krishna is continually vibrating His flute as He herds all the animals of Vraja, even under the full heat of the summer sun. Seeing this, the cloud in the sky expands himself out of love. He is rising high and constructing out of his own body, with its multitude of flower-like droplets of water, an umbrella for the sake of His friend.

"The aborigine women of the Vrindavana area become disturbed by lust when they see the grass marked with reddish *kumkum* powder. Endowed with the color of Krishna's Lotus Feet, this powder originally decorated the breasts of His beloveds, and when the aborigine women smear it on their faces and breasts, they too are relieved of all their anxiety.

"Of all the devotees, this Govardhana Hill is the best! O my friends, this Hill supplies Krishna and Balarama, along with Their calves, cows and cowherd friends, with all kinds of necessities – water for drinking, very soft grass, caves, fruits, flowers and vegetables. In this way the Hill offers respects to the Lord. Being touched by the Lotus Feet of Krishna and Balarama, Govardhana Hill appears very jubilant. My dear friends, as Krishna and Balarama pass through the forest with Their cowherd friends, leading Their cows, They carry ropes on Their shoulders to bind the cows' rear legs at the time of milking. When Lord Krishna plays on His flute, the sweet music causes the moving living entities to become stunned and the nonmoving entities to tremble with ecstasy. These things are certainly very wonderful."

Thus narrating to one another the wonderful playful Pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead as He wandered about in the Vrindavana forests, the *gopis* became fully absorbed in thoughts of Him.

The spiritual quest is always a search for a paradise lost. Truly, we are all looking for the land of Vraja, the land of perpetual enjoyment. In that transcendental place, there is no misery or suffering. Birth, old age, disease, and death are conspicuous by their absence. Only demons die there. For Kṛṣṇa and His friends, nothing else happens but singing, dancing, and endless sporting.

*Within Vrindaban's woods and groves,
Lord Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā unite,
To taste the joy of spiritual love,
All glories to the holy sight.
Lord Kṛṣṇa's beauty thrills the soul,
Defeating even Cupids' dart.
The boy who lifted Govardhan
Has won away the gopis' heart.
Yasoda-mata's darling son,
Yamuna River's pride and joy,
The treasure of all devotees,
All glories to this cowherd boy.*

This song, adapted from Bhaktivinode Thakur's Bengali, gives us a perfect picture of the spiritual world. Why would one ever leave such a wonderful place? This, indeed, is a great mystery. Why did we leave the spiritual sky? How have we lost the paradise that is our original home? Speculating on these questions will not help us, for the conditioned soul cannot answer them. Somehow or other, in the wisdom of Divine Providence, we have fallen down. Our speculating on that fall is something like a drowning man's trying to figure out how or why he is drowning. His investigation will not help to save him from a watery grave, but catching hold of a lifeline will. Similarly, my friend, just use all your energy to hold on to the lifeline of the Holy Name and get out of this ocean of material existence. Then we will see clearly the mistake we made.

We may not be able to say how we have fallen, but we can say with certainty why we have fallen. We are here owing to forgetfulness of Kṛṣṇa. The only difference between the material and spiritual skies is one's awareness of Kṛṣṇa. In the material world He is hidden; in the spiritual world He is everywhere visible. In fact, there He is the center of everything.

The significance of the flute in this story is that it always reminds the gopis of Kṛṣṇa. The same is true of His pastimes, His dress, His three-curved stance, and the peacock feather He wears. Anything connected to Kṛṣṇa becomes "Kṛṣṇa-ized," just as a copper wire becomes electrical when in contact with electricity. The wire no longer acts like copper, but like electricity. In the same way, when we come in contact with Kṛṣṇa, whether by remembering His Name, His Form, His Pastimes, or anything else in connection with Him, we become spiritualized; for He is the Supreme Spirit, the Energetic Source of All.

The Supreme Spirit is always a person, although not an ordinary one. He is the Supreme Person. As such, He may enjoy Himself by playing like an ordinary cowherd boy, complete with a rope on His shoulder for binding the cows during milking. We should not be deceived, however, into thinking He has become an ordinary mortal. Actually,

nothing connected to Him or used by Him is ordinary. The rope on His shoulder is not material—it is pure spirit and therefore worshipable. Its connection to Kṛṣṇa makes it a source of remembrance.

If, somehow or other, we can remember Kṛṣṇa, our life becomes perfect. Only one item of devotional service is enough to transport us to the Spiritual Sky. Just consider. Although the gopīs stayed in the village and did not accompany Kṛṣṇa and the boys to the pasturing ground, and although they did not possess a very elevated material position or education, still Lord Chaitanya accepted them as the highest perfectional symbol of Kṛṣṇa consciousness: No matter where they were, no matter what they were doing, they were always remembering Kṛṣṇa!

We can also perfect our lives by remembering Kṛṣṇa, either through chanting His Holy Name, worshiping His Deity in the temple, preaching His gospel of devotion, or even through eating the remnants of food offered to Him with love and devotion. Somehow or other remember Kṛṣṇa and make your life perfect!

Chapter Twenty-Two: Krishna Steals the Gopis' Garments

During the first month of the winter season, young unmarried girls of Gokulā observed the vow of worshiping the Goddess Katyāyāni. For the entire month they ate only unspiced *khichri*. After they had bathed in the water of the Yamunā just as the sun was rising, the *gopīs* made an earthen deity of the Goddess Durgā on the riverbank. Then they worshiped her with such aromatic substances as sandalwood pulp, along with other items both opulent and simple, including lamps, fruits, betel nuts, newly grown leaves, fragrant garlands and incense.

Each of the young unmarried girls performed her worship while chanting the following *mantra*: “O Goddess Katyāyāni, O great potency of the Lord, O possessor of great mystic power and mighty controller of all, please make the Son of Nanda Maharaja my husband. I offer my obeisances unto you.”

Thus for an entire month the girls carried out their vow and properly worshiped the Goddess, fully absorbing their minds in Krishna and meditating upon the following thought: “May the Son of King Nanda become my husband.” Each day they rose at dawn. Calling out to one another by name, they all held hands and loudly sang the glories of Krishna while going to the Kalindī to take their bath.

One day they came to the riverbank and, putting aside their clothing as they always did, happily played in the water while singing the glories of Krishna. Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and Master of all masters of mystic *yoga*, was aware of what the *gopīs* were doing, and thus He went there surrounded by His young companions to award the *gopīs* the perfection of their endeavor. Snatching the girls' garments from the ground, He nimbly climbed to the top of a *kadamba* tree. He laughed loudly with His

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companions, and addressed the girls jokingly.

Lord Krishna said: “My dear girls, now you may each come here as you wish and take back your garments. I’m telling you the truth and am not joking with you, since I see you’re fatigued from executing austere vows. I have never before spoken a lie, and these boys know it. Therefore, O slender-waisted girls, please come forward, either one by one or all together, and pick out your clothes.” Seeing how Krishna was joking with them, the *gopis* became fully immersed in love for Him, and as they glanced at each other they began to laugh and joke among themselves, even in their embarrassment. But still they did not come out of the water.

As Sri Govinda [Krishna] spoke to the *gopis* in this way, their minds were completely captivated by His words. Submerged up to their necks in the cold water, they began to shiver. Thus they addressed Him, “Dear Krishna, don’t be unfair! We know that You are the respectable Son of Nanda and that You are honored by everyone in Vraja. You are also very dear to us. Please give us back our clothes. We are shivering in the cold water. O Syamasundara, we are Your maidservants and must do whatever You say. But give us back our clothing. You know what the religious principles are, and if You don’t give us our clothes we will have to tell the King. Please!”

The Supreme Personality of Godhead replied sportingly: “If you girls are actually My maidservants, and if you really will do what I say, then come here with your innocent smiles and let each girl pick out her clothes. If you don’t do what I say, I won’t give them back to you. And even if the King becomes angry, what can he do?”

Shivering from the cold, all the young girls slowly came out of the water, modestly covering their private areas with their hands. Seeing how the *gopis* were full of embarrassment, the Supreme Lord became satisfied by their pure devotional affection. Draping their clothes over His shoulder, the Lord smiled and admonished in a teasing tone of voice, “You girls bathed naked while executing your vow and that is surely an offense against the demigods. To counteract your sin you should offer Me obeisances while placing your joined palms above your heads. Then you may take back your garments.”

The young *gopis* of Vrindavana, considering what Lord Achyuta had told them to be true, and thought that they had suffered an offense in executing their vow by bathing naked in the river. As they desired to successfully complete their vow, and since Lord Krishna is Himself the ultimate result of all pious activities, they offered their obeisances to Him, as directed, to cleanse away all their sins. Seeing them bow down like that, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Son of Devaki, returned their garments, feeling compassionate toward them, but fully satisfied by their act. Although the *gopis* had been thoroughly cheated, deprived of their modesty, ridiculed and made to act just like toy dolls, and although their clothing had been stolen, they did not feel any bitterness toward Sri Krishna. Rather, they were joyful to have this opportunity to associate with their Beloved. The *gopis* were addicted to associating with their beloved Krishna, and thus they became captivated by Him. Thus, even after putting their clothes on they did not move. They simply remained where they were, shyly glancing at Him.

The Supreme Lord understood the determination of the *gopis* to execute their strict vows. The Lord also knew that the *gopis* desired to touch His Lotus Feet, and thus Lord

Damodara, Krishna, gently said, “O saintly girls, I understand that your real motive in this austerity has been to worship Me. That intent of yours is approved of by Me, and indeed it must come to pass. The desire of those who fix their minds on Me does not lead to material desire for sense gratification, just as barley corns burned by the sun can no longer sprout. Go now, dear ones, and return to Vraja. Your desire is fulfilled, for in My company you will enjoy the coming nights. After all, this was the purpose of your vow in worshipping Goddess Katyayani, O pure-hearted ones.”

Thus instructed by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the young *gopis*, their desire now fulfilled, still could bring themselves only with great difficulty to go back to the village of Vraja, meditating all the while upon His Lotus Feet.

Some time later Lord Krishna, the Son of Devaki, surrounded by His cowherd friends and accompanied by His elder brother, Balarama went a good distance away from Vrindavana to herd the cows. When the sun’s heat became intense, Lord Krishna saw that the trees were acting as umbrellas by shading Him, and thus He spoke as follows to His friends: “O Stokakrishna and Amsu, O Sridama, Subala and Arjuna, O Vrishabha, Ojashvi, Devaprastha and Varuthapa, just see how these greatly fortunate trees’ lives are completely dedicated to the benefit of others. Even while tolerating the wind, rain, heat and snow, they protect us from these elements. Just see how these trees are maintaining all living entities! Their birth is completely successful. Their behavior is just like that of great personalities, for anyone who asks anything from a tree never goes away disappointed. These trees fulfill one’s desires with their leaves, flowers and fruits, their shade, roots, bark and wood, and also with their fragrance, sap, ashes, pulp and shoots. Similarly it is the duty of every living being to perform welfare activities for the benefit of others with his life, wealth, intelligence and words.”

Meandering slowly among the trees, whose branches were bent low by their abundance of foliage, fruits, and flowers, Lord Krishna soon arrived at the Yamuna River. The cowherd boys let the cows drink the clear, cool, life-giving water of the Yamuna. The cowherd boys themselves also drank that sweet water to their full satisfaction. Then, the cowherd boys herded the animals leisurely within a small forest by the Yamuna. Becoming afflicted by hunger, they went to Krishna and Balarama with their needs.

Commentary on Chapter Twenty-two

This story raises the question of the propriety of Deity worship in general and demigod worship in particular. Generally, Vaishnavas do not worship the demigods, although they respect them as great devotees of the Lord. Because demigod worship reveals a lack of faith in Krsna—a doubt that He is the Cause of all causes and does everything perfectly—Narottama Das Thakur has strictly forbidden it, for one serious to advance in devotional service. Yet, here we find that the *gopis*—accepted by Lord Chaitanya as the highest examples of Krsna consciousness—engaged in worshipping the goddess Durga.

The apparent contradiction is resolved when we consider the purpose of their worship. Generally, people worship the demigods for material benedictions—they want something for themselves. The *gopis*, however, worshipped Durga to get Krsna as their husband. Srila Prabhupada, A. C.

Bhaktivedanta Swami, says: “If Kṛṣṇa is the center of activity, a devotee can adopt any means to achieve that goal.” Kṛṣṇa is truly the ultimate object of worship, and His pleasure is the purpose of creation. Consequently, whatever is connected to Him must be ultimate and spiritual.

It is a religious principle that a young maiden cannot be naked before any male save her husband. Thus, when Kṛṣṇa ordered the gopis to appear naked before Him, in effect He was promising to be their husband. In this way He fulfilled their prayer. Actually, His stealing of the gopis’ garments was a necessary prelude to the Rasa Dance, for in order to qualify for rasa with Kṛṣṇa, one must be ready to stand “naked” before Him—devoid of any coverings offered by religion, society, or family.

This absence of externals is the significance of the verse in the Gita:

Abandon all kinds of pious speculation;
Surrender to Me; give Me your adoration.
Do not fear; I give My loving benefaction
To deliver you from all sinful reaction.

(Ch. 18)

One must be willing to abandon all religious codes, whether social, familial, or ritualistic. A pure devotee’s only consideration is Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure. In pure, unalloyed devotional service only one question arises: “How can I serve You, my Lord?” One must be ready to abandon everything for Him!

By obeying all of Kṛṣṇa’s commands, the gopis became His greatest lovers. Kṛṣṇa induced the gopis to reveal themselves completely, claiming that they had offended Varuṇa and needed to propitiate this demigod. Actually the simple gopis were not at all concerned about Varuṇa or any other demigod. Kṛṣṇa’s satisfaction was their only motivation. Although Kṛṣṇa seemingly cheated them, putting them in a most awkward circumstance, still their adoration for Him did not waver.

Nothing in the material or spiritual realms is comparable to the gopis’ standard of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Invoking their exemplary mood of purest love, Lord Chaitanya prayed: “My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, You may embrace me or trample me under your feet, or make me brokenhearted by never being present before me. Whatever You like, You can do, because You have complete freedom to act. But in spite of all Your dealings, You are my Lord eternally, and I have no other worshipable object.” (Sikṣhastaka 8)

Chapter Twenty-Three: The Brahmanas’ Wives Blessed

The cowherd boys entreated: “O Rama, Rama, All-powerful One! O Krishna, scourge of the wicked! We are very hungry. Please do something about it.” The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Devaki’s Son, desiring to please His devotees, the *brahmanas’* wives, instructed His friends, “Please go to the sacred arena where I learned

brahmanas are now performing a sacrifice for promotion to heaven. Once there, My dear cowherd boys, ask them for some food. And in the Name of My elder brother, Lord Balarama, and also My Name, tell them you have been sent by Us.”

Directed thus by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the cowherd boys went there and requested the *brahmanas*: “O earthly gods, please listen to us. We cowherd boys are executing the orders of Krishna and Balarama. We wish all good fortune to you. Lord Rama and Lord Achyuta [Krishna] are tending Their cows nearby. They are very hungry and request you to give Them some food. Therefore, O *brahmanas*, knowers of religious principles, if you believe us please give us some food for Them. Except for the time between the initiation of a sacrifice and the actual killing of the animal, O most pure *brahmanas*, it is not offensive for even the initiated to partake of food.”

The *brahmanas* heard this plea on behalf of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but they refused to pay any heed. Rather, these *brahmanas* were full of petty desires and enmeshed in elaborate rituals. Though themselves advanced in *Vedic* knowledge, they were, in fact, ignorant fools. The ingredients of sacrificial performance – the time, place, particular paraphernalia, *mantras*, priests, rituals, performer, demigods, offering and the as-yet-unseen beneficial results – are all but aspects of His opulences, unfortunately the *brahmanas* thought Lord Krishna to be an ordinary human, due to their perverted intelligence. They failed to realize that He is the Supreme Absolute Truth, the manifest Personality of Godhead, Whom the material senses cannot perceive. Thus bewildered by false identification with the material body, they did not offer Him proper respect. When the *brahmanas* would not reply even with ‘yes’ or ‘no’, the cowherd boys went back to Krishna and Rama very disappointed, and reported to Them all that had happened. Hearing what had happened, the Lord simply laughed. He consoled His friends, telling them that such is the way ignorant men act in this world. “Tell the *brahmanas*’ wives that I have come here with Lord Sankarsana and they will certainly give you whatever you want, for they are very affectionate toward Me and think of Me always.”

The cowherd boys then went to the place where the *brahmanas*’ wives were gathered. There the boys observed those chaste ladies sitting quietly, nicely adorned with ornaments. They bowed down to the *brahmana* ladies and addressed them with great humility, “Obeisances unto you, dear wives of the *brahmanas*. Kindly listen to us. We have come on behalf of Lord Krishna, Who is herding His cows not far from here. He is now hungry, so you should give some food for Him and His companions.”

The *brahmanas*’ wives were always very anxious to see Krishna, for their minds and hearts had been enthralled by descriptions of Him. When they heard that He had actually come, they became very excited. Taking in large containers four kinds of foods [those which are chewed, licked, suckled or drunk], full of delicious tastes and aromas, the ladies quickly went forth en masse to meet their Beloved, just as rivers flow ceaselessly toward the sea. Although their husbands, sons, brothers and other relatives tried to stop them, their desire to see Krishna, cultivated by much hearing of His transcendental Qualities, easily won out. Beside the River Yamuna, in a garden decorated with *ashoka* trees, they saw Him walking in the company of His cowherd friends and His elder brother, Balarama. His bodily hue was dark blue and His attire golden. Sporting a peacock feather, sprigs of

over buds, colored minerals and a garland of forest flowers and leaves, He was dressed like a theatrical dancer. He rested one hand upon a friend's shoulder and with the other playfully twirled a lotus. Lilies decorated His ears, His hair hung down, covering His cheeks, and His lotus-like face had a big smile..

Those *brahmana* ladies had long heard about Krishna, their Beloved. His glories were the constant ornaments of their ears. Truly, their minds were always thinking of Him. Through the openings of their eyes they now took Him within their hearts, and there they embraced Him for a long time. In this way they fully relieved the pain of separation from Him, just as sages lose the distress of false ego by embracing their spiritual consciousness. Lord Krishna, Who knows the thoughts of everyone, understood how those ladies had abandoned all earthly hopes and were there simply to see Him. Thus He greeted them with a smile on His face:

Welcome, o lucky ladies! Please sit down and be comfortable. What do you want? That you have come to see Me is appropriate. Expert personalities who know their own self-interest certainly render unmotivated and uninterrupted devotional service unto Me, for I am the Soul of all souls. It is only due to contact with the Self that anything becomes dear, including ones' mind, intelligence, body, friends, children and wife or anything else. What could be more dear than one's own Self? Now please return to the sacred arena, as the learned *brahmanas*, your husbands, are householders and need your help to finish their sacrifices."

The *brahmanas'* wives replied: "O Almighty Lord, please do not speak so cruelly. Rather, fulfill Your vow to reciprocate in kind with Your devotees. Now that we have found Your Lotus Feet, we simply wish to stay here so we may put on our heads the garlands of *tulasi* leaves You may indifferently kick away with Your Lotus Feet. We are ready to forsake all our material relationships. Our husbands, sons, fathers, brothers, other friends and relatives will no longer accept us back, so how would anyone else give us shelter? Therefore, since we have taken shelter at Your Lotus Feet and have no other refuge, O Chastiser of enemies, please grant our desire."

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: "Be assured that your husbands will not reject you or be inimical toward you, nor will your other relatives or the general populace. I will personally appraise them of the situation. In fact, even the demigods will be pleased. For you to remain in bodily consciousness would certainly not benefit people in this world, nor would it help you to increase your devotion to Me. Just fix your minds upon Me, and very quickly you will obtain Me. By seeing My Deity Form, hearing about Me, meditating upon Me and chanting My glories and Names, that pure love for Me develops, not by mere physical proximity. Therefore please go home to your families."

Thus instructed, the *brahmanas'* wives returned to the arena of sacrifice. As Krishna had foretold, the *brahmanas* found no fault with their wives, and together they finished the sacrifice. One lady had been forcibly kept back by her husband. While the others describe the Supreme Lord Krishna, she secretly embraced Him within her heart and relinquished her material body, the cause of bondage to material activity.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Govinda, fed all His cowherd friends sumptuously with the four kinds of food brought by the *brahmanas'* wives. Then the supremely powerful Lord Himself ate the preparations. Thus the Supreme Lord, acting like

an ordinary mortal to execute His Pastimes, mimicked the ways of human society. Krishna very much enjoyed pleasing His cows, cowherd boyfriends and girlfriends with His beauty, actions and words. The *brahmanas* rally came to their senses and felt sincere remorse. They thought: “We are sinful, for we have neglected the order of the Two Lords of the universe, Who deceptively appear as ordinary human beings.” Observing their wives’ pure, transcendental devotion for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna, and seeing their own lack of pure devotion, the *brahmanas* felt very remorseful and condemned themselves.

The *brahmanas* said: “To hell with our triple birth, our celibacy and extensive learning! To hell with our aristocratic traditions and expertise in executing sacrificial rituals! These are all useless because we were offensive to the transcendental Personality of Godhead. The illusory potency of the Supreme Lord can bewilder even the greatest mystics, what to speak of us. As *brahmanas* we are said to be the Spiritual Masters of everyone, yet we have become confused about our own best interest. Just see the limitless love these women have developed for Krishna, the Spiritual Master of the whole universe! Their pure love has broken the very bonds of death – attachment to family life. Although these women have never undergone the reformatory rites of the twice-born classes, nor lived in the *ashrama* of a Spiritual Master as *brahmacharis*, nor executed austerities, philosophized on the nature of the Self, followed the strict discipline of cleanliness or engaged in pious rituals; nevertheless, they have attained faith and devotion for Lord Krishna, Whose glories are extolled in the *Vedic* hymns and Who is the Supreme Master of all masters of mystic power.

“We, on the other hand, have no such pure devotion for Krishna, despite having executed all these processes. Indeed, illusioned as we are by our household attachments, we have been completely from the real goal of life. Still just see how He, through the mouths of these simple cowherd boys, has helped us remember the ultimate destination of all real transcendentalists. Otherwise, why would the Supreme Controller – Whose every desire is already fulfilled, and Who is the Master of liberation and all other transcendental boons – enact this Pastime with us, who are always controlled by Him? Hoping for the touch of His Lotus Feet, the Goddess of Fortune perpetually worships Him, leaving aside all others, and gives up Her pride and cleanliness. That She thus begs is surely astonishing. All the aspects of sacrifice – the auspicious time and place, the various items of paraphernalia, the *Vedic* hymns, the prescribed rituals, the priests and sacrificial rites, the patron of the sacrifice, the demigods, the sacrificial offering and the pious results obtained – all are but manifestations of His opulences. Yet even though we were told that Vishnu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Lord of all mystic controllers, had appeared in the *Yadu* dynasty, we were so foolish as to not realize Sri Krishna is none other than He. We were illusioned by Lord Krishna’s potency and thus could not comprehend His in essence as the original Personality of Godhead. Now we beg that He will kindly forgive our offense.”

Reacting on the offense they had committed by neglecting Lord Krishna, they became very eager to see Him. But since they were afraid of King Kamsa, they did not risk the journey to Vraja.

Commentary on Chapter Twenty-three

The Brahmins had every natural advantage for understanding the Supreme, but in the end they were not able to do so. But their wives, supposedly less intelligent and disadvantaged in so many ways for spiritual life_- were able to achieve the ultimate goal. Therefore, Lord Chaitanya said that one does not have to be born in a family of Brahmins or even in a male body to be a Brahmin. Moreover, He says that if one is Krsna conscious, he is more than a Brahmin_he is a spiritual master.

Whereas the husbands were legalistic and external in their comprehension of religion, their wives were spontaneous and intuitive. On hearing Krsna and Balarama's plight, they immediately became anxious to help. They did not have to reason about it. While preparing to go, their husbands, fathers, and sons tried to stop them, but they were determined to go to Krsna. Once Krsna's call has attracted someone, nothing in this world can impede his advance_-not family, not society, not even religion.

Note that when these ladies saw Krsna, they took Him into their hearts through their eyes, and in the heart began to embrace Him. This embracement gives us a clear understanding of the nature of Krsna's amorous pastimes. They are not physical but spiritual, and therefore they are not immoral, nor even limited by time and space. In fact, these pastimes are available to us today. We also can mitigate our feelings of separation from Krsna by taking Him into our hearts through the ear and through the mind. Thus we merge into the existence of the Supreme_-without losing our individual identity.

Without Krsna consciousness, all the religious rituals and performances in the world are ultimately a useless waste of time and energy. Real religion is an expression of loving consciousness, an affair of the heart. We see that even after the Brahmins understood intellectually the supreme position of Krsna and admitted their defect, they would not go to Krsna_-they were afraid of Kamsa. Their habit of considering externals indicates that they were attached to material results.

In the Gita Krsna says that those who cling to materialistic aspirations never develop resolute spiritual determination. Even sages and their followers become bewildered when they use the information in the immense body of scriptures known as the Vedas simply for increasing material comforts in this life and the next. Although surrender to Krsna is the goal of the Vedas, the forms and rituals of organized Krsna consciousness can also be utilized for creating an external show of religiosity. Yes, even a devotee of Krsna can lose sight of the Lord's pleasure while absorbing himself in the outer manifestations of his spiritual heritage.

In his purport to Chaitanya-Charitamrita (Adi 1:91), Srila Prabhupada writes: “. . . there are numerous pretentious faiths that pass as religion but neglect the real essence of religion. The real religion of a living being is his natural inborn quality, whereas pretentious religion is a form of nescience that artificially covers a living entity's pure consciousness under certain unfavorable conditions. Real religion lies dormant when artificial religion dominates from the mental plane.”

The living entities natural innate propensity is to serve God just for the sake of serving Him, according to His pleasure only. But the first and foremost concern of pretentious religion is

one's own gross or subtle sense gratification, whether through cultivating piety and good karma, appealing to administrative demigods, developing yogic powers of mysticism, or merging with the Brahman aspect of God. Genuine spiritualists, however, have nothing to do with these selfish desires. The original, constitutional function of a living entity is service to Godhead alone—only for the Lord's satisfaction. Any so-called religious process or institution that interferes with this unadulterated activity of the soul must be considered as mere pretention.

The wives of the Brahmins demonstrate real religion—spontaneous loving service to God. Just by the hearing of Kṛṣṇa's and Balaram's names, the women dropped whatever they were doing and gathered their best foodstuffs. Regardless of impediments, they rushed off to satisfy Kṛṣṇa. This is perfect Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Chapter Twenty-Four: Worshiping Govardhana Hill

While staying in Vrindavana with His brother Balarama, Lord Krishna observed the cowherd men arranging for a sacrifice to Indra. As the omniscient Supersoul, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, already understood the situation, but He still humbly inquired from the elders, headed by His Father, Nanda Maharaja.

Lord Krishna asked: “My dear Father, will you please tell Me what this great endeavor is all about? What will it accomplish? For whose satisfaction is it intended, and how is it to be executed? Please tell Me about it, dear Father. I want to understand and will listen in good faith. Secrets are not to be kept by pious personalities, who see everyone as equal to themselves, having no conception of ‘I’ ‘mine’ or ‘another’s’. Nor do they consider who is a friend, enemy and neutral. A neutral person may be avoided, but a friend should be treated like one's own self. When people perform activities, they sometimes understand what they are doing and sometimes do not. Those who understand what they are doing achieve complete success in their work, but ignorant people do not. This being the case, this ritualistic sacrifice of yours should be fully explained to Me. Is it a ceremony of scriptural injunction, or is it merely traditional?”

Nanda Maharaja replied: “Powerful Lord Indra is the controller of rain. Clouds are his representatives, and they provide rainfall, which brings happiness and sustenance to all. Not only we, dear Krishna, but many others worship him, the lord and master of the rainclouds. We offer him various paraphernalia of worship produced through his discharge of rain. By accepting the remnants of sacrifice offered to Indra, people sustain their lives and fulfill the threefold aim of religiosity, economic development and sense gratification. In this way Lord Indra is the medium responsible for the material success of industrious people. This religious principle is rooted in sound tradition. Anyone who rejects it due to lust, enmity, greed or fear will never achieve good fortune.”

After Lord Krishna listened to His Father Nanda's explanation, He spoke to His father as follows, just to make Lord Indra angry: “It is due to *karma* that a living being takes birth, and it is due to *karma* alone that he meets his destined end. His happiness,

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sense of security, distress and fear all occur due to *karma*. Even if there be a Supreme Controller Who awards the result of action, He is dependent on a persons engaging in activity. How can there be a bestower of fruitive results without fruitive activities have been performed. Living beings are forced to experience the results of their own individual work. Lord Indra cannot change the destiny of anyone! Destiny is born of one's own nature, so why should people worship him? Everyone is under the sway of his own nature, and he must follow that nature!. This whole universe, with its demigods, demons and human beings, is based on the living entities' conditioned nature; and it is *karma* that causes the conditioned soul to accept and then give up different types of material bodies. Thus it is *karma* that is his enemy, friend or neutral witness, his Spiritual Master and worshipable lord.

“Therefore one should very seriously worship work itself. One should remain content with his nature and should perform his duty. Indeed, what we may live nicely is truly our worshipable deity. If something is sustaining our life but we take shelter of something else, what benefit can we achieve? We would be like an unchaste woman who consorts with a paramour. The *brahmana* lives by studying and teaching the *Vedas*; those of the royal order by protecting the earth; *vaisyas*, the productive class, trade; and the *sudras* or laboring class, by serving the twice-born classes. The occupations of the *vaisya* are four: farming, commerce, money lending and cow protection. Our community is engaged in cow protection. Creation, maintenance and destruction are caused by the three modes of nature – namely goodness, passion and ignorance. Specially the mode of passion creates this universe and through sexual combination effects great variety. Driven by the mode of passion, the clouds pour rain down everywhere, and by this all creatures achieve sustenance. What has the Indra to do with this wonderful arrangement?

“Dear Father, we do not live in the cities or towns or villages. Being forest people, we live in the forest and on the hills. Therefore let us execute a sacrifice for the enjoyment of the cows, the *brahmanas* and Govardhana Hill! With all the paraphernalia already collected for worshiping Indra, let us instead perform this sacrifice: let many varieties of food be cooked - from sweet rice to vegetable soup! Many kinds of delicious cakes, both baked and fried, should be made. And all the available milk products we have should be used for this sacrifice.

“Let the learned *brahmanas* who are expert in chanting the *Vedic mantras* invoke the sacrificial rites. Then you should feed the priests with excellent prepared foods, and reward them with cows and other gifts. After giving appropriate *prasadam* to everyone else, including even the dogs and dog-eaters, you should give fresh grass to the cows and then make your respectful offerings to Govardhana Hill. After everyone has eaten to his full satisfaction, You should dress and decorate yourselves gorgeously, smearing your bodies with sandalwood paste, and then circumambulate the *brahmanas*, the cows, the sacrificial rites and Govardhana Hill. This is what I think, dear Father, and you may carry it out if it appeals to you. Such a sacrifice will be very much appreciated by the cows, the *brahmanas* and Govardhana Hill, and also by Me.”

Lord Krishna, Who is Himself powerful Eternal Time, desired to smash the false pride of Lord Indra. When Nanda and the other Vrindavana elders heard Krishna's statement, they accepted what He said as proper. The cowherd community then executed

all that Madhusudana had suggested. They arranged for the *brahmanas* to chant the auspicious *Vedic mantras*, and using the paraphernalia that had been designated for Indra's sacrifice, they made offerings to Govardhana Hill and the *brahmanas* with great reverential respect. They also gave fresh grass to the cows. Then, placing the cows, bulls and calves in the lead, they circumambulated Govardhana Hill.

As the beautifully adorned cowherd ladies followed along, riding in wagons drawn by white oxen, they sang the glories of Lord Krishna. Their songs mingled melodiously with the *brahmanas'* chanting of benedictions. To inspire faith in the cowherd men, Krishna assumed a unique, huge Form and declared "I am Govardhana Hill!" and then ate all the many offerings. Together with the people of Vraja, the Lord bowed down to this unique Form of Govardhana Hill, thus in effect offering obeisances to Himself.

Then He said: "Just see how this Hill has appeared personally and bestowed mercy upon us. This Govardhana Hill can assume any Form He wishes, and He will kill any residents of the forest who neglect Him. Therefore, let us offer our obeisances to Him for the welfare of ourselves and our cows." The cowherd community, having been thus inspired by Vasudeva to correctly execute the sacrifice to Govardhana Hill, the *brahmanas* and the cows, returned with Lord Krishna to Vraja.

Commentary on Chapter Twenty-four

Krsna's purpose in stopping the Indra Puja was to teach the residents of Vrindaban—and those who wish to develop Vraja's level of unalloyed devotion—that demigod worship is not good. Worship is meant for the Supreme Personality of Godhead alone. What is the harm in demigod worship? Are they not servants of Krsna also? Yes, they are. But those who worship them are not serving Krsna, because they worship the demigods with a separatist mentality, for selfish enjoyment.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is actually the only doer of activity; all others act only as He sanctions. "Man proposes, God disposes." The living being is independent to desire, but the fulfillment of his desire depends on Krsna. When one approaches a demigod for a material benediction, in effect he is trying to get his own way by going around Krsna.

A life of unalloyed devotional service is quite contrary to the separatism of demigod worship. Krsna advises us to abandon all varieties of separate interest and to surrender to Him alone. This is the ultimate religious principle. If we fulfill it, we fulfill all others. But if we fail to surrender to Him, no matter how many demigods we satisfy, no matter how many rituals we perform, no matter how many austerities we undergo, and no matter how many academic degrees we acquire, all is for naught. These endeavors are comparable to having zeros without the one in front. When the one is there, every zero increases the value by ten. Without the one, however, even an endless string of zeros is still zero. Krsna, or God, the Absolute Source of Everything, is the One. Activities performed for Him are valuable. Without connection to Him, they are useless.

Therefore, the most important thing in life is discovering how to bring everything we do into proper relationship with the Supreme. Lord Krsna Himself says,

All that you do, son of Kunti, all that you eat,
Just place as a sacrifice at My lotus feet.
All your austerity and all of your charity
Given to Me yield blest fruits in eternity.

(Gita, Ch. 9)

The person who can help us make this connection is called the spiritual master. His expertise is that He knows the science of Krsna consciousness: how to engage everything in the service of Krsna. The logical question then is “How do I find such a great soul?” The scriptures give the answer. By the grace of Krsna one gets guru, and by the grace of guru one gets Krsna. Just open your eyes, watch, and wait. Krsna has promised to send us a bona fide spiritual master if we sincerely want one.

Chapter Twenty-Five: Krishna Lifts Govardhana Hill

When Indra discovered that his sacrifice had been stopped, he became furious with Maharaja Nanda and the other cowherd men, who were taking Krishna as their Lord. Angry Indra called for the *Samvartaka* clouds of universal destruction. Imagining himself to be the Supreme Controller, Indra scoffed: “Just see how these cowherders living in the forest have become intoxicated by their prosperity! They have surrendered to Krishna, an ordinary human being, and thus they have offended the demigods. Taking shelter of Krishna is exactly like the foolish attempt of materialists who abandon transcendental knowledge of the Self and try to cross over the ocean of material existence in the leaky boats of fruitive activities and ritualistic sacrifices. These cowherd men have acted very offensively toward me by taking shelter of Krishna. He thinks Himself very wise, but actually He is a talkative, foolish and arrogant child.”

To the clouds of devastation Lord Indra shouted: “Their prosperity has made them mad with pride, and their arrogance has been further increased by Krishna. Now go and humble their pride and destroy their animals. I will follow you on my elephant, Airavata, with the swift and powerful wind-god. We will obliterate the cowherd village of Nanda Maharaja.”

On Indra’s order the clouds of universal destruction at once moved over the peaceful cowherd pastures of Maharaja Nanda and began to torment the inhabitants there with incessant torrents of rain. Driven by the fearsome wind-god, the clouds exploded with lightning bolts and roared with thunder. The clouds dropped huge hailstones and rain as thick as massive columns, covering the earth with a flood in which the ground could no longer be distinguished from low. The cows and other animals, quivered from the terrible storms, and the ladies and cowherd men suffering from the cold, approached Lord Govinda for shelter.

Disturbed by the severe rainfall and trying to cover their own heads and those of

their calves with their bodies, the cows approached the Lotus Feet of Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The cowherd men and women also cried out: “Krishna, Krishna, O compassionate One, please deliver us from the wrath of Indra. O Lord, You are very affectionate to Your devotees. Please save us!”

Seeing the inhabitants of Gokula almost fainting from the onslaught of rain, blasting winds and hail, the Supreme Lord Hari could understand that this was the mischief of Indra. Sri Krishna said to Himself: “Because We have abandoned his sacrifice, Indra has caused this fearsome, unseasonable rain and its terrible winds and hail. By My mystic power I will neutralize and counter this disturbance created by the heavenly King. Demigod Indra is proud of his opulence, and out of ignorance thinks that he is the Lord of the universe. I will destroy his ignorance. A demigod is supposed to be endowed with the mode of goodness. The false pride of thinking oneself the Lord should never be allowed to continue. When I smash the false pride of one deviating from goodness, My purpose is to do them good. I will protect My cowherd community by My transcendental potency, for I am their only Shelter. Indeed, they are my kith and kin, and I am their Master and Lord. Moreover, I have promised to protect My devotees.”

Having spoken this, Lord Krishna, Who is Vishnu Himself, plucked up the Govardhana Hill with one hand and held it up as easily as a small child holds up a mushroom. The Lord instructed the cowherd community: “O Father, O Mother, O residents of Vraja, please come under this Hill with your cows. Do not fear that the Hill will fall from My hand. And don’t fear the wind and rain, for your protection from these dangers has already been arranged.”

Their minds thus pacified by Krishna, they all went beneath the Hill, where it was warm and dry, with plenty of room for themselves and their cows, servants, wagons, priests, and for all the other members of the community too. Lord Krishna, being indifferent to hunger and thirst, and not caring for His own personal comfort, stood there holding the Hill aloft for seven days as the people of Vraja all gazed upon Him with wonder.

Indra observed this display of Lord Krishna’s power with astonishment. Knocked down from his pedestal of false pride, and his evil intentions thwarted, Indra ordered his clouds to desist. Seeing that the mighty winds and rain had now stopped, the sky cleared into a brilliant blue sky. Lord Krishna, the lifter of Govardhana Hill, assured His friends, “My dear cowherdmen, please go home with your wives, children and possessions. Do not fear! The winds and rain have now stopped, and the flooded rivers have subsided.”

After collecting their cows and loading all their possessions into wagons, the cowherd men returned home. The women, children and elderly persons slowly followed. Meanwhile, as everyone looked on, Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead set the Hill down in its original place. All Vrindavana’s residents were overwhelmed with ecstatic love, eagerly coming forward to greet Krishna according to their respective relationships with Him. The cowherd women offered water mixed with yogurt and unbroken barleycorns as an expression of honor, simultaneously showering auspicious blessings upon Him. Nanda Maharaja, Mother Yasoda, Mother Rohini and Balarama, the strongest of the strong, all lovingly embraced Krishna. Overwhelmed with emotion, they offered Him

their best blessings.

From the clouds above, all the demigods sang Lord Krishna's praises and showered flowers in great profusion. They loudly blew their conchshells and beat their maddledrums, while the best of the *Gandharvas* sweetly sang His praises. Surrounded by His dear cowherd friends and Lord Balarama, Krishna then went back to where He had been tending His cows. The cowherd girls went home, singing ecstatically about the lifting of Govardhana Hill and other glorious Pastimes performed by Lord Krishna, Who had so profoundly touched their hearts and lives.

Commentary on Chapter Twenty-five

In religious symbolism, a god is not uncommon. Noah, for instance, faced a god when the world had become too wicked and needed re-creation or thorough cleansing. Here, however, the situation is quite different. The godly are being punished for obeying the Supreme Lord!

How is this possible? Only because the god is a *lila*, a Pastime of the Lord that occurs by His will and for His pleasure. At the same time, the Lord uses this occasion to teach us a most valuable lesson: worship is meant for the Supreme Lord alone, and He will always give His pure devotees protection.

Certainly Indra is a devotee, not a demon. Still, because a living entity is not the Supreme, he always has a tendency to become forgetful of the difference between himself and the Lord. In this case, owing to false pride, Indra became envious of Krsna and thereby lost his intelligence. Thus bewildered by *maya*, Indra forgot, temporarily, that he was the eternal servant of Krsna. Out of His causeless mercy, Krsna responded in a way designed to bring Indra back to Krsna consciousness.

But before his memory returned, Indra let loose every agent of suffering and devastation at his command on the inhabitants of Vrindavana. Nevertheless, these pure devotees did not waver in their devotion to Krsna. Instead, the apparent calamity became an occasion for them to realize new heights of bliss under the merciful protection of Krsna. Similarly every trial or temptation we face is simultaneously a boon and a curse. It is a boon if we remember Krsna and a curse if we forget Him. We too, today, can experience the blissful protection afforded the inhabitants of Vrindaban, if we place our exclusive faith in Krsna. Krsna says,

In the same measure that one surrenders to Me,

I reciprocate with him accordingly.

(*Gita*, Ch. 4)

In response to unalloyed, unwavering faith, Krsna awards us the experience of His unlimited, loving protection. Therefore those conditions that materially appear to be the most unfortunate may actually be the greatest boon, because they push us to take shelter of Krsna most completely. When we give up all other shelters, Krsna becomes our perfect and complete shelter.

Maddened by pride, Indra thought that because the residents of Vrindaban had taken Krsna so seriously, they and their cows should die. Although this pastime with Indra is a special affair, nevertheless we should know that in the material world, great endeavors for spiritual advancement

often meet with great opposition. Actually one may surmise that if there is no opposition coming from *maya*, perhaps there is not much spiritual threat to *maya* either.

Krsna's lifting of Govardhan Hill showed His determination to keep His promise that His devotees will never be vanquished. "O Father, O Mother, O residents of Vraja, please come under this Hill with your cows. Do not fear that the Hill will fall from My hand. And don't fear the wind or rain, for your protection from these dangers has already been arranged."

Do we have the conviction and ability to always believe in Krsna's protective arrangement? When *maya's* attractions, rain, ice, and cold spell lead to material calculation, do we think, "That's impossible!" To escape Indra's wrath by congregating under a hill held up by the hand of a small child, Krsna, is a mighty leap of faith. Attachment to material sense perception is the greatest barrier to faith in Krsna and His representative. But without firm faith we will lose the precious opportunity to show our love for Krsna which that circumstance has. The test of our divine love comes when Krsna's desire does not tally with our limited, sensory vision, but we nevertheless happily submit to it. The residents of Vrindaban immediately accepted Krsna's proposal, absurd though it was, and with faithful and peaceful minds entered beneath Govardhan Hill. There they gazed upon Him for seven days, wide-eyed with joyful amazement and love.

Chapter Twenty-Six: Wonderful Krishna

The cowherd men were amazed at Krishna's activities, like the lifting of Govardhana Hill. Unable to comprehend His transcendental potency, they asked Maharaja Nanda, "Since this Child performs such astonishing activities, how could He appear amongst ordinary folk like us – a birth for Him which would be contemptible? How could a mere seven-year-old boy playfully hold up the huge Govardhana Hill with one hand, just like a powerful elephant lifts a lotus flower? As a small baby who had barely opened His eyes, He sucked the breast milk of the mighty demoness Putana and then sucked out her life air as well, even as Time sucks the youth from one's body.

"Once, when Krishna was three months old, He was kicking up His feet and crying as He lay underneath a big cart. That cart fell down and went topsy-turvy simply because it was kicked by Krishna's toe. At the age of one year, while peacefully sitting, He was lifted up into the sky by the Trinavarta demon. Baby Krishna, however, grabbed the demon's neck, inflicting great pain and killing him. Once, Mother Yasoda tied Him with ropes to a mortar because He was stealing butter. Then, crawling on all fours, He dragged the mortar between two *Arjuna* trees and pulled them down.

"Another time, when He was tending His calves in the forest with Balarama and the other cowherd boys, the Bakasura demon went there for the purpose of killing Krishna. But Krishna instead seized this wicked demon by his mouth and tore him apart.

"Desiring to kill Krishna, demon Vatsa disguised himself as a calf and tried to blend

in amongst Krishna's herd. But Krishna killed the demon and used his body to enjoy the sport of knocking *kapittha* fruits down from the trees. Together with Balarama, Krishna killed the jackass demon and all his friends, and thereby secured the safety of the Talavana forest, which was full of very ripe palm fruits. After arranging for the mighty Balarama to kill demon Pralamba, Krishna saved Vraja's cowherders and their animals from a dangerous forest.

"Krishna punished the greatly poisonous serpent, Kaliya, and after defeating him, drove him away from the lake in the Yamuna. In this way Krishna made the water of the Yamuna free of the snake's deadly poison. Dear Nanda, why is it that we and all Vraja's other residents cannot give up our intense affection for your Son? And why is He so spontaneously attracted to us? On the one hand this Child is only seven years old, but on the other He has lifted the great Govardhana Hill. Therefore, O Vraja King, questions about your Son have arisen within us."

Maharaja Nanda replied: "O cowherd men, just listen to me, and let all your doubts concerning Krishna be resolved. Some time ago Garga *Muni* told me all about this Boy."

Garga *Muni* said, "Your Son, Krishna, comes as an incarnation in every age. In the past He has presented Himself in three different colors – white, red and yellow – and now He has come in a blackish color. For many reasons, this beautiful Son of yours sometimes appears as the Son of Vasudeva. Therefore, learned persons often call this Child 'Vasudeva'. Your Son has many Names and Forms according to His transcendental Activities and Qualities. These are all well-known to me, but people in general do not know them.

"To increase the transcendental bliss of Gokula's cowherd men, this Child's actions will always be auspicious for you, and by His grace alone, you will overcome all difficulties. O Maharaja Nanda, history tells us that whenever there was an irregular, incompetent government because Indra had been dethroned, and people were being disturbed by thieves and harassed in general, this Child appeared just to subdue the rogues, and to protect the citizens and allow them to flourish. Since Lord Vishnu is on the demigods' side, the demons cannot harm them. Similarly, any person or group of persons attached to all-auspicious Krishna will never be defeated by any enemy. Therefore, O Maharaja Nanda, your Child is as good as Lord Narayana. Indeed, in His transcendental Opulences, Qualities, Influence, Name and Fame, He is exactly like Lord Narayana. Thus you should not be amazed by His activities."

Maharaja Nanda continued: "After Garga *Muni* spoke thus to me and I returned home, I began to understand that Krishna, Who keeps us safe and free from all disturbance, is actually an expansion of Lord Narayana."

Having heard Maharaja Nanda relate these statements of Garga *Muni*, Vrindavana's residents became enlivened. Their confusion was gone, and they worshiped Lord Krishna and Nanda with due honor. Indra had been angry when his sacrifice was stopped, and thus he sent rain and hail to fall on Gokula, as well as lightning and powerful winds. Altogether these brought great suffering to the villagers, cowherds and animals there. When Lord Krishna, Who is always compassionate, saw the suffering of those who had accepted Him as their shelter, He smiled broadly and lifted with one hand the Govardhana

Hill, as easily as a child plucks up a ball to play with it. In this way Krishna protected the cowherd community. May He, Govinda, the Lord of cows and the destroyer of Indra's false pride, be pleased with us.

Commentary on Chapter Twenty-six

How wonderful is Krsna? Although we may describe some of the ways in which Krsna is wonderful, we cannot begin to estimate the extent of His greatness. Therefore, despite His appearance as a small child, He remains inconceivable and unfathomable, the Supreme Absolute without beginning or end.

Not only is Krsna wonderful by His innate Qualities and Pastimes, but also He is wonderful in His love. His love wants to communicate that knowledge to all His parts and parcels. Hence, He sets in motion a perpetual and ever-increasing source of bliss, because when He experiences His parts enjoying Himself, His enjoyment increases. And when His enjoyment increases, His parts experience more pleasure, *ad in ritum*.

Some might think that this is irrational and irrelevant to physical existence, like pie in the sky. But Krsna is so wonderful and kind that He compresses the Whole of Himself into His Name, His Form, His Pastimes and His Remembrance. Then He invites us to "Always Think of Me." Simply by thinking of Him and remembering Him, all the sorrows and miseries of material life are extinguished and annihilated. Krsna is *sat-chit-ananda*, eternal, full of knowledge, and bliss. When one realizes the Absolute, Krsna, he knows the Whole. Then one knows neither hankering nor lamentation, but only the unalloyed bliss of pure Krsna consciousness.

How wonderful is His Name;
How wonderful is His Fame;
How wonderful is His Form;
It's beyond all earthly norm.

Krsna, all glorious;
O'r all victorious;
You are the Supreme One,
By Whom all things are done.

*Let me chant Your Holy Name,
Let me propagate Your Fame;
Krsna, Krsna, Krsna;
Krsna, Krsna, Krsna.*

*Chapter Twenty-Seven: Lord Indra & Mother Surabhi
Offer Prayers*

After Krishna lifted Govardhana Hill and protected the inhabitants of Vraja from the devastating rainfall, Surabhi, the mother of all cows, came to see Krishna, accompanied by Indra. Indra was very ashamed for offending the Lord. Indra approached Him in a secluded place, and fell down, touching his helmet to the Lord's Lotus Feet. Now Indra not only heard of, but directly witnessed, the transcendental potency of all-powerful Krishna, and his false pride in thinking himself lord of the three worlds was thoroughly smashed. Putting his hands together in supplication, Indra addressed the Lord:

"Your transcendental Form, O Lord, is a manifestation of unalloyed goodness, and is never undisturbed by change, but shines with knowledge, without a tinge of passion or ignorance. The mighty do not exist in You. How could there be any qualities of ignorance in You - such as lust, greed, anger and envy - which are caused by one's entanglement in material existence and which then causes one to become even further enmeshed in material existence? As the Supreme Lord, You inflict punishment only to uphold religious principles and correct the wicked.

"You are the Origin and Spiritual Master of this universe, and its Supreme Controller as well. You are insurmountable Eternal Time, inflicting punishment on the sinful for their welfare. Indeed, in Your different incarnations, chosen by Your own free will, You act determinedly and perfectly to remove the false pride of all who think they are masters in this world. Even fools like me, who foolishly and pridefully imagine themselves to be universal lords, very quickly forsake their conceit and take to the spiritually progressive path when they see that You are fearless and immovable, even in the face of Time. You punish offenders only to correct them.

"Overwhelmed by pride of my own power, and ignorant of Your supreme power, I offended You. O Lord, my intelligence was bewildered. Please forgive me. May my consciousness never again be so offensive. O transcendent Lord, You descend into this world to remove the warlords who burden the earth and create terrible disturbances. Simultaneously, O Lord, You act for the welfare of those who faithfully serve Your Lotus Feet.

"Obeisances unto You, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, O great Soul, Who is all-pervading and Who resides in the hearts of all. My humble obeisances unto You, Krishna, the foremost of the *Yadu* dynasty. Unto You Who assume transcendental bodies to suit the desires of His devotees, unto You Whose Form is pure consciousness, unto You Who are everything, Who are the Seed of everything and Who is the Soul of everyone, I offer humble obeisances.

"O dear Lord, when my sacrifice was stopped I became very angry due to false pride. Thus I attempted to destroy Your cowherd community with very severe rain and wind. O Lord, by smashing my false pride and frustrating my attempt to punish Vrindavana, You have shown great mercy to me. To You, the Supreme Lord, Supreme Soul and Spiritual Master, I come for shelter."

Thus praised by Indra, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna, smiled and then said in a voice as resounding as a cloud: "My dear Indra, it was My causeless mercy that stopped your sacrifice. Being intoxicated by your position as King of heaven, I wanted to help you always remember Me. A man blinded by pride over his opulence

and power cannot recognize Me and My rod of chastisement nearby. I act for his real benefit, and thus drag him down from his material position. Indra, now you may go. Follow My orders and remain in your position as King of heaven. But be sober and without false pride.”

Mother Surabhi, along with her offspring, the cows, then offered obeisances to Lord Krishna. The gentle lady said to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Who was now present before her disguised as a cowherd boy. She said: “O Krishna, Krishna, foremost of mystics! O Origin and Soul of the universe, You are the Supreme Master of the world. By Your grace, O infallible Lord, we now have You as our Master. Please be our worshipable Deity. O Lord of the universe, for the welfare of demigods, the cows, the *brahmanas* and all other pious persons, please be our Indra. As instructed by Lord Brahma, we want to perform Your bathing ceremony to crown You as our King of Heaven. Who descends to this world to lift the burden of the earth.”

Sukadeva Goswami said: “Having appealed to Lord Krishna, Mother Surabhi executed His bathing ceremony with her own milk, and Indra, as ordered by Aditi, the Mother of the demigods, bathed the Lord with heavenly Ganga water from Indra’s elephant carrier, Airavata’s, trunk. Thus, in the presence of the great sages and demigods, Indra crowned Lord Krishna, and gave Him the name ‘Govinda’. The *Gandharvas*, *Vidyadharas*, *Siddhas* and *Charanas*, all came there to sing the praises of Lord Hari, which can purify the whole world. Filled with joy, the wives of the demigods, danced jubilantly in the Lord’s honor.

“The preeminent demigods chanted the Lord’s glories and scattered showers of flowers all about Him. All three worlds were supremely satisfied and the cows soaked the earth’s surface with their milk. The rivers flowed with many varied tastes; the trees exuded honey; the edible plants grew to maturity without cultivation; and the hills produced jewels in their bowels.

“O beloved of the *Kuru* dynasty, Maharaja Pariksit, upon Lord Krishna’s ceremony of bathing, all creatures, even those normally cruel by nature, became free of enmity. After he had ceremonially bathed Lord Govinda, the Master of the cows and cowherd community, Lord Indra with the Lord’s permission and accompanied by the demigods and other celestial beings, returned to their heavenly abodes.

Commentary on Chapter Twenty-seven

This incident clearly shows the danger of all material situations. If illusioned by pride, one can fall down from the topmost position in the material world, the position of the King of Heaven. Furthermore, even a devotee, if not diligent, can forget his utter dependence on Krsna and again come to believe that he is all in all within his sphere of action. How this illusionment happens is described in the *Gita*:

By dwelling of objects of sense satisfaction,
 One becomes soon attached to impious action.
 From attachment comes lust; lust thwarted turns to rage;
 Then delusion overwhelms even a sage.
 One's memory is clouded when delusion takes place;
 Then he give up My service to live in disgrace.
 With intelligence thus lost, life loses real worth,
 And he enters again the cycle of rebirth. (Ch. 2)

To save His devotee, the Lord stepped in to halt Indra's downward spiral. This kind of fall ends in repeated birth in this material world. Just to prevent this fate, the Lord mercifully counters the miscalculation of a puffed-up devotee with the benediction of taking away all his material opulence. That opulence may be health, wealth, or some special ability.

Actually, for one attached to material desires, it is dangerous to become a devotee of Lord Krsna. Krsna directly told King Yudhisthira that the first installment of His mercy upon an immature devotee is to take everything material away from him, because then the devotee becomes fully dependent on Him alone.

Complete dependency and surrender is the ultimate benediction and source of eternal happiness. Indra found this out, and so will you. It is not necessary, however, that one experience the bitter-sweet mercy of Krsna. By immediately surrendering to Krsna fully, one can taste only the sweet-sweet mercy. Some say, "experience is the best teacher," but the rest of the adage says "only fools learn by no other." When we learn by hearing, we don't have to learn by hard experience—we learn from others' experience.

One way or another, Krsna will bring us all to the platform of complete surrender. Nothing less could reveal perfection perfectly, and He does everything perfectly! Krsna told Arjuna:

O Arjun, surrender to Me utterly!

By My grace, you'll enjoy peace, wealth and victory.

(Heart of the Gita.18)

Chapter Twenty-Eight: Krishna Rescues Nanda Maharaja

Sri Badarayani [Sukadeva Goswami] said: "Having worshiped Lord Krishna, Maharaja Nanda fasted on *Ekadasi* day and went to Kalindi's waters on Dwadasi to take a bath. Because Maharaja Nanda bathed in the water in the dead of night, not realizing that the time was inauspicious, Varuna's servant immediately seized him and took him to his master. Not seeing Maharaja Nanda, O King, the cowherd men cried out loudly, 'O

Krishna! O Rama!’ Lord Krishna heard their cries and also understood that His father had been taken to Varuna. Therefore the Supreme Lord, Who makes His devotees fearless, went to the court of Varunadeva.

Seeing that Lord Hrishikesh, had come, demigod Varuna worshiped Him elaborately. Upon seeing the Lord, Varuna was in a state of great jubilation. He said: “Now my body has achieved its end. Indeed, now the purpose of my life is fulfilled, O Lord. Those who accept Your Lotus Feet, O Personality of Godhead, transcend the ways of material existence. O Supreme Personality of Godhead, O Absolute Truth, O Supreme Soul, my obeisances unto You. In You there is no tinge of illusory energy, the cause of creation of this world. Your father, now sitting here, was brought to me by my ignorant, foolish servant who did not know his proper duty. Please forgive us. Dear Krishna, Seer of everything, please bestow Your mercy upon me. O Govinda, You are most dear to Your father. Now take him home.”

Sukadeva Goswami continued: “Thus satisfied by Lord Varuna, Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and Lord of lords, took His father and went home. Their relatives were ecstatic to see Them. Maharaja Nanda had been astonished to see Varuna, ruler of the ocean quarters, and also to note how Varuna and his servants had shown such great respect to Krishna. Nanda related all this to his cowherd friends.

“Hearing about Krishna’s Pastime with Varuna, the cowherd men thought that Krishna must be the Supreme Lord, O King, and their minds were filled with inquisitiveness. They then thought, ‘Will Krishna, the Supreme Lord, send us to His transcendental abode?’ Knowing everything, Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, of course understood what the cowherders were thinking. Wanting to show His merciful compassion to them and fulfill their desires, the Lord thought: ‘People in this world wander among higher and lower destinations, which are achieved through activities done according to their desires, but without full knowledge. For this reason, people do not realize their intended destination.’

“Then deeply considering the situation, the all-merciful Hari, Supreme Personality of Godhead, revealed to them His abode, which is beyond this world of material darkness. Lord Krishna showed them the imperishable spiritual effulgence, which is conscious, unlimited and eternal. Sages see that spiritual sky in trance, when their consciousness is free of material nature’s modes. Lord Krishna brought the cowherd men to the *Brahmahrada*, and made them immerse in its water. He then raised them up, and from the same place where Akrura had seen the spiritual sky, the cowherd men now saw the abode of the Absolute Truth. Maharaja Nanda and the cowherd men felt the greatest bliss on seeing that spiritual abode. They were especially astonished to see Krishna Himself there, encircled by the *Vedas* personified who were offering Him prayers.

Commentary on Chapter Twenty-eight

Though surprised, Krsna’s parents and all the other residents of Vrindaban were pleased to hear how the demigod Varuna had royally and affectionately received and worshipped Krsna. Still, they did not take Varuna’s treatment to indicate that Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Their intimate loving relationship with Krsna precluded such awareness. Rather, they took it

that because Krsna was such a wonderful, lovable child, even a great personality like Varuna could not help but honor Him.

Such affection is called *raganuga-bhakti* spontaneous love. The residents of Vrindaban did not love Krsna because He is God or because He acted so miraculously, but only because He is Krsna_- so lovable, so adorable, so irresistible. Because of this pure, unmotivated love, Krsna reciprocated with them similarly. When they began to wonder about their future in the spiritual sky, Krsna showed them the spiritual sky.

Generally, materialistic persons occupy themselves with hard work for sense gratification in this world. Having no knowledge of another world beyond this one, they do not know of the spiritual sky, where life is eternal, full of knowledge and bliss. The *Gita* tells us that one going to that world never returns to this earthly plane of birth and death.

People in this material world are under the misconception that they are the temporal material body. Based on this misperception, they work very hard in a hard struggle for existence in one of the 8,400,000 species of material existence. The activities performed while in a particular body compose that body's karma, which automatically produces another body, either higher or lower or the same. All material activities produce a reaction of another conditional life. Only *bhaktiyoga*, activities performed in devotional service to the Lord, are free from *karma* and therefore produces no material reaction.

Pure devotees, therefore, who act only for the satisfaction of Krsna, are always free from *karma*. No longer bound by karmic reactions_- either good or bad, higher or lower_- they are eligible to go to the spiritual sky and live with the Supreme Personality of Godhead forever. Because Krsna wants us to be in the transcendental consciousness that will take us to Him, He again and again advises us to "Always Think of Me." Remembering Krsna connects us with Krsna, just as a copper wire connected to a power supply acts like electricity. A living entity connected to Krsna always acts in *satcitananda*, the consciousness of eternity, knowledge, and bliss_wherein he becomes "Krishna-ized"- fully perfected.

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Chapter Twenty-Nine: Krishna & the Gopis Meet

Sri Badarayani said: “Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, complete in all opulences. Still, when he saw those beautiful autumn nights scented with the fragrance of jasmine flowers, His thoughts turned to thoughts of love. For the fulfillment of His purpose, He invoked His internal potency.

“The full moon slowly rose, adorning the face of the western sky with the reddish hue of its own comforting rays, dispelling all pain from those who watched his ascent. The moon was like an affectionate husband who comes back home after a long absence and decorates the face of his beloved wife with *kumkum*. Lord Krishna saw the glow of the full moon bright with reddish effulgence like that of vermilion applied on the face of the Goddess of Fortune. He also happily noticed the *kumuda* lotuses were opening in the moon’s presence and that the forest was brightly illumined by its light. Thus the Lord played very sweetly on His flute, thus attracting the hearts and minds of the lotus-eyed *gopis*.

“When the damsels of Vrindavana heard Krishna’s flute playing, which arouses loving emotions, their hearts were captured by the Lord. They hurried to the place their Lover waited, each having no awareness of the others going there. They moved so rapidly that their earrings swung to and fro. Some of the *gopis* were engaged in milking their cows when they heard the sound of Krishna’s flute. They immediately stopped milking and hurried off to meet Him. Some left their milk curdling on the fire, and others left their cakes baking in their ovens. Some were getting dressed or feeding milk to their babies or rendering intimate service to their husbands, but they all left their duties and went to meet Krishna. Other *gopis* were eating their supper, bathing, applying cosmetics or putting *kajjala* around their eyes. But they all immediately stopped these activities, and despite their clothes and ornaments being in completely disarrayed, they rushed off to rendezvous with Krishna.

“Their husbands, brothers, fathers and other relatives attempted to stop them, but

Lord Krishna had stolen their hearts. Enchanted by hearing His name, they would not turn back. But some of the *gopis* could not get out of their houses and remained home, and with closed eyes meditated upon Him in pure love. For these *gopis* an intolerable pain of separation from their Beloved Krishna caused such an intense agony that it burned away all impious *karma*. For by meditating upon Krishna they realized His warm embrace, and the intense ecstasy they felt burned away their material *karma*. Although Krishna is the Supreme Soul, these damsels simply thought of Him as a male Lover and related to Him in that intimate way. Still, their *karmic* bondage was finished and they gave up their gross material bodies.

Sri Pariksit Maharaja asked: "O sage, these damsels knew Krishna as their Lover only, not as the Supreme Absolute Truth. How could their minds, bound by ropes of material nature's passionate mode, free themselves from material attachment?"

Sukadeva Goswami answered: "This was actually explained to you previously. Even Sisupala, who always hated Krishna, attained perfection; then what can be said of the Lord's pure devotees? O King, the Supreme Lord is immeasurable and inexhaustible. He is untainted by nature's modes. He is their controller. His personal appearance on earth is meant for granting the highest benediction to humanity. Anyone who constantly directs his or her lust, fear, anger, friendship, protective affection, or even feelings of impersonal oneness with Him is certain to become merged in thought of Him. Do not be astonished by Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the unborn Master of all masters of mystic power.. After all, it is the He Who liberates this world."

Seeing that the *gopis* of Vraja had come, Lord Krishna, the greatest of speakers, welcomed them with enchanting words that confused their minds. "O lucky ladies, welcome! What can I do to for you? Is everything right in Vraja? Please tell Me why you have come here. Nighttime is frightening in the forest, and dangerous too, for ferocious creatures lurk about. Go home to Vraja, O small-waisted maidens. This is no place for proper young ladies. Not seeing you at home, your fathers, mothers, sons, husbands and brothers are certainly searching for you. Do not cause them anxiety. Now you have seen the Vrindavana forest, resplendent with the light of the full moon and full of flowers. You have seen the lovely trees, with their autumn leaves rustling in the breeze coming from the Yamuna. Please, go back to the cowherd village. Hurry. O chaste ladies, be good wives to your husbands and give breast milk to your crying infants.

"If, on the other hand, you have come due to great love for Me, which has seized control of your hearts, this is certainly commendable, since all living beings innately possess love for Me. Still, the foremost religious duty of a woman is to serve her husband sincerely, behave nicely toward his family and proper care of their children. Women who desire an elevated destination in their next life should never forsake a husband who has not fallen from the religious standards, even if he is unfortunate, old, obnoxious, unintelligent, sickly or poor. For a chaste woman, adulterous affairs are abominable. They ruin her reputation, bar her from heaven and bring her into difficulty and fear.

"Genuine transcendental love for Me comes from the devotional processes of hearing about Me, worshipping My Deity Form, meditating on Me and always chanting My glories. An equal result is not fained by mere physical nearness. So please return to your homes."

Sukadeva Goswami said: “Hearing these devastating words from Govinda, the *gopis* became very unhappy. Their hopes were being frustrated and they felt great anxiety. Their heads hung down and their breathing became heavy and sorrowful, drying up their reddish lips. The *gopis* scratched the ground with their toes as tears poured from their eyes, washing away their *kajjala* and smearing the vermilion powder on their breasts. Standing *æd*, they silently bore the heartbreak of their unhappiness.

Although Krishna was their Beloved, and although they had forsaken all other things for His sake, He spoke to them apparently unfeelingly. Still, they remained *æd* in their attachment to Him. Ceasing from crying and wiping their eyes, they began to speak with voices trembling with emotion.

The lovely *gopis* said: “O Almighty One, please don’t speak in this cruel way. Don’t reject us, for we have renounced sense gratification to render transcendental loving service to Your Lotus Feet. Be kind and reciprocate with us, O stubborn One, even as the primal Lord, Sri Narayana, reciprocates with His dear devotees on their path towards liberation. O dearest Krishna, as an authority in religion, You have told us that the proper religious duty for women is to chastely serve their husbands, children and relatives. We agree that this is correct, but, in fact, this service should be performed for You. After all, Dear Lord, You are the dearest friend of every embodied soul. You are their closest relative indeed, their very Self.

“Expert transcendentalists direct their love toward You because they know that You are their true Self and eternal Beloved. What is the use of these husbands, children and relatives, who simply give us trouble? Therefore, O Supreme Controller, give us Your mercy. O lotus-eyed Krishna, please do not smash our long-cherished hopes to be blessed with Your association. Up until now our minds have been absorbed in household affairs, but You quickly stole our minds, hearts and hands away from those things. Now our feet won’t move one inch from Your Lotus Feet. How can we return to Vraja? What will we do there?

“Dear Krishna, please pour the sweet nectar of Your lips upon the *re d* of our hearts – a *re* You i gnited by Your s miling glances and by t he sweet sound of Your *te*. I f You don’t, we will forsake our bodies in the *re d* s eparation from You, and l ike mystic *yogis*, attain Your Lotus Feet by meditation. The Goddess of Fortune, O lotus-eyed One, considers it a jubilant occasion whenever She touches Your Lotus Feet. You are most dear to the forest residents, and therefore we also want to touch those Lotus Feet. From such time on, we will never stand in the presence of any other man, having been fully satis *æd* by You.

“Goddess Laksmi’s glance is sought by the demigods with great eagerness, and She has achieved the unique position of remaining always on Her Lord, Narayana’s chest. Still, She also desires the dust of His Lotus Feet, despite having to share that dust with *Tulasi-devi* as well as with His many other servants. For the same reason, we have taken shelter under Your Lotus Feet. O destroyer of all distress, please show mercy to us. In order to approach Your Lotus Feet we have abandoned our homes and families. We have no other desire than to serve You. Our hearts are burning with intense desires ignited by Your magical smiling glances. O Jewel among men, please let us be Your maidservants.

Seeing Your lotus face encircled by wavy locks of hair, Your beautiful cheeks enhanced by earrings, Your lips dripping with nectar, meeting Your smiling glance, and seeing Your two powerful arms, which relieve our fears, and seeing Your chest, which is the pleasure ground for the Goddess of Fortune, we have to become Your maidservants.

“Dear Krishna, what woman in any of the three worlds would not be deviated from religious behavior when bewildered by the enchanting melody of Your flute? Your exquisite beauty makes all three worlds auspicious. Indeed, even the birds, cows, deer and trees manifest the ecstatic symptom of bodily hair standing on end upon seeing Your beautiful Form. Clearly You have been born in this world to relieve the distress and of the people of Vraja, just as the primal Lord, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, protects the domain of the demigods. Therefore, O Friend of the distressed, kindly place Your lotus hand upon Your maidservants’ burning breasts and heads.”

Sukadeva Goswami said: Smiling when he heard these despondent words of the *gopis*, Lord Krishna, the Supreme Master of all masters of mystic *yoga*, mercifully sported with them, although He is Self-satisfied. In the midst of the assembled *gopis*, the infallible Lord Krishna looked like the moon surrounded by myriad stars. He Whose activities are always magnanimous made the *gopis*’ faces blossom by His affectionate glances. His broad smiles showed the brightness of His jasmine bud-like teeth. While the *gopis* sang His praises, the Leader of many women sang enchantingly in reply. He moved amongst them, decorated with His *Vajrayanti* garland, thus enhancing the Vrindavana forest.

Sri Krishna accompanied the *gopis* to the bank of the Yamuna. There the sand was cooling and the breeze, kissed by the river’s waves, carried the fragrance of many lotuses. Krishna placed His arms around the *gopis*, embracing them tightly. He aroused Cupid in the hearts of these beautiful young damsels of Vraja by touching their hands, thighs, belts and breasts, by sportingly scratching them with His fingernails, and by joking with them, looking romantically at them and laughing with them. In such ways the Lord enjoyed His Pastimes.

The *gopis* became proud when they received such special treatment from Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and each thought herself the most lucky woman on earth. Lord Krishna noticed that the *gopis* proud of their great good fortune, and wanted to mitigate their pride and thus show them further mercy. Therefore He immediately disappeared.

.Commentary on Chapter Twenty-nine

Krsna is sometimes criticized as being immoral for dancing with the *gopis* in the dead of night. Careful calculation, however, reveals that Krsna was only eight-years old and the *gopis* not much more. There is no question of their actions being immoral on the mundane platform. On the contrary, Krsna and the *gopis*’ behavior is the perfect expression of innocent, spontaneous love.

We are not describing the lusty activities of ordinary young boys and girls. Such activities are impelled by sensual desire. Not only were the children too young for sensual desire, but moreover Krsna is in Himself the Cause of all causes, full in all six opulences

of wealth, fame, knowledge, beauty, strength, and renunciation. What could He desire that is not already His?

Therefore it is obvious that the *Rasa* Dance is manifest on the yogamaya platform of pure spirituality, and not on the level of *mahamaya's* materiality. Freud correctly observed that all material activities are motivated by self-gratification. Everyone acts for his own self-interest, whether he knows the Self in its higher nature or only its lower expression. Identifying oneself with the material body and seeking gratification through material sense pleasure is called material desire and relates only to the lower self. But when one identifies with Krsna, the Soul of all souls, and makes Krsna's gratification the criterion of his pleasure, this is called spiritual desire and spiritual pleasure, and is the gratification of the Higher Self.

The *gopis* were in love with Krsna and wanted to satisfy Him above all else. Actually, all the *gopis* already had husbands, because according to the custom in India then, a girl's marriage was arranged at a very young age. Therefore the *gopis* did not insist that Krsna be their husband. Still, they could not stop desiring Him as their paramour. In the material world, paramour love is considered abominable. In the spiritual world, however, paramour love of Krsna is the highest, because it connotes the abandonment of everything for Krishna's sake.

Often, what is right materially is wrong spiritually and vice versa. Actually, the material world is a perverted reflection of the spiritual world. Just as a tree on a riverbank reflects upside down on the water, similarly the Supreme Reality is reflected upside down in the material world. For example, lust is an abominable quality in the material world, whereas in the world of spiritual reality, lust for Krsna is the highest consciousness possible.

Certainly the most important understanding of the *Rasa lila* is its exemplification of the soul's most intimate relationship with the Absolute. Everyone can be a *gopi*, if one so desires and is willing to pay the price. The *gopis* are living beings who have forsaken everything - family, society, even religion - for the sake of satisfying Krsna. To devotees who surrender like them, Krsna says He is eternally indebted. In fact, He says that He becomes their property!

What a conception! God becomes the property of His pure devotee, purchased by the coin of pure love! This complete giving of Himself in response to a devotee's love is described in the *Gita*:

Only by undivided devotional love
Can I be known as I am in heaven above.
Only by loving service am I known in truth;
Only by devotion am I won forsooth.

(Ch. 11)

The Absolute Truth is an eternal love affair! God is love, and the exchange of love between Him and His part and parcel is the highest truth. This is what the *Rasa* Dance reveals, for all who have spiritual eyes to see.

Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Krishna
Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Love;

Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Krishna

You love me!

Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Krishna

I love you!

Chapter Thirty: The Gopis Search for Krishna

When Krishna suddenly disappeared, the *gopis* felt terribly sorry to lose sight Him, something like a herd of cow elephants who have lost their mate. As the *gopis* reminisced about Krishna, their hearts were completely overwhelmed thinking of His graceful movements and loving smiles, His sporting glances and enchanting talks, as well as the many other Pastimes He enacted with them. Thus absorbed in loving thoughts of Krishna, the Lord of the Goddess Rama, the *gopis* began to imitate His various transcendental Pastimes.

Because the *gopis* were absorbed in thinking of their beloved Krishna, their bodies mimicked His way of smiling and moving, His way of looking at them, His speech and His many other distinctive features. Deeply immersed in meditation on Krishna and excited by remembering His Pastimes, they said to one another, "I am Krishna!" Talking loudly about Krishna, they wandered and searched for Him, like a mob of mad women, throughout the Vrindavana forest. They asked the trees about Him, Who as the Supersoul resides inside and outside of all created things, even as the sky does.

The *gopis* said: "O Ashvattha tree, O Nyagrodha, O Plaksha, have you seen Krishna? The Son of Maharaja Nanda has forsaken us after stealing our hearts and minds with His enchanting smiles and loving glances. O Kurabaka tree, O Ashoka, O Champaka, Naga and Punnaga, has Balarama's little Brother, Whose smile humble the pride of all haughty women, come this way? O kindest Tulasi, to whom Govinda's Feet are so dear, have you seen that infallible One stroll by, wearing you on His chest and followed by swarms of bees? O Malati, O Jati, O Mallika and Yuthaka, has Madhava come by here, giving you pleasure by the touch of His hand? O Priyala, O Chuta, O Panasa, Kovidara and Asana, O Jambu, O Arka, O Bilva, Amra and Bakula, O Kadamba and Nipa and all you other trees and plants living by Yamuna's bank who have dedicated your existence to the helping of others, we *gopis* have lost our minds. Please tell us which way Krishna has gone?

"O Mother Earth, what great austerity did you execute to obtain the touch of Lord Keshava's Lotus Feet, bring you such joy that your bodily hairs are standing on end? You appear very wonderful in this condition. Was it during the Lord's current incarnation that you acquired this ecstatic symptom, or was it much earlier, perhaps when He covered you with His footstep in His Form as the dwarf Vamanadeva, or perhaps even earlier when He lifted and embraced you in His Form as Varahadev, the boar?

“O friend, mate of the deer, have you seen Lord Achyuta with His beloved, causing great joy to your eyes? Blowing this way, indeed, is the fragrance of His *kunda* over garland, smeared with the *kumkum* from the breasts of the best of the *gopis* when He embraced Her.

“O trees, who are bowing down due to the younger brother of Balarama walking by here, pursued by intoxicated bees swarming around His *Tulasi garland*, did He acknowledge your humble obeisances with His loving glance? Was He resting His arm on His Beloved’s shoulder and twirling a lotus over in His other hand. Let us ask these creepers about Krishna. Though embracing the arms of their husband, the tree, we think they must have been scratched by Krishna’s fingernails, for in bliss they are manifesting ecstatic eruptions on their skin.”

Having said this, the *gopis*, distressed from vainly searching for Krishna, re-enacted His various Pastimes, and became fully absorbed in meditation on Him. One *gopi* imitated the Putana witch, while another played the role of baby Krishna, pretended to suck her breast. Another *gopi*, crying as infant Krishna might have done, kicked the *gopi* who was playing the role of Shakatasura, the cart demon. Another *gopi* played Trinavarta and carried away another *gopi* who hung onto her neck like baby Krishna did to the demon. Yet another *gopi* crawled about rapidly, her ankle bells tinkling as she crawled along.

Two *gopis* acted like Balarama and Krishna in the midst of several others, playing the parts of cowherd boys. One *gopi* imitated Krishna’s killing of demon Vatsasura, played by another *gopi*, and two other *gopis* imitated the killing of Bakasura. When one *gopi* perfectly mimicked how Krishna would call His cows who had wandered too far away, or how He would play His flute or how He would engage in different sports, the other *gopis* congratulated her with loud applause and shouts of “Well done! Well done!”

Another *gopi*, her mind absorbed in thoughts of Krishna, walked around with her arm resting on the shoulder of another *gopi* and declared, “I am Krishna! Just see how elegantly I move!”

“Don’t fear the rain and wind,” cried another *gopi* bravely. “I will save you.” Thereupon she lifted her shawl over her head. Another *gopi* climbed on the shoulders of a friend and, placing her foot on the other’s head, said gravely, “Go away from here, you evil snake! Know that I have taken birth just to punish envious snakes like you!”

Still another girl exclaimed: “My dear cowherd friends, just see the raging forest re! Just close your eyes and I will protect you.”

One *gopi* tied up her slender-waisted companion with a flower garland and threatened, “Now I will tie up this boy who has smashed the butter pots and taken the butter.” The other *gopi* hid her face and smeared eyes, pretending to be afraid. While they were imitating Krishna’s Pastimes in this way and asking Vrindavana’s trees and creepers where the Supreme Soul Krishna might be, they suddenly saw His footprints in the dust.

Gathering together there, the *gopis* said excitedly: “The marks of lotus, æ, thunderbolt, elephant goad, barleycorn are clearly visible on these footprints revealing them to be those of the Son of Maharaja Nanda!” Like hounds catching the scent of their prey, the *gopis* hurried along Krishna’s trail, known by His many footprints,

but drew back sharply when they saw that Krishna's footprints were intertwined with those of a consort.

Much perturbed, they exclaimed to each other, "Here are the footprints of some other *gopi* walking with the Son of Maharaja Nanda. He probably rested His arm on Her shoulder, like an elephant in rut resting His trunk on a cow-elephant's shoulder. Certainly this special *gopi* must have perfectly worshiped Govinda, the all-powerful Personality of Godhead, since He was so satisfied with Her that He left the rest of us and took Her to a secluded place. O *gopis*! The dust of Govinda's Lotus Feet is so holy that even Lords Brahma and Shiva, and Goddess Rama, put that dust on their heads to counter sinful reactions.

"The footprints of this especially favored *gopi* greatly disturb us. Of all of us, She alone was whisked away to a lonely place, where She is now enjoying Krishna's lips. But now we don't see Her footprints anymore! Maybe the grass and stones were picking Her tender feet, and so that Lover lifted up His beloved. Please note, my dear *gopis*, how here lusty Krishna's footprints are more deeply pressed into the ground. Carrying the heavy weight of His Beloved may have been difficult for Him. But over here that intelligent Lover put Her down to collect some flowers.

"Just see how here our dear Krishna gathered flowers for His Beloved, for there is only the impression of the front portion of His feet, as He was standing on His toes to get the flowers. Here Krishna sat down here with His consort to arrange Her hair. I think that lusty Boy must have made a flower crown for that lusty Girl out of all the flowers He had gathered!"

Sukadeva Goswami continued: "Lord Krishna enjoyed Himself with these damsels, although He enjoys most truly only within, as He is Self-satisfied and complete in Himself. Thus, by contrast, He demonstrated the wretchedness of mundane lusty men and women. As the *gopis* wandered around the forest, their minds and hearts completely overwhelmed, they pointed out various places of Krishna's Pastimes. That special *gopi* whom Krishna had taken to a secluded forest when He had left all the other young damsels began to think Herself the luckiest of women.

"My Beloved has left all the other *gopis*," She mused triumphantly, "despite they're being driven by Cupid himself, and has decided to reciprocate with Me only."

As the two Lovers went through the Vrindavana forest, that special *gopi* began to feel more and more proud of Herself. She told Lord Keshava, "I can't walk any further. Please carry Me wherever You desire."

"Just hop on My shoulder," said Krishna, knowing Her heart. But as soon as She tried to, He disappeared. His beloved Consort immediately felt the most intense pain of separation.

"My lover! My Master!" She cried out. "O dearest One, where are You? Where have You gone? Please, dear Friend, O mighty-armed One, show Yourself to Me, Your defenseless servant!"

Sukadeva Goswami said: While continuing their search of Krishna's path, the *gopis* suddenly discovered their lamenting friend instead. She was utterly devastated by separation from Her Beloved. She then told them how Madhava had shown Her much respect and affection, but how She then experienced dishonor due to Her own misbehavior

in the form of pride. The *gopis* were amazed to hear this. In search of Krishna, the *gopis* then went deeper and deeper into the forest as far as the moonlight allowed. But when they found themselves in complete darkness, they turned back. Their minds were totally absorbed in thoughts of Krishna. They discussed His qualities, imitated His Pastimes and thereby felt themselves bathed with His presence. They completely neglected and forgot about their homes, loudly chanting the glories of Krishna's transcendental Qualities.

The *gopis* then returned to the banks of the Yamuna. Meditating on Krishna and eagerly wishing He would come, the *gopis* sat down to talk intimately about Him.

Commentary on Chapter Thirty

The *gopis* were well aware why Krsna had left them. Pride is one of the most offensive of sins, because it means to mentally usurp Krsna's rightful position. The *gopis* enjoyed Krsna's company because of His causeless mercy, not because of anything they had done. In the same way, by causeless mercy, we enjoy Krsna's presence in His Name and through His devotional service. But if a devotee becomes proud of his chanting or his service, Krsna may take it away from him. Devotional service is always causeless mercy, pure divine grace. No one deserves it and no one can earn it. Furthermore, it is very rarely achieved. Out of millions and billions of living entities, perhaps one gets the chance to render devotional service to Krsna!

Still, one should never think that Krsna is mean or small-hearted in denying or withdrawing His presence. Quite the contrary, it is another form of His grace. By apparently removing Himself from a devotee, He imparts a higher knowledge - that of love in separation. Lord Chaitanya has especially praised and recommended this unique mood of love. He also has instructed us that one actually lovingly remembers Krsna and hankers for Him more in separation than in meeting. Since Krsna is not different from His remembrance, love in separation is actually the easiest and best way to associate with Him and experience His presence!

One has to learn this art of love in separation from the *gopis* of Vrindaban. In this way one can always have Krsna's association, for one can always remember Krsna, even though physically apart, and Krsna and His remembrance are nondifferent. We have to learn how to cry for Krsna, becoming so absorbed in thought of Him and mad for Him that we think of Him constantly and even imitate His Pastimes in love. There is even a very high state of love exhibited here by the *gopis* in which one fails to distinguish between oneself and the Lord. Then one is never separated from Krsna! Then one hears the Hare Krsna Mahamantra everywhere - in the rustle of the trees, in the songs of the animals and on the lips of every man.

Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

Chapter Thirty-One: The Gopis' Songs of Separation

The *gopis* said: “O Dearest Beloved, Your appearance in the land of Vraja has made it unspeakably glorious, and thus the Goddess of Fortune, Indira, always resides there. It is only for You that we, Your dedicated servants, sustain our lives. We have been looking everywhere for You. Please show Yourself to us. O Krishna, Lord of Love, Your glance and its beauty excels the whorl of the most perfect lotus in an autumn pond. You are killing Your maidservants, O Bestower of benedictions, who have completely given themselves to You, without price. Isn’t this murder?

“O greatest Personality, You have saved us from all kinds of danger – from poisoned waters, from the frightful man-eater, Aghasura; from incessant rains, from Trinavarta, the wind demon; from the powerful thunderbolt of Indra; from Aristasura, the bull demon; and from Maya Danava’s son. You are not really the Son of Yasoda, O Friend, but in fact the indwelling Witness in everyone’s heart. Due to Lord Brahma’s prayer, You have come to protect the universe and have now appeared in the *Satvata* dynasty.

“O best of *Vrishnis*, Your lotus hand, which holds that of the Goddess of Fortune, bestows fearlessness on those who approach Your Lotus Feet. O dear Lover, please put that Lotus Hand of blessing on our heads. O Krishna, You destroy the suffering of Vraja’s people! O Hero of every woman! Your smile smashes the false pride of Your devotee. Please, dear Lord and dearest Friend, accept us as Your humble servants and show us Your lovely Lotus Face. Your Lotus Feet destroy the sins of anyone who surrender to them. Your Lotus Feet follow the cows in the pastures and are the transcendental abode of the Goddess of Fortune. As You once put those Lotus Feet on the hoods of serpent Kaliya, please place them on our breasts and satisfy the lust in our hearts.

“O Lotus-eyed Krishna, Your charming words and enchanting voice, which attract all intelligent minds, are bewildering us more and more. Our dearest Hero, please save Your maidservants with the transcendental nectar of Your lips. The descriptions of Your activities and the nectar of Your words are the life soul for all who are suffering in this material world. These narrations, chanted by learned sages, destroy one’s sinful reactions and bring good fortune to the hearer. These narrations are filled with spiritual power and should be broadcast all over the world. Those who preach the message of Godhead are certainly the most muni cent of men. Your smiles, dear Krishna, Your sweet, loving glances, Your confidential talks and the intimate pastimes we enjoyed with You are surely auspicious to meditate upon. They touch our hearts very deeply. But simultaneously, O Deceiver of women, they greatly agitate our minds.

“Dear Lover, dear Master, when You leave Vraja to go and herd the cows, our minds become distraught with the thought that Your Feet, which are more beautiful than any earthly lotus, will be pricked by the rough grass and prickly plants of the forest. At the day’s end You sometimes show us Your Lotus Feet, which are then covered with dust and allow us to place our jet black locks of hair on those Lotus Feet. By this, O Hero, You arouse great lust in our minds.

“Your Lotus Feet, which are duly worshiped even by Lord Brahma, fulfill the desires of all who bow down to Them. They are the earth’s ornament and bring supreme satisfaction, and in times of distress they are the proper object of meditation. O dearest Lover, O Destroyer of all anxiety, please put Your Lotus Feet on our breasts. O great Hero,

give us the nectar of Your lips, thus increasing our conjugal pleasure and vanquishing our distress. That nectar is much relished by Your devotees and makes everyone who hears it forget all other attachments.

“When You are away in the forest all day, a tiny fraction of a second seems like a millennium to us due to not seeing You. And even when we get the chance to see Your lovely face, so beautiful with its curly locks, our pleasure is interrupted by our eyelids, which were designed by a foolish creator. O Krishna, dear Achyuta, You know exactly why we have come here. Who but a cheater would forsake young damsels who come to see Him in the dead of night, mesmerized by the enchanting sound of His flute? Just to see You, we have left our husbands, children, brothers, ancestors and other relatives.

“Our minds are always bewildered when we remember the intimate conversations we had with You in secret, or feel the lust swell in our hearts when we remember Your beautiful smiling face, Your affectionate glances and Your powerful broad chest, which is the resting place of Laxmi, the Goddess of Fortune. Thus we experience the greatest hankering for You. O Beloved, seeing You is all-auspicious and vanquishes the distress of those dwelling in Vraja’s forest. Our minds similarly long for Your vision. Please give us small doses of that medicine which mitigates the distress in Your devotee’s heart.

“O dearly Beloved! Your Lotus Feet are so soft that we fear that even when we place them gently on our breasts, Your Lotus Feet will be hurt. Our life rests entirely in You. Thus our minds are filled with fear that Your tender Lotus Feet might be wounded by sharp pebbles as You walk on the forest paths.”

COMMENTARY ON CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

In his commentary on this chapter, Srila Visvanath Chakravarti Thakur compares Krishna to an expert physician to Whom devotees have appealed in order to heal their hearts’ disease due to not seeing Him. Specifically, they begged for the ambrosial nectar of His lips, which they claimed was the right medicine for their condition, although they said they did not have much with which to compensate Him. Still, they said, Krishna should give them this medicine liberally as He is a great hero and a most munificent giver of charity. The *gopis* said that if they did not get this medicine, they would surely die. “You give it freely to Your devotees which is only a dried up hollow piece of bamboo, so why can’t You save our lives by giving it to us?” the *gopis* cried.

To their pathetic appeal, Krsna said, “The medicine you request is deadly for most people, for they are attached to being very wealthy in this world and to being well-liked by others, as well as to having a nice, big family, to being consulted by others, to being honored and praised by their friends and neighbors. For them, the medicine you request is poison. In fact, My special potion which you seek, makes one completely forget about everything else, and to want only more and more of the same. This medicine is totally transcendental and destroys all material desires, aims, goals, habits and material endeavors.

The *gopis* persisted: “Please, O mighty Hero, grant us one sip of this wonderful nectar. You are most charitable, Krsna. Please give us Your mercy and let us taste this transcendental nectar.”

Chapter Thirty-Two: The Reunion

Sukadeva Goswami said: “O King, having thus spoken and exposed their hearts in various loving ways, the *gopis* began to cry very loudly. They were in such anxiety to see Lord Krishna. Then Lord Krishna, smiling, suddenly appeared before them. Wearing a garland atop a yellow garment, He looked like one Who could bewilder the mind of Cupid himself, although Cupid bewilders the minds of all ordinary people.

“When the *gopis* saw their beloved Krishna had returned, they all stood up, and out of pure affection for Him their eyes opened wide. It was as if their life air had again entered their bodies. One *gopi* joyfully placed Krishna’s hand in her folded palms, while another placed His arm which was anointed with sandalwood-paste, on her shoulder. One slender *gopi* worshipfully accepted in her cupped hands the betel nut Krishna had chewed, and another *gopi*, with lusty desire, put Krishna’s Lotus Feet on her soft breasts.

“One *gopi*, crazed by loving anger, bit her lips and glared at Krishna with furrowed brows, as if to consume Him with her eye glance. Another *gopi* drank His lotus face through unblinking eyes, but even after deeply savouring its sweetness she was not satiated, even as mystic saints never become satiated when meditating upon His Lotus Feet. Another *gopi* drank the Lord through the her eyes and locked Him within her heart. Then, with her eyes shut and her hair standing on end, that *gopi* continuously embraced Krishna within. Thus merged in transcendental ecstasy, she became a perfect *yogi* simply by meditating upon her Lord.

“The *gopis* all enjoyed the greatest happiness when they beheld their beloved Krishna again. They gave up the sorrow of separation, just as one forgets his material misery when he gains the association of a highly enlightened soul. Surrounded by the *gopis*, who were now relieved of all distress, Krishna, Lord Achyuta, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, beamed resplendently. My dear King Pariksit, Krishna thus looked like the Supersoul surrounded by His spiritual potencies.

“The Lord then led the *gopis* to the bank of the Yamuna, who with her wave-like hands had scattered piles of soft white sand upon the shore. At that auspicious place, the breeze bore the fragrance of Kunda and Mandara flowers, attracting many bees, and the bright rays of the autumn moon dispelled night’s darkness. In the ecstasy of seeing Krishna their heartaches vanished, and the *gopis*, like the personified *Vedas* before them, had all their desires fulfilled. For their dear lover Krishna they made a seat with their shawls, which were dusted with the *kumkum* powder from their breasts.

“The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, for Whom the masters of mystic yoga make a seat in their hearts, took His seat amongst those gathered *gopis*. His transcendental body, the supreme abode of beauty and opulence within the three worlds, glowed brilliantly as the *gopis* worshiped Him. Sri Krishna aroused romantic desires within the *gopis*, and they responded to Him by glancing with coy, playful smiles, gesturing lovingly with their eyebrows, and simultaneously massaging His feet and hands, holding

them tightly on their laps. But even though worshipping Him, they felt a little angry, and thus they asked Him: “Some people only reciprocate the affections of those who are affectionate toward them, while others are affectionate even to those who are inimical or indifferent. And still others do not show affection to anyone. Dear Krishna, please clearly explain this matter to us.”

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, responded: “So-called friends who have affection for each other only to benefit themselves are in fact selfish. That is not true friendship, nor are they following the real principles of bona fide religion. Indeed, if they did not experience benefit for themselves, they would never reciprocate. My dear thin-waisted *gopis*, some people are genuinely merciful or, like parents, are innately affectionate. Such persons devoutly serve even those who don’t reciprocate with them. They are following the true, faultless path of religion, and they are everyone’s true well-wishers.

“Then there are individuals who are spiritually Self-satisfied, materially fulfilled, or by innately ungrateful or sometimes simply envious of superiors. Such persons do not love even those who love them, not to mention those who are indifferent or inimical. But the reason I do not always reciprocate the affection of living entities, even those who worship Me, O *gopis*, is that I desire to increase their loving devotion to Me. Then they act like a poor man who has gotten some wealth and then loses it, and who then becomes so concerned about it that he thinks of nothing else.

“My dear *gopis*, understanding that it is only for My sake that you have overcome and rejected the power of worldly opinion, of your relatives and of the *Vedas* too, I acted as I did only to increase your attachment for Me. Even when I suddenly disappeared from your sight, I never stopped loving you. Therefore, My *gopis*, please do not hold any ill feelings toward Me, your Beloved. I will never be able to repay My debt to you for your spotless service, even in a lifetime of Brahma. Your bond with Me is perfect, beyond reproach. You have worshiped Me, forgetting all domestic ties, which are ordinarily very difficult to break. Therefore, please accept your own noble and glorious deeds as your compensation.”

Commentary on Chapter Thirty-TWO

In this chapter Kṛṣṇa gives us a wonderful exposition of pure love. This love, He says, is never to be found among those who love in exchange for some reward. These persons are compared to businessmen because their dealings are self-centered. Their feelings cannot be truly called love. Rather, Kṛṣṇa considers the love of an ideal parent for its child to be the epitome of love, because the parent loves despite the child’s abuse or neglect. Real love must be unmotivated and uninterrupted. Kṛṣṇa says that only real love of this kind can completely satisfy the Self.

The *gopis* meant to let Kṛṣṇa know that they felt He was not reciprocating their love. Consequently, Kṛṣṇa explained to them that sometimes He does not reciprocate His devotee’s love for a good reason. The reason is not because He does not love them, but because He loves them very dearly and wants to increase their love for Him! It is a psychological fact that things easily

obtained are taken for granted, and things obtained only after great difficulty, or at a high price, are prized all the more. Thus, Kṛṣṇa says for this reason He sometimes appears to be lost to the devotee. But instead of forgetting Kṛṣṇa, the devotee becomes almost mad in ecstatic love for Him and constantly remembers Him, which is what Kṛṣṇa really wants for His devotee. By such love, Kṛṣṇa says, He becomes eternally indebted. There is no way He can ever repay it. Therefore, He asks the lover to be satisfied in the love itself.

The most exemplary quality of unalloyed love was manifested in Vrindaban by the cowherd milkmaids or *gopis*. Hence, Lord Chaitanya accepted the *gopis*' method of love - love in separation - as the topmost form of love of God and the purest form of devotional service.

Chapter Thirty-Three: The Rasa Dance

When the *gopis* heard Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, speak these enchanting words, they abandoned their distress of separation from Him. Feeling His transcendental limbs satisfied all their desires. There on Yamuna's delightful shore, Lord Govinda began His Pastime of the *Rasa* Dance, surrounded by those rare jewels among women, His faithful *gopis*, who blissfully linked their arms.

The transcendental *Rasa* Dance began with the cowherd damsels arrayed in a circle. Lord Krishna expanded Himself and to be between each pair of *gopis*. That Master of mystic *yoga* put His arms around their necks in such a way that each *gopi* thought He was standing only next to her. The demigods and their consorts were overwhelmed with desire to see the *Rasa* Dance, filling the sky with their celestial airplanes.

Kettledrums resounded from above, in the sky, and flowers rained down in profusion while the foremost *Gandharvas* and their consorts sang Lord Krishna's glories. A beautiful tinkling sound then arose from the arm, ankle and waist bells of the *gopis* as they danced with their Beloved, Krishna, *Rasa* Dance arena.

Amongst the *gopis*, Lord Krishna looked most effulgent, sparkling like a sapphire surrounded by golden ornaments. As the *gopis* sang the praises of Krishna, their feet danced, their hands uttered, and their eyebrows moved in a way that enhanced their playful smiles. With their belts and braids tied tightly, their faces perspiring, their waists bending, their saris covering their breasts moving back and forth, and their earrings swinging on their cheeks, Krishna's nubile consorts shone like flashes of lightning between dark blue clouds. Anxious to enjoy conjugal love, their necks colored with various unguents, the *gopis* sang loudly and danced merrily. Enthused by Krishna's touch, their voices reverberated throughout the entire universe.

One *gopi*, who was accompanying Lord Mukunda in His singing, sang sweet melodious sounds that blended harmoniously with His. Krishna was very pleased and showed His appreciation for her performance, saying, “Excellent! Excellent!” Then another *gopi* sang the same melody, but in a different metrical pattern, and Krishna lauded her too. When a certain *Gopi* became tired during the *Rasa* Dance, She turned to Krishna and placed Her arm over His shoulder. Their vigorous dancing had loosened Her ornaments and the tresses in Her hair.

Around the shoulder of that special *Gopi*, Krishna placed His arm, the blue-lotus fragrance of which intermingled with the sandalwood pulp adorning Him. As that *Gopi* enjoyed the fragrance, Her bodily hair stood up in great joy, and She kissed that arm. Into His cheek She pressed Her own, which was beautified by the brilliance of Her earrings. Those earrings glittered and dazzled as She danced. Then Krishna gave Her the chewed betel nut from His mouth.

Being fatigued from her dancing and singing, another *gopi* placed the comforting lotus hand of Krishna, Who was standing by her side, over her breasts.

Having attained Krishna as their intimate Lover, the *gopis* enjoyed great pleasure. They sang His transcendental glories as He entwined their necks with His arms. The *gopis'* beautiful faces were enhanced by drops of perspiration, locks of hair, and by the lotus tresses over their ears. The tinkling of their armlets and ankle bells made a very pleasing sound. Thus the *gopis* danced with Lord Krishna in the circle of the *Rasa* Dance, as swarms of bumblebees hummed in accompaniment.

In this way Krishna, the original Narayana, the Master of the Goddess of Fortune, enjoyed in the company of the *gopis* of Vraja, sometimes caressing them, sometimes embracing them and looking lovingly at them. He smiled playfully at them continually. It was like a Child playing with His own reflection. Their senses overwhelmed in the bliss of having His physical presence, the *gopis* could not check their dresses, hair, as well as the saris covering their breasts from becoming disarrayed. Their garlands and ornaments also became scattered.

The demigods' wives, observing Krishna's sporting activities from their airplanes, were completely entranced and became quite agitated with lust. Indeed, even the full moon and his entourage of stars, became amazed. Expanding Himself to associate individually with each *gopi*, the Supreme Lord sportingly enjoyed their company, though He is completely Self-satisfied. Seeing that they were fatigued from making love, merciful Krishna lovingly soothed them and wiped their faces with His lotus hand.

The *gopis* worshiped their Hero with loving glances, sweetened by the luster of their beautiful cheeks, curly locks and the radiance of their glittering earrings. Excited by the touch of Krishna's fingernails, they sang His glories and chanted His all-auspicious transcendental Pastimes. Lord Krishna's own overgarland had gotten crushed during His conjugal affairs with the *gopis* and became tinged with vermilion from the *kumkum* powder on the *gopis'* breasts.

To mitigate the *gopis'* fatigue, Krishna entered the Yamuna's waters, followed by swarms of bees singing like the best of *Gandharvas*. Krishna looked like a lordly elephant going into the water in the company of his cow-elephants. Indeed, He had transgressed all *Vedic* and worldly morality as indifferently as an elephant breaks the mud banks of

a paddy field. In the water the Lord found Himself splashed on all sides by the happy, laughing *gopis*, who steadily gazed at Him lovingly. While the demigods worshiped Him by showers of flowers from their celestial airplanes, the Self-satisfied Lord enjoyed like the King of elephants.

Then the Lord sauntered through a small grove of trees beside the Yamuna. This small forest was filled with breezes redolent with the sweet fragrances of various flowers growing in the forest and in the water. Followed by His company of bees and lovely damsels, Lord Krishna resembled an intoxicated elephant with his herd of cow-elephants. Although the *gopis* were very attached to Krishna, His desires were always Self-satisfied, and He was not even a little affected by mundane sex desire. Still, to execute His Pastimes properly, the Lord used all those moonlit autumn nights, nights inspire erotic, poetic descriptions of transcendental desire, for His personal pleasure.

Being amazed, Maharaja Pariksit said: "O great *Brahmana*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Lord of the universe, descended here on Earth, together with His plenary portion, to reestablish religious principles and to destroy irreligion. Indeed, He is the original enunciator, guardian and follower of moral laws. How is it possible that He could have violated them by seducing other men's wives? O steadfast upholder of vows, please destroy my doubt by explaining to me what aim the Self-satisfied Lord of the *Yadus* had in His mind when He behaved in such an apparently reprehensible way?"

Sukadeva Goswami answered: "The position of powerful controllers is not affected by apparently brazen and obnoxious transgressions of morality we may think we see in them, for the powerful controllers are like fire, which consumes everything put into it and yet remains unpolluted. One who is not a powerful controller should never dare to imitate the behavior of such great personalities, even mentally. If in foolishness an ordinary man imitates such behavior, he will certainly destroy himself, just as one who is not Lord Shiva would be destroyed if he attempted to drink an ocean of poison. The words of the Lord's empowered devotees are always true, and their acts are exemplary and consistent with those statements. Therefore an intelligent man should follow their instructions. My dear prabhu, when great souls who are free from false ego act piously, they have no personal selfish motives of ill, and similarly when they act in ways contrary to the law of piety, they are never subject to sinful reactions. How, then, could the Supreme Lord of all beings - whether demigods, men or animals - be subordinate to the piety and impiety governing His created subjects?"

"Material activities never entangle even a devotee of the Lord, for he is completely satisfied by serving the Lord's Lotus Feet; nor do material activities entrap intelligent sages who are freed from the bondage of fruitive actions through the power of *yoga*. How then can there be bondage for the Supreme Lord Himself, Who takes on His transcendental Forms by His own sweet will?"

"He Who is the Witness within the *gopis* and their husbands, and Who is indeed within all living beings, assumes Forms here in this world to enjoy Himself in transcendental Pastimes. When the Lord takes on a humanlike body in order to show mercy to His devotees, He enacts such Pastimes that will attract those who hear them and thus make

them attached to Him. The cowherd husbands of the *gopis*, bewildered by Krishna's illusory potency, thought their wives were always by their sides. Thus they did not feel any jealousy towards Krishna.

"After dancing a whole night of Brahma with Him, Krishna told the *gopis* to go home to their husbands. Although they did not want to do so, they complied with the Lord's request. Anyone who regularly hears or narrates Krishna's romantic affairs with the *gopis* of Vraja will soon attain His pure devotional service. Simultaneously, he will become steady and able to conquer lust, the sickness of the heart."

Commentary on Chapter Thirty-three

The *Rasa* Dance is often misunderstood to be nothing more than an adolescent adventure in sexuality. As already pointed out, both Krsna and the *gopis* were too young for sexual exploits. As we have learned in a previous chapter that Krishna and the *gopis* were only about eight years old and had not even reached puberty. The mystic power of the Supreme Lord is inconceivable, and it is on this spiritual platform that this *Rasalila* takes place. It is only by accepting the inconceivable mystic power of the Lord that we can understand His Pastimes.

Such understanding allows us to realize also how Lord Jesus Christ can be called the only son of God. The word "only" can denote number, but more importantly it can denote quality. For example, each *gopi* thought that Krsna was only with her. How is this possible when He stood between each two *gopis*? In the spiritual sphere this question is irrelevant. With God, all things are possible. But God's ways are always inconceivable! Krsna's dealings with His devotees cannot be understood otherwise. In the *Gita* He tells us that He promises to reciprocate with each devotee according to his surrender. If one surrenders completely to Him, making Krsna his only love, then Krsna - to keep His word - must make that devotee His only object of love too. But He has to do so in a way that is equal to all. That equality in reciprocation is another promise of His:

I am equal to all and envy no one,
But My devotee I treat as an only son.
(*Gita*, Ch. 9)

He does this by making a relationship of exclusive quality available to all who surrender to Him exclusively. That is truly inconceivable, but a fact!

Another interesting point is to see Krishna's extreme loving compassion for the *gopis* in gradually elevating them to perfect spiritual realization. You may remember that when Krishna stole the *gopis*' garments they felt shame and tried to hide their nudity. Now here they feel no shame but sheer delight in what He wants to do. One feels shame at being nude because the false ego thinks, "I am this body and you are that body." Before the fall, Adam and Eve felt no shame in their nudity, for they knew no duality or distinction between each other. They were still in the "Garden of Eden," the Paradise of non-duality, without knowledge of good and evil, but complete and perfect harmony with the Whole.

If we have any desire to regain that "Paradise Lost," we must die to false ego and merge our identity in Krsna, the Whole, as did the *gopis*. This is the "Die before you die" the saints and

sages describe. This merging does not mean we lose our individuality of Self-identity. Rather, it means that we find our real being and identity in Kṛṣṇa. We only have to abandon what is false and unreal - our sense of separateness from Kṛṣṇa. This separateness is an illusion, *maya*, ignorance, for Kṛṣṇa is the Whole and Himself says in the *Gita*:

On receiving this Truth, you'll joyfully know
That all living things from Me verily flow.

(Ch. 4)

Kṛṣṇa is the beginning, middle, and end of existence. Everything emanates from Him, is sustained by Him, and winds up in Him. One who knows Kṛṣṇa knows everything!

Chapter Thirty-Four: Nanda Maharaja Saved & Sankhacuda Slain

One day, eager to take a pilgrimage to worship Lord Shiva, the cowherd men of Vraja traveled by bullock cart to Ambika forest. Upon their arrival there, they bathed in the Saraswati and then devoutly worshiped powerful Lord Shiva and his consort, Goddess Ambika. The cowherd men gave gifts of cows and gold to the *brahmanas*, praying, "May the good Lord be pleased with us." All the cowherds then spent the night on the River Saraswati's bank, keeping their fast of drinking water only.

During the night a very large and ravenous snake waited in the thickets by their campground. Slithering on his belly over to sleeping Maharaja Nanda, the snake started to swallow him. Waking in the clutches of the snake, Maharaja Nanda cried out, "Krishna, Krishna, my dear Son! This fearsome snake is swallowing me! Save me! I am totally surrendered to You!" When the cowherds heard Nanda's cries, they at once got up and started to beat the serpent with burning logs. These rebrands, however, proved useless, for the serpent would not let go of Maharaja Nanda. Then the Lord, the Master of His devotees, walked over and touched the serpent with His Lotus Foot.

By the touch of the Lord's Lotus Foot, the serpent had all his sinful reactions destroyed, and he thus gave up his snake body and assumed the form of a worshipable demigod. The Supreme Lord then asked this demigod who stood before Him with his head bowed and his body covered with golden necklaces: "My dear sir, you are wonderfully effulgent and very beautiful. Who are you? Who forced you to accept this horrible form of a snake?"

The serpent answered: "I am the well-known demigod named Sudarshana. I was extremely opulent and most beautiful. I used to travel freely all over the universe in my airplane. Once I saw a group of ugly sages who were descendants of Angira *Muni*. Proud of my own beauty, I laughed at them, and for that offense they cursed me to assume this hideous body.

"Actually it was for my benefit that they cursed me, since I have now been touched

by the Lotus Foot of the Supreme Lord, and have thus been freed of all inauspiciousness. My Lord, You remove all fear from those who, being fearful of this material world, take full shelter of Your Lotus Feet. By the mere touch of Your Lotus Feet I am now relieved of the sages' curse. O destroyer of distress, please allow me to return to my former abode.

“O Master of all mystic power, O Supreme Personality, O Lord of all devotees, I surrender completely to You. Please order me as You like, O Lord of all lords, O Supreme God, O infallible One, I was immediately freed from the *brahmanas* curse simply by seeing You. Chanting Your Holy Name purifies all who hear, as well as the chanter. How much more auspicious must be the actual touch of Your Lotus Feet!”

Receiving permission from Krishna, demigod Sudarshana circumambulated the Lord, bowing down in humble obeisance, and then went back to his heavenly abode. Maharaja Nanda was thus saved from great peril, and the inhabitants of Vraja were thrilled to see the awesome power of Krishna. They then finished their worship of Lord Shiva and went back to Vraja, all along the way talking excitedly about Krishna's powerful deeds.

Once Krishna and Balarama, the performers of stupendous feats, were sporting at night in the forest with the *gopis* of Vraja. The Two Lords wore beautiful wild-ower garlands and colorful garments. Their arms were beautifully decorated and smeared with unguents and sandal paste. The *gopis* sang Their glories passionately, being tightly bound to Them by love. Krishna and Balarama praised the evening time, for it revealed the full moon and many galaxies of stars. It also offered a lotus-scented breeze and swarms of buzzing bees, intoxicated by the aroma of jasmine flowers.

Krishna and Balarama sang together, covering the entire range of musical sounds simultaneously, thus bringing happiness to the minds and ears of all who heard Them. The *gopis* were stunned when they heard Their song. Completely forgetting themselves, they were unaware that their saris were becoming loose, and their garlands and hair disheveled. While Lords Krishna and Balarama thus sported and sang in apparent intoxication, a servant of Kuvera named Sankhacuda entered the scene. Even in front of the Two Lords, Sankhacuda audaciously began stealing the maidens away. The *gopis*, who had made Krishna and Balarama their Lords, began to call to Them. Hearing Their devotees' cries of “Krishna! Rama!” and understanding that they were like cows being stolen by a rustler, Krishna and Balarama took off after the demon.

To Their devotees, the Lords called, “Do not fear!” Then They grabbed big logs from a *shala* tree and quickly went after that lowest of *Guhyakas*, who tried to quickly run away. When Sankhacuda saw the Two Lords coming toward him like the combined forces of Death and Time, he panicked. Full of fear, he left the *gopis* and fled for his life. Lord Govinda, however, pursued the demon just to get his crest jewel. Meanwhile Lord Balarama remained with Vraja's damsels to protect them.

After covering a great distance in less than a second, the Almighty Lord caught Sankhacuda, and using only His hand, He severed the evil demon's head and also his crest jewel. Having killed the demon, Sankhacuda, and taken away his jewel of brilliant radiance as a trophy, Lord Krishna presented it to His Elder Brother with great joy as the *gopis* looked on.

.Commentary on Chapter Thirty-four

After condemning demigod worship in His Pastime of lifting Govardhan Hill, why was Krsna engaged in celebrating Shivaratri? The answer is that the cowherd men were not asking the demigod for a material benediction. Rather, they were worshipping Lord Shiva because he is the foremost Vaishnav. Even though in charge of *tamo-guna*, the department of ignorance, Lord Shiva is always detached from the material world. He is most often pictured performing great austerities or in profound meditation. What is he meditating on? The object of his meditation is his worshipable Lord, Krsna, especially Krsna in His Pastime of *Rasa lila*. Therefore Lord Shiva himself has become the worshipable Spiritual Master of everyone. It is very important to note that one is worshippable not because of a high material position, wealth, or extensive education, but because of one's intimate relationship with Krsna.

The Pastime of Vidyadhara further illustrates the lack of correspondence between material assets and spiritual worth. Vidyadhara was a highly-placed demigod, yet owing to Vaishnav *aparadha*, an offense to a devotee, he found himself degraded to the body of a snake. Blinded by pride, Vidyadhara had insulted pure devotees by laughing at their bodily features. That meant he was already in ignorance. His receiving the body of a snake, the very embodiment of ignorance and envy, was just the external manifestation of what already existed internally in the foolish demigod.

Simply by the transcendental touch of Krsna, however, envy and ignorance are turned into love, and pride into humility. There is only one problem in the world. The problem is not poverty, illiteracy, or any other material condition. The only real problem is lack of Krsna consciousness, lack of connection with the Whole. When we see ourselves separate from the Whole, we become selfish, exploitive, greedy, envious and jealous. Then we engage in acts of thievery, rape, murder, waste and environmental degradation. But when we see ourselves correctly, as an integral part of the Whole meant for service to the Whole, then we use everything in a loving, serving mood for everyone's good. We see and want only what is good for the Whole!

Chapter Thirty-Five: The Gopis Sing of Krishna

Each day, whenever Krishna left for the forest, the *gopis'* minds would run after Him, and they then piningly spent their days singing Krishna's Pastimes. The *gopis* said: When Mukunda vibrates His flute, stopping its holes with His lotus fingers, He puts His left cheek on His left arm and causes His eyebrows to dance. At that time the wives of the demigods, traveling in the sky with their husbands, become stunned. As those ladies listen, they are dismayed to find their minds full of lusty desires, and in their bewilderment they are unaware that their garments are loosening."

"O *gopi* friends, this Son of Nanda, Who brings joy to the distraught, bears streaks of lightning on His chest and wears a smile as beautiful as a jeweled necklace. Now listen

to something wonderful. When Krishna vibrates His flute, Vraja's bulls, cows and deer are all so enthralled by that sound that they stop chewing their food and cock their ears. Dazed, they look as if they were asleep or were figures in a painting."

"My dear *gopis*, sometimes Mukunda imitates professional wrestlers by adorning Himself with peacock feathers, leaves and colored minerals. Then, surrounded by Balarama and His cowherd friends, He plays His flute to call the cows. At that time the river stops flowing, its waters stunned by the ecstasy it feels from the wind bringing the dust of Krishna's Lotus Feet. But like us, the river must not be very pious, for it merely waits with its arms - its waves - trembling out of love."

"Krishna travels all over the forest with His friends, who enthusiastically chant the glories of His marvelous deeds. He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead displaying His limitless opulences. When the cows wander off into the mountain caves and Krishna calls them with His flute, the trees and creepers respond to the sound by spontaneously producing bounteous fruits and flowers. They seem to be worshipping Lord Vishnu in their hearts. With branches bent low, the creepers and vines on the tree trunks stand erect in ecstatic love of God, and both the creepers and the trees pour down a continuous shower of nectar. Maddened by the transcendental, honey-like fragrance of the *tulasi* flowers on Krishna's garland, swarms of bees buzz merrily for His pleasure, and that most handsome of all Persons gratefully acknowledges and praises their singing by putting His flute to His lips and replying with a transcendental tune. That entralling flute song then steals away the hearts and minds of all, even the swans, cranes and other waterfowl. Indeed, they come near to Krishna, close their eyes and silently worship Him by fixing their minds upon Him in profound meditation."

"O Goddesses of Vraja, when Lord Krishna is sporting with Balarama on the mountain slopes, humorously wearing a flower garland on top of His head, He further engaddens everyone with a harmonious melody from His flute. Thus He enthuses the entire creation. At such times, a nearby cloud, scared of offending a great personality, begins to thunders very softly in accompaniment. The cloud also showers flowers onto its dear Friend and shades Him from the sun like a giant umbrella."

"O pious Yasoda, your Son, Krishna, Who is very expert in the art of herding cows, has devised many new ways of flute playing. When Krishna puts His flute to His ruby-red lips and sends forth its vibration of beguiling melodies, even Shiva, Brahma, Indra and other great demigods become entranced upon hearing those melodies. Although they are the foremost learned authorities, they cannot fathom the complexity of that music, and thus they lower their heads and open their hearts."

"As Krishna saunters through Vraja's forests, His Lotus Feet, with markings of jag, thunderbolt, elephant goad and lotus, He alleviates the distress that the ground experiences from the cows' hard hooves. While He playing His illustrious flute, His body moves like a graceful elephant. The *gopis* become so agitated by lust when Krishna flirtatiously glances at us that we stand as still as trees, and are unaware that our garments and hair are opening. Krishna perhaps is now standing somewhere in the forest counting His different groups of cows on a *mala* of gems. He probably wears a *tulasi* garland that carries the fragrance of His beloved Radha, and He has likely just thrown His arm over the shoulder of a close cowherd friend. When Krishna sings and plays His flute the music attracts the

wives of the black deer, who approach that Ocean of Transcendental Qualities and sit down next to Him. Like us *gopis*, they have also given up all hope for any lasting happiness in family life.”

“O saintly Yasoda, your charming Son has undoubtedly decorated Himself with jasmine flowers, and is now sporting by the Yamuna in the company of the cowherd boys and the cows, entertaining all His dear companions. The soft breeze pleases Him with its soothing aroma of sandalwood, as do the different *Upadevas*, standing on every side like so many panegyrists offering their musical gifts of praise. Out of great love for the cows of Vraja, Krishna lifted Govardhana Hill. Now, at the end of each day, after rounding up His cows, Krishna plays a melody on His flute, and all the great demigods, standing at attention all along the path leading home to Vraja, adore His Lotus Feet; while the cowherd boys with Him chant His glories. Krishna’s garland always becomes powdered with the dust raised by the cows’ hooves. His beauty is increased by His fatigue, creating an ecstatic festival for the eyes of everyone along the way. Eager to satisfy His friends’ desires, Krishna appears like a full moon appearing from Mother Yasoda’s womb.”

“As Krishna warmly greets His dear friends, His eyes roll slightly just like one who is intoxicated. He wears a wild flower garland, and the charm of His rosy cheeks is enhanced by the glow of His golden earrings and the brilliance of His face, as glowing as a badara berry. With His beautiful face resembling the moon which is the night’s lord, the Lord of the *Yadus* struts with the grace of a royal elephant. In this way He comes back every evening with the cows of Vraja, after the heat of the day.”

Sri Sukadeva Goswami said: “O King, during the daytime the Vraja’s women took great pleasure in constantly singing the Pastimes of Krishna. This is how those ladies’ hearts and minds - ever absorbed in Him - were always filled with great ecstasy.”

Commentary on Chapter Thirty-five

Although the *gopis* danced with Krsna in the forest at night, during the day they could not be with Him. In the morning, Krsna and His cowherd friends would leave the village to graze the cows in the forest, and they would not return until evening. Unable to be with Krishna physically, the *gopis* sent their hearts out to the pastures with Him. Lord Caitanya and His immediate successors, the Goswamis of Vrindavan, have taught us that this mood of separation – so perfectly exhibited by the *gopis* – is the highest stage of Krishna consciousness. Paradoxically, intense feelings of separation actually insure no separation! Indeed this loving mood of love in separation brings about perfect spiritual union with the Beloved, Krishna.

This method of association through intense feelings of separation, especially applies to us today. Though the grossest of materialists surround us, and though we are physically far from Vrindavan, India, nonetheless we can feel Krsna’s presence by remembering His presence or chanting His Holy Name. Krsna and His Name and Form, Pastimes and Entourage, are all transcendental and identical with Him. By the *gopis* remembering the transcendental Pastimes of the Lord, they were always with Him.

Because of Krsna’s all-attractiveness, everything is attracted to Him! Even today, anyone can immediately and very easily associate with Krishna simply by hearing His wonderful Pastimes

of love. Everyone has a tendency to love someone or something. Everyone wants to love someone and be loved by someone. The essence of Krsna consciousness is that Krishna should be the object of our love. Then we will be the recipient of His love. As He says in the *Gita*:

In the same measure that one surrenders to Me

I reciprocate with him accordingly. (4)

By incessantly chanting His Holy Name and by remembering His Pastimes of love, we can enjoy Krishna's presence and thus have perfect Krsna Consciousness. Then our lives become complete and perfect, sublime and blissful. Hare Krsna.

Chapter Thirty-Six: The Slaying of Arista, the Bull Demon

Sri Sukadeva Goswami then narrated another of the Krishna's Pastimes: Demon Arista came to the cowherd village disguised as a bull with a big hump. His body was so huge that he made the earth shake as he walked and cut the ground with his hooves.

Aristasura bellowed loudly and pawed the earth, his tail raised high and his eyes glaring. He tore into the road's embankments with his pointed horns, every little while passing stool and urine. My dear King, clouds gathered around Aristasura's hump, taking it for a big hill or mountain. When the *gopas* and *gopis* saw the demon, they ran every which way in terror. The sound of the demon's roar so terrified the pregnant women and cows that they had miscarriages." The domestic animals did in terror too. Everyone ran to Lord Govinda for shelter, crying, "Krishna! Krishna! Save us! Save us!" When the Supreme Lord saw His cowherd community distraught and quaking in fear, He calmed them by saying, "Fear not! I will protect you!" Then He said to the bull demon, "You are a fool and a rascal! Why are you frightening My cowherd community and animals? Don't you know that I am here to punish troublesome rascals like you?"

Having thus spoken, the Almighty Lord Hari clapped His hands and slapped His arms, further infuriating Arista with a loud clapping noise. Krishna then casually put His all-powerful arm on the shoulder of a friend and faced the demon directly. Thus challenged, Arista pawed the earth with his hooves, and with clouds hovering around his upraised tail, he charged Krishna. Arista pointed his horns straight ahead and glared threateningly at Lord Krishna with bloodshot eyes. Arista charged the Lord with a speed equal to the thunderbolt hurled by Lord Indra.

Instantly, Krishna grabbed Aristasura by his horns and threw him eighteen yards back, much like an elephant might do with a rival foe. Thus pushed back by the Supreme Lord, demon Arista slowly got up and, breathing heavily and perspiring all over his huge body, he again charged Krishna in a mad rage. This time Lord Krishna grabbed him by the horns and threw him to the ground. The Lord then beat him mercilessly and then yanked

out one of his horns and repeatedly struck him with it until he lay very still. Profusely vomiting blood and passing stool and urine, rolling his eyes and kicking his legs, Aristasura very painfully passed to the land of Death. The demigods then worshiped Lord Krishna by showering powers upon Him.

Having thus killed Arista, the bull demon, He Who is a feast for the *gopis* eyes, entered Vraja's village with Balarama. Soon after Aristasura had been slain by Krishna, the Lord Who acts wonderfully, Narada *Muni* went to see King Kamsa

"Yasoda's child was actually a girl," Narada told Kamsa, "And Krishna is really the Son of Devaki and Balarama is the Son of Rohini. Out of fear of you, Vasudeva, Their father, entrusted Balarama and Krishna to his good friend Maharaja Nanda, and it is these Two Brothers who have slain all your men."

Upon hearing this, Kamsa became furious and lost all sense control and good sense as well. He grabbed a sword and started to kill Vasudeva, but Narada restrained Kamsa by reminding him that it was not Vasudeva, but the Two Sons of Vasudeva who would cause his death. Still, to appease his mind, Kamsa imprisoned Vasudeva and his wife, Devaki, and shackled them in iron chains. After Narada left, King Kamsa called for Kesi and ordered him: "Go kill Balarama and Krishna."

The *Bhoja* King next summoned his ministers, headed by Mustika, Chanura, Shala and Toshala, and also summoned his elephant-keeper. Kamsa addressed them: "My dear brave Chanura and Mustika, "Balarama and Krishna, the Sons of Vasudeva are now living in Nanda's cowherd village. There is a prediction that these Two Brothers will be the cause of my death. When They come here, kill Them on the pretext of a wrestling match. Construct a wrestling arena encircled by viewing stands, and invite all the inhabitants of the city and the countryside to see the festive sporting competition.

"You, elephant-keeper, my very good friend, should keep the elephant Kuvalayapida in the gateway to the wrestling arena and incite him to kill my Two Enemies. Let us hold the bow sacrifice on the *Chaturdasi* day, following all the *Vedic* injunctions. In ritual slaughter, sacrifice the proper animals to magnanimous Lord Shiva for our success."

Having thus ordered his ministers, Kamsa next called for Akrura, a very eminent *Yadus*. Kamsa knew the art of diplomacy and thus he put Akrura's hand in his own and spoke in a very friendly way: "My dear most charitable Akrura, please do me a favor. Among the *Vrishnis* and *Bhojas*, there is no one so dear to me as you. Honorable Akrura, you always execute your duty very soberly, and therefore I am depending on you - like powerful Indra depends on Lord Vishnu in order to gain a certain goal. Please go to Maharaja Nanda's village, where those Two Sons of Vasudeva are living, and quickly bring Them here on this wonderful chariot.

"The demigods, being protected by Vishnu, have sent these Two Boys for my death. Please bring Them to me. Also invite Nanda and the rest of the cowherds, and tell them to bring gifts of tribute. After you have brought Krishna and Balarama, I will have Them killed by Kuvalayapida, the elephant, who is as dangerous and powerful as Death Personified. And if somehow or other They escape him, I will have Them slain by my wrestlers, who are as powerful and deadly as lightning bolts. When these Two Brothers have been killed, I will then kill Vasudeva and all Their grieving relatives - the *Vrishnis*, *Bhojas* and *Dasarhas*. I will also slay, Ugrasena, my old father, who is envious of my kingdom, as well as Devaka,

his brother, and all my other enemies, too.

“Then, my friend, the earth will be devoid of thorns! My esteemed relative Jarasandha and my good friend Dvidida are our dependable well-wishers, as are Sambara, Naraka and Bana. We can use them to destroy any other kings who are friendly with the demigods. Then I shall rule the earth in peace. Now that you understand my plan, please go immediately and bring Krishna and Balarama to see the bow sacri t e and enjoy t he opulence of Mathura, the *Yadus'* capital.”

Akrura said: “O King, your plan has been expertly devised in order to free yourself of opposition. Still, one should be equipoised in success and failure, since destiny alone produces the results of one’s effort. Ordinary persons act upon desires, but one’s fate often prevents their fulfillment. Therefore one sometimes encounters happiness and sometimes distress. Still, I will do as you have asked.”

Sukadeva Goswami said: Having thus ordered Akrura, King Kamsa sent his ministers away and retired to his private quarters. Akrura also went home.

Commentary on Chapter Thirty-six

The four animal propensities are eating, sleeping, fearing, and mating. Of these, fearing is the most prominent. Here we see that Aristasura immediately caused the town of Vrindaban to behave in an animal like way by his fearful appearance. Fortunately, the residents of Vrindaban immediately had the good sense to call out to Krishna and take shelter of Him. The scriptures say that even fear personified is afraid of Krishna, because He is the Lord and Master of everyone and everything. At any rate, with Krishna’s appearance on the scene, the fear personified by Aristasura abated.

We too, by following the example of the Vrindaban residents, can counter any fearful situation, as they did by fervently calling upon the Holy Name of Krishna. Since the Name Krishna is non-different from Krishna and acts as powerfully as He, all fears automatically disappear when we chant

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare

Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

Then there is the question, “Why did Narada go to Kamsa and volunteer information that could be used against Krishna?” We can only understand this in the context of the larger picture of Krishna’s *lila*. Krishna advented in this world, according to *Bhagavad Gita* 4:8, in order to “annihilate the miscreants” and to “reestablish the principles of religion.” Kamsa was the foremost of all miscreants. This annihilation of the demons is part of the Lord’s eternal “play,” His *lila* or sporting pleasure. As part of this play, Narada had been requesting to play the role of an agitator, just to expedite the action. His role in fact demonstrates the measure of his faith in Krishna. Narada had no doubt that Krishna would be victorious, and therefore was anxious to witness His accomplishing this aim.

The same can be said about Akrura. Akrura was a great devotee of Krishna and a prominent member of the Yadu clan. Why would he agree to be an agent for evil Kamsa, who was trying to kill his worshipful Lord? Akrura was aware of the plan of the Lord, and was happy to

be a part of it. Like Narada, he had unlimited faith in Krsna and His ability to handle any situation. What is the need of protecting God? He is giving shelter to the whole creation, and is Himself the Cause of all causes.

Nevertheless, we see that the residents of Vrindaban were even more exalted than Narada or Akrura. Their love for Krsna was pure and spontaneous, free from knowledge of His divinity. Therefore they tried desperately to protect Him from all material dangers. Mother Yasoda, for example, when she remembered the supernatural happenings of Krsna's childhood, explained Krsna's triumphs to one of her friends in this way: "Nanda Maharaj, the leader of the cowherd men, worshipped Lord Vishnu, along with me, and as a result of this worship, Krsna has been saved from the clutches of Putana and other demons. The twin Arjuna trees were, of course, broken due to a strong wind, and although Krsna appeared to have lifted Govardhan Hill along with Balaram, I think that Nanda Maharaj actually held the mountain. Otherwise how could it have been possible for a little boy to lift such a great hill?" (*Nectar of Devotion* p. 341) Because her pure love of God manifested in the relationship of parental love, Mother Yasoda always felt that unless she took care of Krsna very attentively, He would surely be killed.

This is the play! Krsna's Pastimes are a play of love. At every turn and at every instant, one has a chance to love Krsna. Sometimes this love is expressed in knowledge, sometimes in awe and admiration; and sometimes it is expressed spontaneously, without reason but in the purest loving devotion

Chapter Thirty-Seven: The Killing of the Demons Kesi & Vyoma

The Kesi demon was also sent by Kamsa and arrived in Vraja disguised as a very large, monstrous horse. Running as rapidly as the wind, he tore up the ground with his sharp hooves. The hair of his mane touched the clouds and scattered the demigods' airplanes hovering in the sky. He terrified everyone with his loud whinnying. When Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, saw how he was disturbing Gokula by his ceaseless whinnying and beating the clouds with his tail, Krishna came there to meet him. Kesi had been searching for Krishna in order to kill Him, so when He stood before him in a challenging stance, the demon responded with a roar like a lion.

Kesi quickly charged Krishna in a mad rage, his mouth wide open as if to swallow the whole sky. Rushing furiously, the unapproachable and unconquerable horse demon raised his two front legs to strike lotus-eyed Krishna. The Transcendental Lord, however, dodged Kesi's feet, seizing hold of them. He whirled him about in the air, and threw him a distance of one hundred yards, as easily as Garuda might toss a snake.

When he regained consciousness, Kesi slowly but angrily got up again, opening his mouth wide and once more rushed at Krishna, Who stood fearlessly waiting. As Kesi ran toward Him, the Lord smiled and pushed His left arm into the demon's open mouth.

Being touched by the Supreme Lord's arm, which for the demon was as hot as molten iron, Kesi's teeth all broke and fell out. Then in Kesi's throat Krishna's arm expanded, completely stopping Kesi's breathing. The demon's legs thrashed convulsively, his eyes rolled uncontrollably, and his body perspired profusely. The demon then fell to the ground dead.

Mighty-armed Krishna then withdrew His arm from Kesi's throat and mouth. Without the slightest tinge of pride at having killed His enemy, Lord Krishna nevertheless accepted the demigods' offering of flowers showering down from above.

Thereafter, in a solitary place, Lord Krishna was approached by the great demigod sage, Narada *Muni*. That exalted devotee said to Krishna, Who spontaneously and effortlessly executes His Pastimes: "O Krishna, my dear Krishna, unlimited Lord, Fount of all mystic power and Lord of all creation! O Vasudeva, Shelter of all living beings and foremost of the *Yadus*! O Supreme Soul of all beings, sitting unseen within the heart like *re w i t h i n w o o d*. You are the *W i t n e s s w i t h i n a l l t h e S u p r e m e P e r s o n a l i t y* and the absolute controlling Deity.

"You are Shelter for all beings, the Supreme Controller, simply by Your will You fulfill all Your desires. By Your own creative potency, before the beginning of Time You manifest the three modes of material nature, and then through them create, maintain and ultimately destroy this universe. You, the original Creator, are now here on the earth to annihilate the demons, who are posing as kings, and simultaneously to protect Your devotees.

"This horse demon was so frightening that his whinnying terrified the demigods into leaving their heavenly kingdom. But it is our good fortune that You have now sportively killed him. In only two more days, O Almighty Lord, I will also see the killing of Chanura, Mustika and other wrestlers, and also that of Kuvalayapida, the elephant, and King Kamsa himself – all by Your almighty hand. Then I shall witness You killing Kalayavana, Naraka, Mura and the conch demon, and I will also observe You taking the *parijata* over and defeating Indra. I will then see You marry many daughters of noble kings, after liberating them by Your valor.

"O Lord of the universe, then in Dwaraka You will free King Nriga from a curse and gain for Yourself the *Syamantaka* jewel, along with another wife. You will also bring back a *brahmana's* son from the dead who is in Your servant Yamaraj's abode; and thereafter You will slay Paundraka, consume the city of Kashi with fire, and slay Dantavakra and the King of Chedi during the stupendous *Rajasuya* sacrifice. I shall see all these amazing Pastimes, as well as many others You will enact during Your stay in Dwaraka. These Pastimes are gloried in the songs of transcendental poets all over this earth..

"Thereafter I will witness Your appearance as Time Personified to serve as Arjuna's chariot driver and destroy vast hordes of soldiers in order to rid Mother Earth of her burden. Let us all approach You, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, for ultimate shelter. You are the perfectly pure spiritual consciousness and are eternally situated in Your own identity. Since Your will is never obstructed, You have already achieved all desirable things; and by the potency of Your spiritual power, You remain unaffected by the flow of the illusory qualities. I bow to You, O Supreme Controller, Who are dependent only on Yourself. By Your own potency You have made all the unlimited, unique arrangements of this universe.

Now You have come as the foremost Hero amongst the *Yadus*, *Vrishnis* and *Satvatas*, and are participating in human activities, including warfare, by Your own desire.”

Sukadeva Goswami said: Having thus addressed the Chief of the *Yadu* dynasty, Lord Krishna, Narada prostrated himself and offered humble obeisances. Then that great sage, Narada, that most eminent devotee took his leave from Krishna and went away experiencing transcendental bliss for having personally seen Him. After killing demon Kesi, the Supreme Personality of Godhead continued tending His cows and other animals in the company of His cowherd friends. In this way He brought happiness and contentment to all the residents of Vraja.

One day while grazing their cows on the hilly slopes, the cowherd boys played a game of stealing and hiding, some taking the part of thieves, some as of herders, and others as sheep. They played their merry game without fear or anxiety.

A powerful demon called Vyoma, a son of demon Maya, came there disguised as a cowherd boy. He joined in Their game playing the part of a thief, and then proceeded to steal almost all of the boys playing as sheep. One by one the demon abducted the cowherd boys and shut them up in a mountain cave, and sealed the opening with a big boulder. When, at last less than a half dozen boys playing as sheep remained at large, Lord Krishna, the shelter of all saintly devotees, understood exactly what Vyoma was doing. Like a lion catching a wolf, Krishna suddenly seized the demon as he was taking off with more cowherd boys. The demon then assumed his original form, big and powerful like a mighty mountain. But despite trying his best to free himself, he could not, for he had lost all his strength by being strangled in Krishna’s tight grasp. Krishna held Vyomasura in His almighty arms and then threw him to the ground. Then, while heavenly demigods looked on, Krishna slew Vyoma in the same way that one sacrifices a lamb.

Krishna then opened the cave’s entrance and led the cowherd boys to freedom. Thereafter, as the cowherd boys and demigods sang Krishna’s glories, they all returned to Gokula.

Commentary on Chapter Thirty-seven

How wonderful are the Lord’s Pastimes! No one can understand or fathom His mind! But on the wings of transcendental sound, we can be with Him and travel the length and breadth of Vrindaban, the land of pure Krsna consciousness. There, Krsna encounters demons of incalculable mystic power, yet none is a match for Him, because He is *Yogeswara*, the Master of all mystic power!

The Kesi demon represents the dark powers of nature, so terrifying to the ordinary, conditioned soul. He could not frighten Krsna, however, since even Fear Personified is afraid of Him. Without hesitation, Krsna urged the demon to attack Him. He did, and Krsna very expertly thwarted his advance. Regardless of a demon’s shape or size or fearfulness, Krsna is perfectly competent to counter it. Have no fear when Krsna is near!

For Krsna, His killing of Kesi was a minor feat, but for the demigods, it was wonderful. Even Narada Muni, the Spiritual Master of the Demigods, felt greatly inspired. Krsna’s supreme independence particularly impressed him. Narada explained that although Krsna had taken birth

in the family of Yadu, and although He was the friend of Arjuna, He was not obliged to act in a certain way, in order to enjoy a certain result or action. He may appear like an ordinary human, but He always remains the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Cause of all causes, and all that is. His so-called human activities are just Pastimes or sport, His play. Hearing of them from a bona fide source produces in the faithful and submissive hearer the same transcendental consciousness that these Pastimes describe. This easy access of divine consciousness is the miracle of transcendental sound, a vibration that is non-different from the Lord Himself. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Vyomasura, the demon who lies in the sky, is analogous to self-glorification, which allows one to rise to any height, but steals the consciousness away from the reality of Krsna. Only Krsna can kill such a demon, and only when this demon is utterly destroyed can the soul reunite with his eternal friend, Krsna. How careful we must be, even when in the company of the Lord or His pure devotees, to know Who is who and What is what; it is Krishna that is the center of existence and the Lord of all. If we forget this, we may find ourselves locked inside a cave constructed by a demons of our mind. But if we make Krsna our best friend, keep Him in the center of all we do and rely fully on His protection, safety and success are guaranteed:

O Arjuna, declare it boldly and publish,
My pure devotee will never, never perish.

(Gita, Ch. 9)

Chapter Thirty-Eight: Akrura's Arrival in Vrindavana

After passing the night in Mathura city, high-minded Akrura mounted his chariot and started for Maharaja Nanda's cowherd village. As he started, great soul Akrura felt tremendous love for the lotus-eyed Personality of Godhead, and thus he thought: "What pious acts have I performed, what rigid austerities undertaken, what worship executed or charity distributed to allow me to see Lord Krishna today? Since I am an ordinary man absorbed in sense gratification, I think it is quite a mazing that I have gotten this chance to see the Supreme Lord. It is like a *sudra* being allowed to recite the *Vedic mantras*. But enough of this nonsense! After all, by the Lord's grace even a sinful soul like me can get the chance to gaze upon the infallible Lord, even as a conditioned soul, being carried down the river of Time, sometimes makes it to shore.

"Today all my offenses and their reactions will be destroyed and my birth will be successful, for I will be able to offer my humble obeisances at the Lord's Lotus Feet, Feet which even great mystic *yogis* meditate upon. Indeed, King Kamsa has today shown me great mercy by sending me here to see Krishna's Lotus Feet. Simply by the radiance of His toenails, many souls have formerly transcended the impenetrable darkness of material existence and thereby achieved liberation. His Lotus Feet are adored by Lords Brahma,

Shiva and all other great demigods, by the Goddess of Fortune, and by great sages and Vaishnavas. Upon those Lotus Feet Lord Krishna roams the forest of Vrindavana while herding His cows with His friends, and those Feet are also smeared with the *kumkum* dust from the *gopis'* breasts.

“Moreover I am going to see Lord Krishna’s face, for the deer are now passing me on my right side. His face, encircled by curly black hair, is further enhanced by His beautiful nose and cheeks, His smiling glances and His pinkish lotus eyes. I will see the Supreme Lord, the Fount of all beauty, Who by His own will has assumed a human Form to relieve Earth of her heavy burden. Without doubt my eyes will attain the fulfillment of their existence! Krishna is the knower of material nature’s cause and effect, but He is ever free from any identification with it. By His own Internal Potency, He dissipates the darkness of ignorance and confusion. The individual *jiva* souls, who are manifested here after He glances over His material creative energy, can indirectly know Him in the working of their senses, intelligence and life airs. Sinfulness is destroyed and all auspiciousness is created by the Supreme Lord’s Appearances, Qualities and Activities. Even the words that describe these things purify, animate and beautify the whole world! On the other hand, words that do not glorify Him are like decorations on a dead body. That same Supreme Personality of Godhead has now descended into the *Satvata* dynasty to please the demigods, who uphold the religious principles He has created. Although residing in Vrindavana, He spreads His Name and Fame everywhere, for the demigods glorify Him in song, bringing auspiciousness to all.

“Today I shall see Him Who is certainly the goal and Spiritual Master of all great souls. Seeing Him is pure joy to those who have eyes, for He is the real and ultimate beauty of the universe. His Form is the refuge of the Goddess of Fortune. Surely all the days of my life have now become auspicious. I will at once get down from my chariot and fall prostrate at the Lotus Feet of Balarama and Krishna, the Supreme Personalities of Godhead. Their Lotus Feet are meditated upon by great mystic *yogis* seeking Self-realization. I will also offer humble obeisances to the Lords’ cowherd friends and to the other residents of Vrindavana.

“And having fallen at His Lotus Feet, the Almighty Lord will then put His lotus hand upon my head. For those seeking refuge in Him, being much disturbed by the most powerful serpent of Time, His hand removes every fear. By offering alms to His lotus hand, Bali got the position of King of heaven, and during the *rasa* dance, when the Lord wiped the *gopis'* faces of perspiration, removing their fatigue, He simultaneously made His hand as sweet smelling as a rose.

“The all-knowing Lord will not think me an enemy, despite my being sent here by Kamsa as his messenger. After all, He is the true knower of this material body, and with His infallible vision He knows, both externally and internally, the motives of a conditioned soul’s heart. Thus He will put His affectionate, smiling glance upon me as I lay prostrate with joined palms at His Lotus Feet. Immediately then all my contamination will be obliterated, and I will have no more doubts and will experience the most intense bliss. Seeing me a relative and intimate friend, Krishna will embrace me with His powerful arms, at once sanctifying my body and destroying all my material bondage due to fruitive activities’ reactions.

“All glorious Lord Krishna, having embraced me, I will stand before Him with bowed head and joined palms. Then He will say to me, ‘My dear Uncle Akrura.’ Certainly then my life’s purpose will be completely fulfilled. But the existence of anyone whom He does not recognize is simply to be pitied. The Supreme Lord does not have favorites nor dearest friends, but is equal to all. He does not see anyone as despicable, undesirable or to be neglected. Rather, He lovingly reciprocates with all in kind, however they approach Him, just as the heavenly desire trees fulfill the desires of all who approach them. And then Balarama, Lord Krishna’s Elder Brother and foremost of the *Yadus*, will clasp my hands while I am standing with bowed head, and embrace me. He will then take me to His home. There He will respectfully receive me with various rituals and inquire from me how Kamsa is treating His family members.”

Sukadeva Goswami continued: My dear King, while Akrura, the son of Svapalka, traveled on the road, thus meditating intensely on Lord Krishna, he reached Gokula just as the sun was setting. In the pastures Akrura could see those Lotus Footprints whose dust the universal planetary rulers all hold on their crowns. Those Lotus Footprints of the Lord, distinguished by marks of lotus, barleycorn and elephant goad, decorated the ground very beautifully.

Increasingly excited by ecstasy at beholding the Lord’s Footprints, his hairs standing erect in pure love, and his eyes streaming tears, Akrura got down from the chariot and rolled about in those Footprints, exclaiming, “Oh, this is my Master’s Footdust!” The goal of life for every embodied being is this ecstasy, which Akrura experienced when, having accepted Kamsa’s order, he abandoned all lamentation, fear and pride, and absorbed himself in remembering Lord Krishna. We can today enjoy the same ecstasy by remembering Krishna Pastimes as fervently as Akrura did.

Akrura soon caught sight of Balarama and Krishna in Vraja village milking the cows. Krishna was dressed in yellow garments and Balarama in blue. Their eyes were as beautiful as autumnal lotuses. One of Them, Who are both shelters of the Goddess of Fortune, possessed a dark-blue complexion, while the other One was whitish. Both had re-featured faces and appeared to be the most beautiful of men. As they strode with the swagger of young elephants, glancing here and there with compassion, They beautified the earth with the Footprints of Their Feet, which bore the marks of a æ, elephant goad, lightning bolt and lotus. The Two Lords, Whose Pastimes are most attractive and magnanimous, were adorned with jeweled necklaces and fragrant overgarlands, and They were smeared with auspicious substances, freshly bathed and dressed in spotless garments. They were the Supreme Personalities of Godhead, the Primeval Masters and original Causes of the cosmos, Who had for the welfare of the earth now descended in the Forms of Krishna and Balarama.

O Maharaja Pariksit, They looked like two exquisite mountains, one of silver and the other of emerald. By Their effulgence They dissipated the sky’s darkness. Akrura, overwhelmed with loving affection, jumped down from his chariot, and prostrated himself at the Lotus Feet of Krishna and Balarama. The bliss of seeing His Lord coddled Akrura’s eyes with tears of love and covered his limbs with goosebumps of ecstasy. He felt such exhilaration that he could not properly speak.

Upon seeing Akrura, Lord Krishna pulled him near to Him with His hand, which

bears the symbol of the chariot wheel, and then warmly embraced him. Krishna felt very pleased, for He is always affectionately disposed toward a surrendered devotee. As Akrura stood there, with bowed head, Krishna and Balarama grasped his joined hands and then took him to Their house. After inquiring from Akrura about his trip, Balarama offered him a comfortable seat, bathed his feet and respectfully served him milk mixed with honey.

Almighty Lord Balarama gave Akrura a cow in charity, massaged his feet to mitigate his fatigue, and then very respectfully served him foods of different tastes. When Akrura finished eating, Lord Balarama, the knower of religious principles and duties, offered him fragrant herbs for sweetening his breath, along with aromatic oils and flower garlands. Akrura thus enjoyed the highest pleasure.”

Maharaja Nanda asked Akrura: “O descendent of *Dasarha*, how are all of you maintaining yourselves under the merciless Kamsa? You are like sheep being kept by a butcher. Self-serving Kamsa is so cruel that he murdered the babies of his cousin-sister before her very eyes, as she cried in anguish. So how can we expect any good for you, his subject?”

Honored by Maharaja Nanda with these sincere and pleasing words of inquiry, Akrura felt relieved from the fatigue of his journey.

Commentary on Chapter Thirty-eight

Akrura’s predicament raises quite an interesting and frequently recurring problem that neophyte devotees face in spiritual life. He knows what he should do and wants to do it; still, he does just the opposite! Saint Paul described the problem in this way: “For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil that I would not, that I do.” (Rom. 7:19)

Akrura found the solution to this problem by meditating on Krsna. Despite his going to Vrindaban on behalf of Kamsa for a dreadful purpose, he used the occasion to think of Krsna with love. Sometimes a devotee, because of either birth, previous habit, or force of circumstance, is forced by his *karma* to perform activities he does not want to do. Here is the solution. Always think of Krsna lovingly and pray that the Lord will somehow use the situation for His glory!

Thank You, Krishna for now as it is.

How do I use it for Your service, Lord?

By sincerely praying in this way, one will soon be free from all sinful slavery.

How can we thank God for a disgraceful predicament? Because we are not the body! We are spirit soul, part and parcel of God. If we surrender to Him, desiring to serve Him, He will fulfill our desire very quickly. Therefore, simply by meditating on Krsna - His Name, His Form, His Pastimes, His Activities, or His Instructions - we are on the platform of transcendence, of auspiciousness. No matter what one may do, by this method He can be in full Krsna consciousness. By this meditation, the whole universe can progress peacefully and happily. But without Krsna consciousness, any and every activity is useless - no matter how “good” or “scientifically advanced”

it seems from the material viewpoint. Pious material activities are compared to decorations on a dead body. A dead body may be decorated very gorgeously, but without life, without consciousness, what is its value?

Material activities may also be compared to a severed hand. A hand cut off from the rest of the body has no value, although it may have freshly painted nails and look like it belongs to a wealthy person. Without connection to a living body, it is useless. Similarly, whatever activities we may perform, if they have no connection to Krsna, God, their Source and Owner, they have no ultimate usefulness. Therefore one should connect everything to the Supreme Lord with love and devotion. As Krsna says in the *Gita*:

All that you do, Son of Kunti, all that you eat,

Just place as a sacrifice at My Lotus Feet.

(*Gita* Ch. 9)

If one wants to enter the land of Vraja, the place of pure devotion and unalloyed love of God, one must follow in the footsteps of Akrura. His going to Vrindaban is exemplary. One enters Vraja - not by train or automobile - but by meditating on Krsna. As soon as one approaches the boundary of that transcendental abode, he should immediately fall on the ground and smear himself with the dust of Vrindaban. How to enter Vrindaban is made clear by Krsna when He says:

Abandon all kinds of pious speculation;

Surrender to Me; give Me your adoration.

(*Gita*, Ch. 18)

Any kind of material religiousness is pious speculation. Speculation may take us near the truth, but never to the Truth. Upon reaching the outskirts of Vrindaban, the land of spontaneous, pure love of God, one must abandon his mental speculation. Only by leaving such defective vehicles behind and getting down on one's hands and knees and smearing oneself with the dust of Vrindaban in loving surrender, can one receive Krsna's highest benediction - pure love of God. Vrindaban's dust is realized today only in Krsna Consciousness. Krsna Consciousness and the dust of Vrindaban are non-different, and when we immerse ourselves in Krsna Consciousness, we are smearing ourselves and lowering ourselves into the dust of Vrindaban. Then Krsna Himself will pick us up from our position of self-abnegation, just as He did to Akrura, and will say:

Do not fear; I give My loving benefaction

To deliver you from all sinful reaction.

(*Gita*, Ch. 18)

Chapter Thirty-Nine: Akrura's Vision

Sukadeva Goswami resumed: Having been thus greatly honored by Balarama and Krishna, Akrura relaxed on a couch, feeling that all his desires contemplated on the road were fulfilled. My dear King, what is not obtainable for one who has pleased the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Refuge of the Goddess of Fortune? In the same way, those who are fully engaged in His devotional service never lack anything.

After supper, the Son of Devaki, Lord Krishna, asked Akrura about Kamsa's treatment of their dear friends and relatives, and what Kamsa was planning to do now. The Supreme Lord inquired: "My dear, gentle Uncle, was your trip here pleasant? May all auspiciousness be yours. Are our good friends and relatives in Mathura enjoying happiness and good health? But, my dear Akrura, as long as Kamsa – the disease of our family, passing by the name of 'maternal uncle' – is still active, what is the use of asking about the happiness of our relatives and his other subjects?"

"Just see the suffering I have caused My dear parents! Because of Me their other sons were all slain and they personally were imprisoned. By good fortune, Our desire to see you has today been fulfilled, O gentle uncle. O dear relative, please inform Us of your purpose for coming."

Sukadeva Goswami said: In response to Krishna's inquiry, Akrura described the whole state of affairs, including Kamsa's bitter enmity for the *Yadus* and his attempt to kill Vasudeva. Akrura then repeated Kamsa's message that he was supposed to give. He also revealed Kamsa's real intentions and the fact that Narada had told Kamsa that Krishna was really the Son of Vasudeva.

Krishna and Balarama, the Vanquishers of powerful opponents, laughed loudly when They heard Akrura's speech. The Lords then informed Nanda Maharaja of Kamsa's orders. Maharaja Nanda then gave orders to the cowherd men through the village constable: "Go get all our surplus milk products, as well as valuable gifts, and then yoke your wagons. Tomorrow we shall travel to Mathura, present our gifts to the King and witness a very great festival. All the residents of the outlying districts are attending."

When the *gopis* heard that Akrura was there in Vraja to take Balarama and Krishna to the city, they were extremely distraught. Some *gopis'* hearts were so pained that their faces turned pale and they breathed very heavily. Others were so distressed that their dresses, braids and bracelets became slackened. Other *gopis* completely stopped all sensory activity and fixed their minds on Krishna in meditation. They lost all consciousness of the world outside, just like saints who attain the stage of Self-realization. Still other young *gopis* fainted when they remembered Krishna's words, accompanied by affectionate smiles. All these remembrances deeply wounded the *gopis'* hearts.

The *gopis* were terribly frightened at the mere thought of even the slightest separation from their Lord. They lovingly pondered His graceful gait, His loving smiling glances, His Pastimes, His joking words and heroic deeds, which somewhat relieved their distress. But soon they again became overwhelmed with sorrow at the thought of His impending separation. They gathered together and spoke to each other with eyes profusely tearing, but minds totally absorbed in Krishna.

The *gopis* lamented: "O Providence, You are so cruel! You bring living beings together in friendship and love, and then separate them before their desires are fulfilled.

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This whimsical sport of Yours is like child's play. Having first shown us Krishna's lotus face, encircled by dark locks and enhanced by His beautiful cheeks, raised nose and smiling glances which eradicate all misery, You now are making his face invisible. Such behavior is not at all proper! O Providence, though coming here under the name 'Akrura' which literally means 'not cruel', You are actually very cruel, for like a fool You are now taking away what You previously gave us — Lord Krishna's enchanting Form, the perfection of all creation. Alas, Nanda's Son, Krishna, Who breaks loving relationships in a second, does not even look at us now. Forcibly brought under His control, we left our husbands, children, homes and relatives just to serve Him, but now He is looking for new lovers. Tomorrow's dawn will certainly be auspicious for Mathura's women. All their dreams will now be fulfilled, for as Vraja's Lord enters their city, they will be enabled to drink the nectarine smile emanating from His face and eyes.

"O *gopis*, although Mukunda is most intelligent and very obedient to His parents, as soon as He falls under the spell of the sweet words of Mathura's women and becomes enchanted by their seductive, shy smiles, He will never return to us ordinary village girls. When the *Bhojas*, *Dasarhas*, *Andhakas*, *Satvatas* and *Vrishnis* see Devaki's Son in Mathura, they will enjoy a grand festival for their eyes, as well for everyone who sees Him as He travels the road to the city. After all, He is the darling of Laxmi, the Goddess of Fortune, and is the Reservoir of every transcendental Quality.

"He who is performing this cruel deed should not be called 'Akrura.' He is so cruel that he does not even try to console the poor residents of Vraja for taking Krishna away. He means more to us than life itself. Hard-hearted Krishna has now mounted Akrura's chariot, and all the foolish cowherders are following Him in their bullock carts. Even the Elders aren't saying anything to stop Him. Today fate must be against us.

"Let us ourselves approach Krishna and try to stop Him from going. What can our relatives do? Now that destiny is separating us from our Lord, our hearts are already broken, for we cannot bear to be separated from Him, even for half a second. When He brought together in the *rasa* dance, where we relished His affectionate, enchanting smiles, His delightful intimate talks, His soothing glances and His warm embraces, we passed all those nights as if they were but a moment. O *gopis*, how can we possibly endure the unbearable darkness of His separation? How can we exist without Krishna, Who in the evening came back to Vraja with all His cowherd friends, His hair and garland covered with the dust raised by the cows' hooves? His flute playing, combined with His smiling sidelong glances, captivated our hearts and minds."

Sukadeva Goswami said: After speaking like this, Vraja's damsels, who were completely attached to Krishna, felt extremely upset by the thought of their imminent separation from Him. Forgetting all shame, they loudly cried, "O Damodara! O Madhava! O Govinda!" But even as the *gopis* thus cried out, Akrura, having already performed His morning worship and other sunrise duties, began to drive the chariot. The cowherd men, led by Nanda Maharaja, followed behind Lord Krishna and Akrura in their wagons. The cowherd men brought many offerings for the King with them, including pots of ghee and many milk products.

Lord Krishna's smiling glances somewhat pacified the *gopis*, and they too ran

behind Him for some distance. Then, hoping He would stop and say something to them, they stood still. As He was leaving, that foremost of the *Yadus*, realizing how sorrowful the *gopis* were, consoled them by sending His messenger with this loving promise, "I will soon return." Sending their minds with Him, the *gopis* stood motionless like figures in a painting. They remained there for so long as the top of His chariot was visible, and even after that until the dust raised by the chariot wheels could no longer be seen. The *gopis* mournfully went back to their homes, having no hope that Govinda would ever come back to them. Full of sadness, they spent their days and nights chanting the Pastimes and Glories of their Beloved.

The Supreme Lord Krishna traveled like the wind in that chariot with Balarama and Akrura, and soon arrived at the Yamuna river, whose waters destroy all sins. The river's water was more sparkling than brilliant jewels. After touching it for purification, Lord Krishna drank some from His hands. Then He had the driver move the chariot into a grove of trees and got back on it with Balarama. After the Two Lords had taken Their seats on the chariot, Akrura took Their permission and went to the Yamuna to take his bath.

While dipping himself ceremoniously in the water and repeating Vedic *mantras*, Akrura suddenly saw Krishna and Balarama before him. Akrura wondered, "How can Vasudeva's Two Sons, Whom I left in the chariot, be standing here in the water? They must have left the chariot." So Akrura left the water to see, but when he looked he saw that They were still on the chariot. Now he wondered, "Was what I saw in the water but an illusion?" Akrura then went back to the river.

This time Akrura saw Ananta Sesa, Lord of the serpents, being praised by *Siddhas*, *Charanas*, *Gandharvas* and demons with heads bowed. Akrura also saw Ananta Sesa, the Personality of Godhead with thousands of heads, thousands of hoods and thousands of helmets, wearing a blue garment. His fair complexion was as white as the lily of a lotus, and made Him look as white as Kailasa Mountain with its snowy peaks.

Then Akrura saw the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Maha Vishnu, lying peacefully on Lord Ananta Sesa. His complexion was that of a dark blue cloud. Wearing yellow garments, He had four arms and pinkish lotus-petal eyes. His face appeared very attractive and cheerful with its smiling loving glance and beautiful eyebrows, its raised nose and delicate ears, and its rosy cheeks and reddish lips. The Lord's broad shoulders, large and powerful chest were beautiful, and His arms stout and long. His neck looked like a conchshell, His navel was deep, and His abdomen had lines like those on a banyan leaf. He had large hips and loins, thighs resembling an elephant's trunk, and well-proportioned knees and shanks. His raised ankles reflected the glowing effulgence emanating from His lotus petal-like toenails, which beautified His Lotus Feet.

Adorned with a helmet, armlets and bracelets, which were all covered with priceless gems; He also had a gorgeous belt, a sacred thread, ankle bells, necklaces and earrings. The Lord radiated a dazzling effulgence. In one hand He had a lotus flower, in the other a conchshell, club and discus. On His chest were the *Srivatsa* mark, the luminous *Kaustubha* gem and a wild flower garland. Encircling the Lord in adoration were Nanda, Sunanda and other attendants; Sanaka and all the other Kumaras; Lord Brahma, Lord Shiva and other important demigods; the nine great sages; and all the saintly devotees led by Prahlada

and Narada. Each of these personalities was worshiping the Lord by chanting verses of praise in his own special mood. Also in there were the Lord's chief internal potencies, His material potency and Shantki, His internal pleasure potency.

As great devotee Akrura beheld Balarama as Sesa Naga, and Krishna as Maha-Vishnu, he became extremely happy, and became exhilarated with transcendental devotion, causing his hair to stand up erect and tears to flow incessantly from his eyes, wetting his whole body. Somehow he really managed to control himself. Akrura then bowed his head and joined his hands in adoration and, in a voice choking with emotion, he very deliberately and sincerely began to pray.

Commentary on Chapter Thirty-nine

It is interesting to compare the fearfulness of a demon like Kamsa with the fearlessness of Krsna and His devotees. Because Akrura had informed them, Krsna and His devotees knew the plan of Kamsa. Still, they did not hesitate to go to Mathura. In fact, they were anxious to go and see the fun. A pure devotee has complete faith in the Lord. He knows that if Krsna wants to kill, no one can save, and if Krsna wants to save, no one can kill. Thus a devotee is always happy, content in the knowledge that Krsna's desire is perfect and will surely come to pass.

Another noteworthy point in this chapter is that Krsna and His expansions are everywhere - within and between every atom. For one with eyes to see - eyes smeared with pure love - Krsna and the spiritual sky are everywhere. To have this vision, one must follow in the footsteps of Akrura. This means to surrender as he did, even surrendering to do what seems wrong and what we cannot understand - simply because Krsna or His representative has told us to do it.

How can anyone be a greater moralist than Krsna? Krsna is the Complete Whole; we are His infinitesimal parts. Obviously only the Complete Whole can have full and perfect vision of how all things fit together for the ultimate good and perfection of everyone and everything. That perfect perspective is impossible for the tiny, fragmental living entity. Therefore, in all cases one must follow the order of Krsna and the Spiritual Master, Who perfectly represents His will.

In this world, we all have our Kamsas to whom we are subordinate. Never mind - just think of Krsna. At each moment, in every situation, just desire and try to serve Krsna. Every instant of our life, each event we face, is a new opportunity to surrender to Krsna's Will by doing one's best to serve Krsna in the present moment as it is. As Akrura said, "Krsna knows my heart." His words are both a statement of faith and a statement of surrender. In this faith one will find perfect protection.

Krsna's suddenly leaving the *gopis* behind is not symptomatic of Krishna's ingratitude and coldheartedness. Rather, His departure from Vrindavana demonstrates His intelligence and kindness. Krsna wanted to go to Mathura to rid the world of demonic King Kamsa and his cronies. Yet, for the *gopis* there was a deeper, more intimate reason for His leaving. Just like His disappearance during the *Rasa* Dance, Krsna's seeming abandonment of the *gopis* for Mathura is only an illusion, for, in truth, Krsna never takes one step outside of Vrindavana. But it brought about feelings of transcendental love in separation, the highest expression of love of God, and therefore gave Krsna to the *gopis* in a way in which they could never be separated.

Chapter Forty: The Prayers of Akrura

Akrura said: “I bow to You, O Lord, the Cause of all causes, the primal and inexhaustible Supreme Person, Lord Narayana. From the lotus whorl of Your navel, Lord Brahma was born, and through him this universe has come to be. Earth, water, air and ether; and its source, the *mahat-tattva*; the total material nature and its source, the Supreme Lord’s *Purusha* expansion; the mind, the senses, the senses’ predominating deities and the sense objects – all these causes of the universal manifestation originate from Your transcendental body.

“The entire material nature, including the elements of creation, cannot know You truly - as You are - for they are manifestations of dull matter. Since you are beyond nature’s modes, even Lord Brahma, who is also within these modes, does not know You as You are. Perfect *yogis* worship You, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, by thinking of You in the threefold Form of material elements, living entities and the controlling demigods of the elements.

“*Brahmanas* who strictly follow the regulations of sacred worship You by *mantra* chanting from the *Vedas*, and they perform sacrifices to the different demigods of various names and forms. In pursuit of true spiritual knowledge, some people renounce all material activity and thus become peaceful and perform the sacrifice of philosophic investigation to worship You, the primal Form of all knowledge. Still others – whose intelligence is uncontaminated – follow the directives of *Vaishnava* scriptures given by You. Merging their minds in Your thought, they adore You as the One Supreme, manifest in myriad Forms. Still others worship You, the Supreme, in the Form of Lord Shiva and follow the teaching described by him.

“But all of these, dear Lord, even those who are worshiping demigods, are in truth worshiping You only, O Lord of all demigods. As rivers originate in the mountains and flow into the sea, so do all these teachings, in the end, reach You, O Supreme Master, but the qualities of Your material nature - goodness, passion and ignorance - entangle all conditioned souls, from Lord Brahma down to the smallest moving creature.

“I offer My humble obeisances to You, Who as Supersoul, witness everyone’s consciousness with unbiased vision. In ignorance, the current of Your material modes, flows strongly amongst living beings, assuming identities as demigods, humans and animals. Fire is supposed to be Your face, the sun Your eye, the Earth your feet, and the sky Your navel. The directions are said to be Your sense of hearing, the oceans Your abdomen, the chief demigods Your arms. Heaven is imagined to be Your head, and the wind to be Your physical strength and vital air. The trees and plants are thought of as the hair on Your body, the clouds the hair on Your head, and the mountains Your bones, O Supreme Being. The blinking of Your eyes is said to be the passing of day and night, Your genitals to be the progenitors of mankind, and rain Your semen.

“All worlds and their presiding deities, as well as their teeming populations, come from You, the inexhaustible Supreme Personality of Godhead. These worlds all exist within You, the ground of the mind and senses. To enjoy Your Pastimes You present

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Yourself in various Forms in this world, and these Incarnations cleanse all unhappiness from those who blissfully chant Your glories.

“I offer humble obeisances to You, the Cause of creation: to Lord Matsya, Who swam in the ocean of dissolution; to Lord Hayagriva, slayer of Madhu and Kaitabha; to Lord Kurma, the immense Tortoise Who supported Mandara Mountain on His back; and to Lord Varaha, the Boar Incarnation Who enjoyed lifting the earth.; obeisances to You, Lord Nrsimhadeva, the wondrous Lion, Who removes all Your devotees’ fears; and to Lord Vamana, the Dwarf, Who covered the three worlds with His footstep; obeisances to You, Lord Parasurama, Lord of the Bhrigus, Who cut down the forest of the prideful and conceited royal order; and to Lord Rama, the foremost of the Raghu dynasty, Who killed the great demon Ravana; obeisances to You, Lord Krishna, Lord of the *Satvatas*, and to Your Forms of Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradhymna and Aniruddha; obeisances to Your Form as the compassionate Buddha, Who bewilders the *Daityas* and *Danavas*, and to Lord Kalki, destroyer of the miscreant meat-eaters posing as kings.

“O Supreme Lord, the conditioned living entities are bewildered by Your illusory energy. Being covered by the false concepts of ‘I’ and ‘mine’, they are forcefully engaged in the ways of fruitive work. I, too, am illusioned in this way, O Almighty Lord, foolishly imagining my body, wife, children, home, money and followers to be real, though they are, in fact, just like a dream. Thus mistaking the temporal for the eternal, the body for the Self, and what are sources of misery, in fact, for sources of pleasure, I have tried to find happiness in the material world. Thus covered by ignorance, I could not recognize You, the real object of my love. Just as a fool fails to see a body of water full of vegetation growing on it, and runs after water in a mirage, so I have left You, the true and ultimate Reality. My intelligence is crippled and disturbed by material desires and activities. I am constantly dragged this way and that by my uncontrolled senses. In this fallen condition, I am approaching Your Lotus Feet for shelter, Dear Lord, because although the impure never attain Your Lotus Feet, I think it may be possible due to Your causeless mercy. Only when one’s material life ceases, O lotus-naved Lord, can one attain consciousness of You by the sure method of serving Your pure devotees.

“Obeisances to the Supreme Truth, the Source of unlimited energies. You are the embodiment of pure, transcendental knowledge, the Source of all kinds of awareness, and the Predominator of the modes of nature that rule all living beings. O Son of Vasudeva, obeisances to You, within Whom all living beings reside. O Supreme Lord of the mind and senses, I offer You my obeisances again and again to You. O Master, I am fully surrendered to You. Please protect me.”

Commentary on Chapter Forty

Again we face the issue of the relative value of demigod worship and the worship of the Supreme Lord, the controller of all. Here it is clearly stated that the demigods are under Krsna’s control. They cannot offer any benediction without His sanction. As stated in the *Bhagavad Gita*, chapter seven:

Wanting material boons, men surrender
To demigods, and to them homage render.
Their worldly piety is quickly repaid,
But, in truth, I bestow all that's gained in this trade.

The demigods can award benedictions only after empowerment by the Supreme. This limitation is the verdict of all bona fide scripture. Therefore, those who try to influence the demigods without reference to the Supreme are comparable to citizens who try to bribe government officials. In time, they will surely be caught and punished. There is one Whole, and the whole is One. Everything must be done in Whole-istic consciousness, for the benefit of the Whole.

Praising Lord Krsna for His innumerable Forms and Incarnations, Akrura thanked Him for descending in so many different ways to aid living entities suffering in ignorance. The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* states that just as streams of water gush from springs incessantly, countless Incarnations of the Lord manifest continuously, in countless universes. The inexhaustible Source of all Avatars is Krsna. *Bhagavatam* 1:3:28 tell us, "All these Incarnations of Godhead are either plenary portions or parts of plenary portions of the Lord. But Krsna is the original Personality of Godhead Himself. Through His different features He comes to protect the world, whenever the atheists create disturbances."

Akrura fell down at Lord Krsna's Lotus Feet and prayed for His eternal protection and direction. This, too, must be our mood. Akrura is demonstrating how the infinitesimal part of the Whole surrenders to the Whole. By this surrender, individuality is not lost, but found truly in Krsna. Nothing is more important than our using whatever facility we have or whatever situation we may be in for His service. Therefore we pray, "Thank You, Krsna, for NOW, as it is. How can I use it in the best way for Your service, Lord?" Such gratitude and willingness makes one's life perfect.

Chapter Forty-One: Krishna & Balarama Enter Mathura

While Akrura was offering his prayers, Lord Krishna withdrew His Divine Form which He had shown in the water, even as an actor concludes a performance. When Akrura realized that the vision was no longer there, he quickly left the water and hurriedly finished his other duties and then returned to the chariot in a state of astonishment.

Krishna asked Akrura: "Have you seen something splendid or unusual on the earth, in the water or in the sky? From the look of your face, We think you must have."

Akrura answered: "Whatever splendid things the earth, sky or water contain, exist only in You. Since You pervade everything, when I see You, what am I not seeing? O Supreme Absolute Truth, now that I am seeing You — in Whom repose all wonderful things, whether on earth, on the water or in the sky — what wonderful things remain

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to be seen anywhere else?"

Saying this, Akrura, Gandini's son, started driving the chariot towards Mathura, where by day's end he arrived along with Balarama and Krishna. All along the way, as they passed on the road the villagers came out to gaze upon Vasudeva's Two Sons with great pleasure. In fact, they could not stop gazing at Them. Maharaja Nanda and Vrindavana's other residents, having reached Mathura before Akrura's chariot, were waiting at a garden on the city's edge for the chariot bringing Krishna and Balarama to arrive.

After joining Maharaja Nanda and the others, Krishna, the Supreme Controller of the cosmos, grasped humble Akrura's hand in His own. Smiling, He said, "Take this chariot and go home. After resting here for a little while, We will then go and see the city."

"O Master," Akrura implored, "without You Two I shall never go. O Lord, I am Your devotee! It is not right for You to leave me, for You are always very affectionate to Your devotees. Come with me to my house alongwith Your Elder Brother and Your companions. O transcendental Lord, O best of friends, in this way please bless my house. You are its Master. I am only an ordinary householder attached to ritualistic sacrifices. Please purify and sanctify my home with Your Lotus Footdust. By that act, my forefathers, the demigods and the sacrificial r̥s will all be satisfied. By bathing Your Lotus Feet, Bali Maharaja attained not only fame and power, but also the ultimate destination of pure devotees.

"After becoming transcendental by bathing Your Lotus Feet, the Ganges' water has been purifying the three worlds. Lord Shiva accepts that water on his head; and by its touch, King Sagara's sons attained heaven. O Master of the universe, O Lord of lords, O You Whose glories it is most auspicious and sanctifying to chant and hear! O Foremost of *Yadus*! O You Whose Fame is narrated in excellent poetry! O Supreme Lord Narayana, I offer my humble obeisances to You."

"I will come to Your home with My Elder Brother," the Lord promised, "but first I must please My friends and well-wishers by slaying that enemy of the *Yadu* clan, King Kamsa."

Thus spoken to by Krishna, Akrura entered the city with a sorrowful heart. He informed Kamsa of His mission's success and went home. Lord Krishna had a desire to see Mathura, so around evening He, together with Balarama and the cowherd boys, went into the city. There the Lord saw its tall gates made of crystal, its huge archways and doors of gold, its granaries and other depots built of copper and brass, and its impassable moats. Adorning the city here and there were beautiful gardens and parks. The main intersections were decorated with gold, and there were many mansions with secluded pleasure gardens, and also guildhalls and other buildings.

Mathura resounded with peacocks and turtledoves calling from their sitting places in the small openings of lattice windows or standing on gem-studded doors, on columned balconies or on the ornate rafters of the houses. These rafters and balconies were beset with vaidurya stones, crystal quartz, diamonds, sapphires, coral, emeralds and pearls. All the wide avenues and commercial streets were sprinkled with water, as were even the side lanes and courtyards. Newgrown sprouts, flower garlands, rice and parched grains were scattered everywhere. Gracing the doorways of the houses were elaborately painted pots

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lled with water, which were then bedecked with mango leaves, smeared with sandal paste and yogurt and encircled by ribbons and flower petals. Next to the pots were garlands, bunches of flowers, rows of lamps and the trunks of betel nut and banana trees.

The ladies of Mathura hurriedly gather and went out to see Vasudeva's Two Sons as They entered the city to stroll down the King's road, encircled by Their cowherd friends. Some of the ladies climbed to their houses' roofs to gaze at Them. In their hurry some ladies put their ornaments and clothes on backwards, others forgot one of their ankle bells or earrings, and others put makeup on one eye, but not on the other. Those who were eating dinner abandoned their meals, while others went out without completing their baths. Women who were lying down resting got up at once when they heard the commotion, and mothers breast-feeding their babies simply pushed them aside.

The lotus-eyed Lord stole the hearts of all who saw Him, by His smiling glances. He walked like a royal elephant in rut, creating a wonderful festival for their eyes with His transcendental Form, the pleasure of the Goddess of Fortune. Mathura's ladies had repeatedly heard of Krishna, but as soon as they actually saw Him, their hearts melted. Each one felt blessed that He was bestowing upon her the nectar of His broad smile and enchanting glance. Through their eyes they took Him into their hearts where they embraced Him, Who is the personification of all ecstasy. Their bodily hairs stood up, and they forgot the extreme distress of His absence. Their lotus faces were blossoming with affection, and the women who had gone to the roofs of their houses lovingly showered flowers upon Lord Balarama and Krishna. *Brahmanas* along the way honored the Two Lords with offerings unbroken barleycorns, yogurt, pots full of water, fragrant substances such as sandal paste, garlands and other items of worship. The ladies of Mathura exclaimed: "Oh, what great austerities the *gopis* must have undergone to be able to see Krishna and Balarama constantly. They are the Source of the greatest pleasure and satisfaction for everyone!"

Seeing a washerman coming towards Him, Krishna asked the washerman for the best garments he had. Lord Krishna said: "Please give your best garments to the Two of Us, Who surely deserve them. If you give us this charity, you will certainly derive the highest benefit."

Thus asked by the Supreme Lord, Who is complete in every respect, that arrogant servant of Kamsa became very angry and said insultingly: "You impudent Tramps! You're used to roaming the hills and forests, but now You dare to desire garments like these! These are the King's clothes You are asking for, Fools! Run away from here quickly! Don't even talk like that again if You value Your life. When someone is this bold, the King's guards arrest him and kill him and then confiscate all his property."

When the washerman had spoken thus, Devaki's Son became very angry, and with a mere swipe of His fingertips, Krishna separated his head from his body. The washerman's helpers quickly dropped the King's clothes and ran away. Lord Krishna and Balarama put on the garments that pleased Them, and then Krishna gave the remaining clothes to the cowherd boys to use as they liked.

Soon thereafter a weaver came and, feeling affection toward the Two Lords, nicely decorated Their attire with ornaments of different colors. Krishna and Balarama appeared

most resplendent, each in a unique and wonderfully adorned outfit. They reminded one of a pair of young elephants, One Black and the Other White, dressed up for a festival. Pleased by the weaver, Krishna blessed him with the liberation of attaining a Form like the Lord's after his death, and that while living in this world, he would have great opulence, good health, sensory vigor, inebriation and perfect memory.

The Two Lords next went to the house of a garland-maker named Sudama. Upon seeing Them, Sudama at once stood up and bowed low, putting his head on the earth. After offering Them comfortable seats and bathing Their Lotus Feet, Sudama worshiped Them and Their companions with garlands, pan, sandal paste and other gifts. Sudama said: "O Lord, my birth is now successful and my family is freed from contamination. Now that You Two have come here, the demigods, the great sages and my forefathers are surely all satisfied with me. You Two Lords are the Primal Cause of this whole universe. To bestow prosperity and sustenance upon this earth, You and Your plenary expansions have descended here. Because You are the Supreme Souls and well wishing Friends of the entire universe, You regard all with equal vision. Even though You reciprocate Your devotees' loving worship in kind, You are actually always equal to all. Please order me, Your humble servant, to do according to Your wish. To be engaged by You in any service is most certainly a great blessing for everyone, but especially on me."

Sukadeva Goswami continued: O Pariksit, best of kings, having thus spoken, Sudama understood what Krishna and Balarama wanted. Thus with great delight he gave Them exquisite garlands of fragrant, fresh flowers. Attractively decorated with these, Balarama and Krishna were delighted, as were Their companions. The Two Lords then requested surrendered Sudama, who was lying prostrate before Them, to ask for whatever benediction he wanted. Sudama eagerly chose to devote himself to the Supreme Soul, Krishna, as well as friendship with His devotees, and also transcendental compassion for all living entities. Not only did Krishna grant Sudama these boons, but He assured him good health, long life, fame, beauty and great prosperity for his family. Then Krishna and Balarama took Their leave.

Commentary on Chapter Forty-one

The most amazing scene in this Pastime is the residents of Mathura displaying their spontaneous attraction for Krsna.. As soon as word spread that Krsna had arrived in the city, all the inhabitants eagerly gathered. Especially the ladies of Mathura were anxious to see Krsna, for they had already heard much about Him. Krsna is all-attractive, and anyone whose eyes are not blinded by envy will appreciate His unparalleled beauty.

The washerman, however, because he was a servant of Kamsa, did not appreciate Krsna or even His beauty. Indeed, he insulted Him. This envious mentality is the disastrous effect of bad association, namely, that of King Kamsa. Because of the washerman's sin of insulting Krsna and refusing His request, Krsna mercifully killed him, but thereby liberated him. On the other hand, the devotee-tailor and Sudama, the garland maker, immediately recognized Krsna's beauty and surrendered to Him. They were ready, indeed anxious to give Krsna whatever He wanted. Owing to their great devotion, Krsna liberally bestowed his benedictions upon them.

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Sudama was a great, pure devotee, and therefore he did not want a boon for himself. Nevertheless, he was willing to accept a benediction that would benefit others by giving them the boon of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Real Vaishnavas are the greatest philanthropists. Their munificence is unrivalled.

Sudama's example teaches us that if we wish to do the greatest good to the world, we should give everyone God consciousness. The *Bhagavatam* (10.31.9) states: "My Lord, the nectar of Your words and the descriptions of Your activities are the life and soul of those who are always aggrieved in this material world. These narrations are transmitted by exalted personalities, and they eradicate all sinful reactions. Whoever hears these narrations attains all good fortune. These narrations are broadcast all over the world and are filled with spiritual power. Those who spread the message of Godhead are certainly the most munificent welfare workers."

It is interesting to note that the Lord had a desire to see Mathura City. Because we tiny parts are qualitatively one with Him, we also have the propensity for sightseeing. Whatever traits we possess had to originate in Krishna, the original Source of everything. But He possesses all our traits perfectly and unlimitedly. A drop of ocean water is but a tiny sample of the whole ocean itself and it shares the ocean's saltiness and other qualities minutely. Similarly, we are all one and different from the Supreme: one in quality, but different in quantity. Perhaps this qualitative oneness is what the *Bible* means when it says that God created man in His own image.

God is Supreme, the Master, and all others are His servants. Therefore, there is no scope for the living entity to derive enjoyment by seeing objects for the sake of his own sense gratification. This misuse of our God-given nature is called *maya*, and results in misery only. Our innate tendency of wanting to pour vision on pleasing sights attains its proper fulfillment when we dovetail it with Kṛṣṇa's pleasure. For example, when we gaze upon the Deity Form of the Lord in the temple, we should not look in order to enjoy the spiritual sight ourselves, but simply to glorify Him for His inconceivable beauty, hoping that our appreciation will give Him pleasure. Then we ask: "How can I serve You, my Lord?"

We should also note that Kṛṣṇa and Balaram's desire to stroll through Mathura and take in the city's sights does not detract from Their Self-sufficiency. Everything in the city is Kṛṣṇa's energy, and all the residents are His energy also. Nothing exists that is not the energy of the Lord. Therefore, by touring Mathura and receiving the adoration of its residents, Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Energetic Source, is simply enjoying Himself. Everything is Kṛṣṇa; and then again, everything is different from Him. As He says in the *Gita* (Ch.9:5)

By Me alone, this universe is pervaded;
All beings in Me dwell, but I'm not degraded.
Behold My mystic power: all things rest in Me,
Yet as the source of all, I am separate and free.

Kṛṣṇa's energy is simultaneously one with Him and different from Him. God is inconceivable. One must surrender to this incontrovertible fact.

Chapter Forty-Two: The Breaking of the Bow

As He walked along the King's highway, Lord Madhava [Krishna] saw a young hunchback lady with a pretty face, carrying a tray of aromatic ointments. The bestower of love's ecstasy smiled and inquired: "Who are you, My lovely-limbed lady? Ah, you have ointment! Who is it for, dear maiden? Tell Us truthfully! Give Us some of your best ointment and you will quickly gain a rare boon."

The maiden replied: "O Handsome One, I am King Kamsa's servant. He highly values me for the excellent ointments I make. Trivakra is my name. Who more You Two deserve my ointments?" Her mind captivated by Krishna's beauty, charming smiles, sweet words and loving glances, Trivakra immediately smeared Krishna and Balarama with large amounts of her ointment. Anointed with these very excellent cosmetics, which decorated Them with hues contrasting Their natural complexions, the Two Lords appeared most beautiful. Lord Krishna being very pleased with Trivakra, wanted to straighten her hunched back just to demonstrate what seeing and serving Him can bring. Pressing her toes with both His Lotus Feet, Krishna placed one finger of each hand under her chin and lifted her up, thus straightening her body.

Simply due to Lord Krishna's touch, Trivakra was instantly transformed into a most beautiful woman with straight, nicely proportioned limbs, and large breasts and hips. Now endowed with great beauty and a very generous character, Trivakra started to feel very lusty for Lord Krishna. Taking hold of His upper cloth, she smiled and said to Him: "Come, O great Hero, to my house. I want to be with You alone. O Best of Males, please have pity on me, for You have excited me greatly."

Thus entreated by the lady, Lord Krishna first looked at Lord Balarama, Who was watching, and then at the cowherd boys. Jokingly, Krishna replied, "O lady of impeccable eyebrows, as soon as I finish My business I will visit your house, where one can relieve his anxiety. Indeed, you will be a refuge for Us lonely travelers."

Leaving her with these most pleasing parting words, Lord Krishna walked on down the road. The merchants all along the way worshiped His Elder Brother and Him by presenting Them with different respectful offerings, including garlands, fragrant substances and pan. The mere sight of Krishna aroused romantic feelings in the hearts of all the city's women. Thus agitated, they completely forgot themselves, and their braids, clothes and bangles became quite disarrayed, standing fixed as figures in a painting.

Lord Krishna then asked the locals where the arena was where the bow sacrifice would be held. When the Lord went there He saw a wonderful bow, resembling Lord Indra's. That most amazing weapon was guarded by many soldiers, who were worshiping it very respectfully. Krishna pushed His way past them and, despite their attempts to stop Him, picked up the bow. He deftly lifted it with His one hand and strung it in a second. The King's guards stared in amazement. Krishna mightily pulled on the bowstring, snapping the bow in half, as easily as an elephant breaks stalks of sugar cane.

The sound of the bow's breaking reverberated in all directions. Upon hearing that

sound, Kamsa was overwhelmed with terror. Meanwhile, the angry guards took up their weapons to seize Krishna and His friends, surrounding them and shouting, “Grab Him! Kill Him!” Understand the guards to be coming at Them with evil intent, Krishna and Balarama each brandished one of the bow’s two halves, striking all the soldiers dead.

After killing Kamsa’s contingent of soldiers, Krishna and Balarama departed from the sacrificial arena and continued Their stroll about the city, happily observing the various sights. Having witnessed the wonderful deeds of Krishna and Balarama, and noting Their boldness, strength and beauty, the people of Mathura thought: “These must be two important demigods.” As They wandered about at will, the sun started to set, so They and Their cowherd companions left the city and returned to the cowherd encampment.

At the time of Mukunda’s [Krishna’s] departure from Vrindavana, the *gopis* had foreseen that Mathura’s residents would enjoy many divine blessings, and now the *gopis’* foretelling came true, for those residents now gazed upon the beauty and opulence of Krishna, the supreme Jewel amongst men. Indeed, the Goddess of Fortune sought the shelter of His beauty so easily that She neglected other men, although they worshiped her diligently. After returning to Their camp, Krishna and Balarama’s Lotus Feet were bathed and the Two Lords were fed rice with milk. Despite Their knowing all about what Kamsa had planned for Them, They passed the night very comfortably and peacefully.

Wicked Kamsa, on the other hand, was terrified, having heard how Krishna and Balarama had snapped the bow and killed all his soldiers and guards. Kamsa remained sleepless, and whether awake or dreaming, saw many inauspicious omens of death. When he saw his reflection he saw no head; the moon and stars inexplicably appeared double; he saw holes in his shadow; nor could he hear the sound of his breath; trees appeared to be covered with gold; and his feet left no visible footprints. He dreamt of being embraced by ghosts, of riding a donkey and of drinking poison. He also saw a naked man covered with oil passing by wearing a garland of *nalada* funeral flowers. Witnessing such evil omens both awake and asleep, the shadow of death loomed large, petrifying wicked Kamsa and depriving him of sleep.

When night had fully passed and dawn appeared in the east, Kamsa frantically set about arranging for the festival’s wrestling match. His priests performed ritualistic worship of the wrestling arena; other agents played their drums and other instruments, and still others bedecked the viewing stands with eggs, garlands, ribbons and arches. Both townsmen and suburbanites, especially the *brahmanas* and *kshatriyas*, came and took their seats in the galleries. Royal guests had special boxes. Kamsa, surrounded by his ministers, took his seat on the emperor’s dais. But although he sat surrounded by his many provincial rulers, his heart still quaked.

While the musicians loudly played their instruments in cadences appropriate for such occasions, the lavishly decorated wrestlers proudly entered the wrestling arena and sat down. Enthused by the exciting music, Chanura and Mustika, Shala, Kuta and Toshala seated themselves in one corner of the ring. Maharaja Nanda and the cowherds, called for by King Kamsa, presented their gifts and then seated themselves in the galleries.

Krishna's Pastime with Kubja, the hunchback prostitute, teaches us that by serving and pleasing Krsna even a deformed hag can turn into a most beautiful woman. Kubja's transformation significantly demonstrates to us that a Krsna conscious person does not have to be very qualified or beautiful to approach Krsna. Simply by serving Krsna in loving Krsna conscious surrender, a devotee becomes most qualified and beautiful.

At New Vrindaban, we have had very good experience of Krsna's power being manifest through devotional service. When we undertook the construction of Prabhupada's Palace in 1973, none of the volunteers were experienced construction workers. But because they were sincere in their desire to serve the Lord in this way, Krsna gave them the necessary inspiration and instruction, from within and without, and they became very skilled craftsmen.

The devotees who built the Palace knew that it was Krsna Who was empowering them and that He deserves all the credit, not we ourselves. Kubja also felt such gratitude. Actually, her appreciation was so great that, forgetting where she was, she wanted to thank Krsna in the way she knew best, which wasn't very appropriate for the street or before His elder brother. She frankly admitted to Krsna that she had lusty desires for Him. Her proposal teaches us that any art - even the prostitute's art - becomes perfect when centered on Krsna!

Krsna, however, had more important business to tend to that day. Here we see an example of Krsna's opulence of renunciation. Krsna never forgot that He had come to Mathura to kill Kamsa. Nor did Kamsa ever forget that Krsna had come to kill him! Kamsa saw the signs of his death everywhere. But whereas Krsna and those in Krsna consciousness are blissful, peaceful and content, Kamsa was always in great anxiety and fear.

When the time was right, Krsna did return to meet Kubja, not for sense gratification, but to turn her into a pure devotee. Similarly, when the time is right, He will turn us into pure devotees too. Krsna is perfect and He does everything perfectly. He has created us all to manifest His perfection in perfect Krsna Consciousness. Have patience, my friend. Of course, the more we hanker for perfect Krsna Consciousness, the sooner it will manifest. But hanker patiently, not impatiently. Patience is the symptom of surrender! He knows the best time. Show your love for Him by faith in Him, demonstrated by patience to see the desired result. Always remain content to say: "Thank You, Krishna, for NOW as it is. How do I use it best for Your service and pleasure, My Lord?"

Chapter Forty-Three: Krishna Kills the Elephant Kualayapida

Upon completing all the prescribed purification rituals, Krishna and Balarama heard the kettledrums sounding in the wrestling arena, and at once went there to see what was going on. When Krishna got to the entrance of the arena, He saw that Kualayapida, a mad elephant, was blocking His way at the direction of his keeper. Tightening His belt

and tying up His hair, Krishna spoke to the elephant-keeper words as grave as rumbling clouds: “O elephant trainer, move aside and let Us pass! If you don’t, this very day I will send you and your elephant to Yamaraja’s abode!”

Thus threatened, the elephant-trainer became very angry. He goaded the mad elephant, who appeared to be Death Personified, into attacking the Lord. That king of elephants charged Krishna and caught Him with his trunk. But Krishna got away, and in doing so, struck him very powerfully and disappeared between his legs. Frustrated in being unable to see Krishna, the elephant used his sense of smell to find Him. Again Kuvalayapida grasped the Lord with his trunk, only to have the Lord free Himself again by His superior force.

Krishna then grabbed the mighty elephant by his tail and sportingly tossed him twenty-five yards away, as easily as Garuda tosses snakes.

Then as Lord Achyuta held tightly to the elephant’s tail, the animal tried to free himself by twisting to the left and right, swinging Krishna back and forth. It reminded Krishna of when He was a small boy being thrown back and forth while holding a calf by its tail. When Krishna came face to face with Kuvalayapida, He slapped him forcefully and ran away. Kuvalayapida tried to pursue Him, but Krishna outmaneuvered the pachyderm and caused him to trip and fall.

As Krishna dodged this way and that, He also playfully rolled on the ground, but quickly got up again. The furious elephant, thinking Krishna was still down, tried to gore Him with his ivory tusks but instead struck only the earth. His attempt foiled, the frustrated Kuvalayapida went into a mad rage. Still, the elephant-keeper goaded him on, and so Kuvalayapida furiously charged Krishna again. The Supreme Lord, Slayer of the Madhu demon, confronted the attacking elephant and grabbed his trunk with one hand, throwing the powerful pachyderm to the ground.

Lord Hari jumped lightly onto the elephant’s back, and with the ease of an agile lion, yanked out a tusk and used it to kill the beast and his handlers. Leaving the lifeless elephant aside, the Lord carried the tusk as a trophy into the wrestling arena. With a tusk on His shoulder and drops of elephant blood and sweat all over Him, especially His beautiful lotus face, the Lord glistened with heroic beauty.

Lord Janardana and Lord Baladeva, each carrying an elephant tusk for defense, entered the wrestling arena together with the cowherd boys.

The various classes of spectators in the gallery regarded Krishna in various ways when He appeared there with His Elder Brother. The competing wrestlers saw Him as a lightning bolt, Mathura’s men saw Him as the Best of Males, Mathura’s women as Cupid Personified, His cowherd elders as their dearest Relative, the evil rulers as a Chastiser, His parents as their beloved Child, the King of *Bhojas* as Death Personified, the less intelligent as the Lord’s Universal Form, *yogis* as the Absolute Truth and the *Vrishnis* as their Supreme worshipable Deity.

When Kamsa was informed of the elephant Kuvalayapida’s death and the seeming invincibility of the Two Brothers, he was beside himself with anxiety. Decorated with variegated garlands, ornaments and garments, that made Them look like a pair of gorgeously costumed actors, Krishna and Balarama shone splendidly in Kamsa’s arena. Indeed, They

bewildered the minds of the onlookers with Their brilliant effulgence. As the citizens of Mathura and the spectators from outlying districts gazed at Them, their happiness caused their eyes to expand and their faces to become bright. They drank in the transcendental vision of the Two Lords' lotus faces, never becoming satiated. The people appeared to be drinking Krishna and Balarama with their eyes, smelling Them with their nostrils, licking Them with their tongues and embracing Them with their arms. Remembering the Lords' beauty, charm, character and bravery, the audience began describing Their features to each other according to all they had heard and seen.

The people said: "These Two Lads are surely expansions of Lord Narayana, Who have descended here into the family of Vasudeva. This One [Krishna] was born from Mother Devaki and was taken to Gokula, where He remained hidden all this time in King Nanda's house. He killed Putana and the whirlwind demon, pulled down the two Arjuna trees and killed Kesi, Sankhacuda, Dhenuka and many other demons. He saved the cowherds and the cows from a forest fire and subdued the Kāliya serpent. He destroyed Lord Indra's false pride by lifting the best of mountains, Govardhana, with one hand for a whole week, sheltering Gokula's inhabitants from wind, rain and hail.

"The *gopis* surmounted all kinds of distress and knew complete happiness simply by seeing Krishna's face, which is ever cheerful and smiling and free of fatigue. It is said that under His infallible protection the *Yadus* will become very famous and attain great wealth, power and glory. His lotus-eyed Elder Brother, Lord Balarama, is the Possessor of all Transcendental Opulences. He is the One Who killed Pralamba, Baka, Vatsa and many other demons."

While the people talked thusly and the music resounded, wrestler Chanura said to Krishna and Balarama: "O Krishna, O Rama, You Two are well-known and honored by courageous men and You are also skilled at wrestling. Having heard of Your skill, the King has invited You here to see for himself. Subjects who try to please the King by their thoughts, words and deeds are sure to have good fortune, but those who do not do so are sure to suffer appropriately. It is commonly known that cowherd boys play sportingly as they tend their calves, and that they playfully wrestle among themselves while grazing their calves in the forests. Therefore please do what the King wants. Everyone will be benefited, for the king is the embodiment of all the demigods."

Hearing this, Lord Krishna, Who loves to wrestle, welcomed the challenge and replied with words suitable to the moment: "Although We are forest dwellers, We are also subjects of the Bhoja King and will try to gratify his desires. Such action will bring Us the greatest benefit. But We are just young boys and should compete with those of equal age and strength. The wrestling match must be done properly, lest irreligion taint the pious audience."

Chanura said: "You are not in truth a Child or even a Man, and neither is Your Brother Balarama, the Strongest of the strong. Indeed, You blithely killed an elephant, which had the strength of many many elephants, like it was mere play. Therefore You Two should fight us powerful wrestlers. That is certainly fair and righteous. You, O descendent of *Vrishni* [Krishna], can display Your prowess against me, and Balarama will compete with Mustika."

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Commentary on Chapter Forty-three

Whatever Krsna does, He enjoys! He is the Supreme Enjoyer, Who enjoys everyone and everything, even when facing two huge wrestlers in a wicked arena. The scripture describes that without being impolite, Krsna smilingly glanced over the wrestlers with His lotus eyes. Although the wrestlers could have seen in His gaze the determination of an elephant about to uproot some insignificant vegetation, nevertheless, when Krsna began to speak with them, He was smiling and full of love.

Krsna is the reservoir of all relationships, favorable and unfavorable, auspicious and inauspicious. When we are Krsna conscious and surrender to Him and His Will, everything manifests as auspiciousness. When we forget His supremacy and rebel against His desire, everything becomes inauspicious. The Lord is supplying everyone's desire since time immemorial, but to experience a good result we have to desire rightly. Krsna says,

I am in everyone's heart for helpfulness,
Granting knowledge, remembrance, and forgetfulness.

(Gita Ch.15)

The Lord appears to us in the best way possible for our benefit. Therefore, when Krsna entered the wrestling arena, each person saw what he most needed. To the wrestlers, He appeared like a thunderbolt; to people in general, He was the most beautiful personality; to the ladies, He was Cupid personified. The cowherdmen saw Krsna as their dear most kinsman. To Kamsa, He was death personified. The kshatriya princes saw Him as the perfect ruler. To His parents Nanda and Yasoda, Krsna was the most adorable child. The citizens of Mathura saw Him as the Reservoir of pleasure. They looked on His face with insatiable eyes, as if they were drinking the nectar of heaven.

Kamsa's wrestling arena was an unlimited treasure store of variegated relationships with Krsna. Based on the particular vision awarded them by Krsna, the persons assembled in the arena responded accordingly. Rupa Goswami has passed down to us an exquisite description of the various reactions accompanying each distinctive view of Krsna: ". . . Kamsa's priest looked at Krsna with a detestful expression. The entire arena was filled with dread on the part of Kamsa and his priest, but restless expressions of pleasure on the faces of Krsna's friends. Frustration was felt by His envious rivals. The great sages meditated. Hot tears were in the eyes of Mother Devaki and other motherly ladies, and the hair stood on the bodies of valiant warriors. There was astonishment in the hearts of demigods such as Indra. Servants danced, and the restless eyes of the young maidens glanced about." (*Lalita-Madhava*, quoted by Srila Prabhupada in *Nectar of Devotion*.)

One way or another, everyone in Kamsa's wrestling arena was filled with Krsna Consciousness! The citizens of Mathura all began to recite the Pastimes of Krsna: His birth to Vasudev and Devaki, His transference to Maharaja Nanda's home in Gokula, and all the other events, including the killing many demons in Vraja, that preceded His coming to Mathura. Krsna is an ocean of unlimited pleasure, and is fully competent to make everyone Krsna Conscious - even the Kamsas! Whatever you want, you will find in Krsna! Putting Krsna in the center of your life will make your life perfect!

Chapter Forty-Four: Kamsa Killed

Thus challenged, Lord Krishna accepted the invitation to wrestle. He squared off with Chanura, as did Lord Balarama with Mustika. Grabbing each other's hands and locking legs, the competitors struggled mightily, each eager to defeat his opponent. Striking ~~st~~ against ~~st~~, ~~knee~~ against ~~knee~~, ~~chest~~ against ~~chest~~ and ~~head~~ against ~~head~~, each contender dragged his opponent around in circles, shoving, squeezing, throwing him down, running and dodging.

The women present felt extreme anxiety and compassion, considering the contest unfair – a match between the weak and the strong. They gathered in groups and lamented: “Alas, this is irreligious! And in front of the royal assembly!” Another exclaimed, “What contest can there be between these hulking professionals, whose limbs are like lightning bolts and whose bodies resemble mighty mountains, and two juveniles with soft and tender limbs?” Someone else said, “Religious principles have ~~ed~~ t his assembly. ~~One~~ s hould not stay in such a place, even for a moment.” Still another added, “Persons of wisdom do not enter irreligious gatherings. And if they do, if they remain silent and do not protest, they will surely incur sin.”

“Just observe the lotus face of Krishna,” one observed. “How He dodges His foe! His face with its beads of perspiration due to strenuous ~~ghting~~ l ooks like a l otus k issed with morning dew.” Someone else said, “And see Lord Balarama's face, His eyes coppery from ~~er~~ ce anger at ~~M~~istika, i ts beauty heightened by His l aughter and absorption i n the contest!” Yet another pondered, “How pious the land of Vraja must be to have the primeval Personality of Godhead, now disguised with human features, strolling about performing His various Pastimes! He, Whose Lotus Feet are adored by Lord Shiva and his consort, sports a marvelous wild ~~ow~~ er garland and plays His ~~ute~~ as He ~~gr~~ azes and protects the cows along with Balarama.”

Someone else mused, “What great austerities did the *gopis* perform? They are always drinking the nectar of Lord Krishna's Form with their eyes. He is the essence of loveliness, the only abode of fame, opulence and beauty, being Self-perfect, extremely rare, but ever fresh.” Another chimed, “Vraja's ladies are the most fortunate of all women, for their minds are fully merged in Krishna. They are always choked up with tears, but they constantly sing of Him, whether winnowing grain, milking cows, churning butter, gathering fuel, tending their babies or riding on swings. Whatever they do, they think of Him! Such exalted Krishna consciousness certainly attains all desirable things automatically.” A ~~ral~~ woman said, “Hearing Krishna's ~~ute~~ playing as He l eaves ~~V~~raja e arly i n the ~~orning~~ with His herd, or when He brings them back at sunset, everyone hastily leaves their houses just to see Him. What pious deeds give them the right to see Krishna walking on the road, mercifully glancing at them with His smiling face?”

As Mathura's ladies thus spoke amongst themselves, Lord Krishna, the foremost of mystics, decided to immediately kill His opponent. Because of their sincere affection for the Two Lords, Devaki and Vasudeva were overcome with grief at hearing the women's

dire concern for Krishna and Balarama, for they did not realize their Sons' real strength. The Supreme Lord's crushing blows fell on Chanura like lightning bolts, breaking his body and causing him great pain and fatigue. Infuriated, Chanura assaulted Lord Vasudeva with the speed of a hawk, striking His chest with his fists. The demon's strong blows were no more hurtful to the Lord than a flower garland striking an elephant. Immediately, Lord Krishna grasped Chanura's arm and swung him around a few times and then threw him to the ground very forcefully. Like a huge column collapsing, the famous wrestler fell down dead, his hair, clothes and ornaments scattered.

Meanwhile Lord Balarama and Mustika expertly displayed their wrestling skills. But when Mustika received a mighty blow from Lord Baladeva's fist, he trembled in great pain and, vomiting blood, fell as lifeless as a tree uprooted by a hurricane. The wrestler Kuta then confronted Lord Balarama, and that Foremost of Fighters nonchalantly killed him with His left hand. Then the wrestler Shala stepped forward, and Krishna struck him in the head with His Lotus Toes, tearing him in two. He dealt with wrestler Toshala similarly.

Upon seeing all their comrades killed, the other wrestlers ran for their lives. Balarama and Krishna then called for Their cowherd companions to join Them in celebration, and all together they danced and frolicked about. The great saints and elevated *brahmanas* all exclaimed, "Excellent! Well done!" Everyone was thrilled at Krishna and Balarama's wonderful exhibition, except Kamsa. When the Bhoja King saw that all his powerful wrestlers had either been slain or had fled, he ordered the musicians to stop, shouting, "Kick these Two Sons of Vasudeva out of my city! Consecrate all the property of the cowherds and arrest foolish Nanda! Kill that evil idiot, Vasudeva! And kill Ugrasena, my stupid father, and also his followers, who are always siding with the demigods, my eternal enemies!"

While Kamsa ranted and raved uncontrollably, Almighty Lord Krishna, became extremely angry, quickly jumping into Kamsa's high royal box. Perceiving Krishna's approach as that of Death Personified, Kamsa at once assumed a warrior's stance, brandishing his sword and shield. Feinting like a hawk darting in the sky, the King of the *Bhojas* tried to defend himself. But Lord Krishna's powers are fearsome and invincible, and He seized Kamsa as easily as Garuda seizes a snake. Knocking off his crown and grasping Kamsa's hair, the lotus-naved Lord hurled him down from the high dais onto the wrestling mat. Then the Almighty Lord, the upholder of the whole universe, jumped on top of the King, killing him.

Like a lion dragging a dead elephant, Krishna dragged Kamsa's corpse around the arena for all to see. Many people tumultuously cried, "Alas! Alas!" Kamsa had been obsessed with the thought that the Lord would kill him. Whether eating, sleeping, drinking, moving about, or simply resting, Kamsa always visualized Lord Vishnu with His disc in hand before him. For this, Kamsa received the rare boon of *swarupya* liberation, obtaining a form just like that of the Lord.

Seeking revenge for their brother's death, Kamsa's eight younger brothers attacked the Two Lords in a violent rage. As they ran swiftly toward Krishna and Balarama with weapons upraised, the Son of Rohini slew them with His tusk-club as deftly as a lion kills deer. Kettledrums beat loudly in the sky as Lords Brahma and Shiva and other demigods showered flowers with great pleasure upon Lord Krishna. While the demigods

chanted His praises, their wives danced.

Aggrieved by the death of their beloved husbands, all the wives of Kamsa and his brothers came forward weeping profusely and beating their breasts. Lying as heroes might in their final resting place, the dead husbands were embraced by their grieving widows, who were loudly lamenting and shedding torrents of tears. The ladies cried: "Alas, my master and dear one, knower of the principles of religion! O King and merciful shelter of the shelterless! Now that you are slain, we are also slain, along with our households. O mighty hero among men, without you, its lord, this city has no beauty, nor have we. All good fortune and festivity here have come to an end. O beloved one, you have been reduced to this state due to the crimes you committed against saintly souls. One who harms others never attains happiness. Lord Krishna is the Cause of the birth and death of all beings. He is their Maintainer also. One who dishonors Him can never prosper or be happy."

After comforting the royal mothers, Lord Krishna, Who sustains all, arranged for the proper burial rites to be performed for the slain. Then Balarama and Krishna went and released Their father and mother from Kamsa's prison house and offered them obeisances, touching their feet with Their heads. Now realizing Balarama and Krishna to be the Lords of the universe, Vasudeva and Devaki could only stand there with folded hands, for being filled with awe and reverence, they could not embrace their Sons.

Commentary on Chapter Forty-four

Fulfilling the wrestlers' desire, Lord Krishna accepted Chanura's challenge and Balaram accepted Mushtika's. Although the sport of wrestling was very popular in those days, apparently the audience was not very satisfied with this contest, for they rightfully thought that pitting huge professionals against young boys violated the principles of good sportsmanship and fair play. The wrestlers, of course, had no idea that they were about to receive the Lord's causeless mercy in the form of their death. By challenging Krsna and Balaram to fight, they were accepting a situation in which they would constantly be thinking of the Lord at their life's end. From the *gopis* we learn that thinking of Krsna - no matter what the cause or material circumstance - relieves one of all material contamination.

As previously mentioned, the physical superiority of Chanura and Mushtika did not even slightly disturb Krsna and Balaram. Moreover, when the actual fight began, the mighty blows the brutes inflicted on Them did not hurt the Two Brothers even slightly. On the other hand, simply by the centrifugal force of Krsna's whirling him around, Chanura lost his life force. Mushtika met a similar fate when Balaram hit him with His almighty fist. This fight proves the utter ineffectiveness and helplessness of matter against Spirit. While Mushtika's fierce blows had no effect on Balaram, Balaram's hits caused Mushtika to vomit blood and lose his life force. After these two demons were killed, other demon wrestlers appeared on the scene to avenge their friends. Just as a devotee, by the Lord's grace, eliminates all vices from his life, one after another, Krsna and Balaram dispatched the avenging wrestlers to Yamaraja's abode.

Because the audience was in perfect Krsna consciousness, they were ecstatic when Krsna and Balaram killed their evil opponents. Drums beat wildly and all the people clapped approvingly.

Only Kamsa, envy personified, was more. Instead of being pleased, he angrily ordered retribution on the cowherd boys, Krsna's father, his own father, and anyone else who opposed him.

By his behavior, we clearly see that Kamsa personifies the demonic mentality, which is described by Lord Krsna in the *Gita* (16.13-15): "The demonic person thinks: 'So much wealth do I have today, and I will gain more according to my schemes. So much is mine now, and it will increase in the future, more and more. He is my enemy, and I have killed him; and my other enemy will also be killed. I am the lord of everything, I am the enjoyer, I am perfect, powerful and happy. I am the richest man, surrounded by aristocratic relatives. There is none so powerful and happy as I am. I shall perform sacrifices, I shall give some charity, and thus I shall rejoice. In this way, such persons are deluded by ignorance.'"

Kamsa was the personification of evil, and Krsna had descended to eliminate all evil elements. Therefore Krsna could not rest until He had killed Kamsa. Interestingly, although Kamsa was evil personified, he was given *sarupya-mukti*, the liberation of attaining the same form that Lord Narayana has in the Vaikuntha planets. Despite Kamsa's enmity - or more precisely, because of the intensity of his enmity - he was always thinking of Krsna. If thinking of Krsna as an enemy gives one liberation, then what must be the glorious result awaiting one who always thinks of Him in love and devotion?

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is all good, and whoever at the time of death thinks of Him gets liberation. This is the promise of Krsna:

One who gives up his body thinking of Me
Without doubt attains My abode eternally.
On what the mind dwells at the moment of death,
One attains to that state when he takes his next breath. (*Gita* Ch.8)

Anyone who always thinks of Krsna - no matter in what manner - gets liberation. For this reason, the Lord says so often, "Always think of Me!" The liberation awarded to a demon, however, is not generally the same as that offered to a devotee. The demons are allowed to merge into His impersonal effulgence, but the devotees attain personal association with the Lord. The Lord says:

I am equal to all and envy no one,
But My devotee I treat as an only son. (*Gita* Ch.9)

This is what a devotee wants. His paradise is to hear the Lord say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" (*Matt.*, 25:21)

Chapter Forty-Five: Krishna Rescues His Teacher's Son

Seeing His parents beginning to realize His transcendental opulences and not wanting this, the Supreme Personality of Godhead expanded His *yogamaya*, His transcendental

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bewildering potency. The foremost of the *Satvatas*, Lord Krishna, then approached His parents along with Balarama, His Elder Brother, as their beloved Sons. Bowing His head very humbly, He satisfied them by respectfully saying: “My dear father, My dear mother., only because of Us Two Boys were you always in anxiety and fear, unable to enjoy Our infancy and youth. Due to misfortune, We were not able to stay with you and experience the joys most children enjoy in their parents’ association. From one’s parents one gets a human body and bodily sustenance, which enables him to achieve his goals in life. For this reason, no one can repay the debt he owes to his parents, even if he faithfully serves them for his whole life. A son who, though capable, does not provide his parents with physical necessities and wealth is forced after death to eat his own flesh. Anyone who, though capable, fails to maintain his aged parents, faithful wife, immature child or Spiritual Preceptor, or who ignores a deserving *brahmana*, or anyone else who takes shelter of him, is as good as dead though still breathing.

“We have, therefore, wasted all Our days, for We were not able to adequately honor you due to Our minds’ disturbance from fear of Kamsa. Dear mother and father, forgive Us! We were not free to do as We wanted, for Our desires were frustrated by cruel Kamsa.”

Devaki and Vasudeva were charmed by the sweet words of Lord Hari, who, although He is the Supreme Soul of the universe, now appeared as a mere mortal due to His own internal potency. Thus His parents joyously took Him on their laps and lovingly embraced Him. Being bound by the ropes of affection, His parents could not speak, their throats being choked up, and tears flowed from their eyes. They were completely overwhelmed with love. Thus having calmed and satisfied His father and mother, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Son of Vasudeva and Devaki, installed Ugrasena, His maternal grandfather, as King of the *Yadus*. The Lord said to him: “O valiant King, you are Our lord, so please order Us what to do. Despite Yayati’s curse that no *Yadu* should occupy the royal throne, due to My presence as your attendant, the demigods and all other great personalities will all come with bowed heads to offer you honor.”

The Lord then sent for all His family members and close relatives, who had fled to various places in fear of Kamsa. He welcomed all the clans - the *Yadus*, *Vrishnis*, *Madhus*, *Andhakas*, *Dasarhas*, *Kukuras* and others - with due respect, consoling them over their long exile. Lord Krishna, the Lord of the universe, situated them in houses and gave them valuable gifts. Protected by the strong arms of Lord Krishna and Lord Balarama, all those various clan-members felt as if all their desires were satisfied. They no longer suffered from the burning fever of material existence, for everyday they received the merciful glances and feasted on the ever-joyous lotus face of Mukunda, the Giver of Liberation. From constantly drinking the elixir of Lord Mukunda’s lotus face with their eyes, even the elderly and inerm appeared youthful and vibrant.

Then Devaki’s Son, Krishna, together with Balarama, went to see Maharaja Nanda. Embracing him warmly, the Two Lords said: “Dear father, you and Mother Yasoda maintained Us and took care of Us so affectionately - better than you took care of your own selves! He is the real father and she the real mother who cares for abandoned children as if they were their own sons, when their natural parents are unable to maintain and

protect them. Now, My dear father, you should all return to Vraja. We will come and visit Our dear friends and relations who suffer from Our separation as soon as We give some satisfaction to Our relatives here.”

Thus comforting Maharaja Nanda and Vraja’s cowherdsmen, the infallible Supreme Lord very respectfully and sincerely honored them with gifts of cloth, jewels and household items. Upon hearing Krishna’s sweet words, Maharaja Nanda became overcome with loving emotions and his eyes filled with tears as he enfolded the Two Lords in his arms. Then he returned to Vraja with all the cowherdsmen.

Vasudeva then arranged for Krishna and Balarama’s second-birth initiation. After Their second-birth initiation, the Two Lords took a vow of celibacy from the Spiritual Master of the *Yadu* dynasty, Garga *Muni*. Despite Their perfect knowledge, these two omniscient Lords of the universe disguised Themselves under a cloak of humanity and desired to live at the school of a Spiritual Master. Thus They went to Sandipani *Muni*’s *gurukula* in Avanti.

Sandipani was delighted by These Two well-behaved disciples, who had come to him so fortuitously. By Their personal example of devoted service, as if the Guru were the Supreme Lord Himself, They taught all others how one should worship the Spiritual Master. Being very satisfied with Their humble and submissive manner, Sandipani taught Them the whole *Vedas*, the six corollaries, as well as the *Upanishads*. They also learned the *Dhanur-veda* and its secrets [knowledge of warfare and fighting], the standard law books and the methods of philosophical debate, logical reasoning and the six divisions of politics.

Because these greatest of Princes, Krishna and Balarama, were Themselves the Origin of all knowledge, They assimilated each and every subject immediately after hearing it explained only once. Thus, by Their æd concentration, They mastered the sixty-four arts and skills in sixty-four days. At the conclusion of Their study, They gratified Their Spiritual Master with an offering of *guru-daksina*. Considering the unique Qualities and abilities of these Two Lords, in consultation with his wife, Sandipani asked Them for the return of their young son, whom they had lost to the ocean at Prabhasa. “So be it,” replied the Two Lords and They immediately mounted Their chariot and went to Prabhasa.

Upon reaching Prabhasa, They approached the water’s edge and sat down. Recognizing Them to be the Supreme Lord, the Ocean deity at once came there with offerings of tribute. Lord Krishna demanded, “Return the son of My Guru, who was seized by your mighty waves, at once.”

The Ocean replied, “It was not I who took him, my dear Lord, but the demon Panchajana, who lives in the ocean in the form of a conch. It is that demon who has taken him away.” Hearing this, Lord Krishna immediately dove into the ocean, found Panchajana and slew him. But the boy was not within the demon’s belly. As a trophy, however, Lord Janardana took the conchshell forming the demon’s body and returned to the chariot.

Next He went to Samyamani, the fabulous capital of the Lord of death, Yamaraj. Upon arrival there, He blew His conchshell, whose vibration at once summoned Yamaraj, the keeper of conditioned souls. Yamaraj devoutly worshiped the Two Lords and addressed

Lord Krishna, “O Supreme Lord Vishnu, what can I do for You and Baladeva, Who are sporting as ordinary humans?”

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said, “Due to his past *karma*, the son of My Spiritual Master was brought here by you. Obey My order, O great King, and bring him here to Me quickly.” Yamaraj said, “I will,” and at once produced His Guru’s son.

After presenting the boy to Their Guru, They asked him, “Please ask for another boon.” “My dear students,” replied Sandipani, “You Two have properly fulfilled the obligation of a disciple towards his Guru. Actually, with disciples such as You, what other desires could a Spiritual Master have? O Valiant Heroes, You may now kindly return home. May Your glory sanctify the world, and may the *Vedic mantras* be ever present in Your minds.”

After receiving Their Guru’s blessing and permission to depart, the Two Lords mounted Their chariot and returned home, traveling as fast as the wind. Mathura’s residents all rejoiced to see Krishna and Balarama again, each feeling like one who had lost his wealth and then suddenly regained it again.

Commentary on Chapter Forty-five

Krsna’s acceptance of a Spiritual Master is the greatest paradox. Krsna is the Source and Repository of all knowledge, material and spiritual. He is the Creator, Maintainer, and Destroyer of everything! How can He have need to be taught? Certainly there is no need, for Krsna is never in need of anything, because He is *atmarama*, Self-contained and Self-sufficient, perfect and complete.

What need has the sun for a candle, or the Ganges River for a glass of water? Yet, in devotion, worshipers offer a lamp to the sun and a palmful of water to the Ganges. There is no question of necessity generated by lack in the Supreme Lord. Such calculations do not enter the realm of love. The offerings are made for love’s sake and they are accepted in loving exchange. Similarly, it is in love that all transcendental reciprocations are exchanged. As Krsna, the God of Love, says in the Fourth Chapter of the *Gita*:

In the same measure that one surrenders to Me,
I reciprocate with each accordingly.

As the original and supreme Spiritual Master, the Lord Himself shows us, by His personal example, the necessity of everyone accepting a Preceptor in Discipular Succession from Krishna, and serving Him with unalloyed love.

From time to time in human society, it becomes fashionable to advocate spiritual realization without the help of a Spiritual Master. “Everyone is a preceptor,” we are told. “Don’t try to lead me and don’t try to follow me. Just walk the road together with me and we will each attain enlightenment, in our own way.” Certainly God is in everyone’s heart, and He is the original and

supreme Guru, but that does not obviate the need for a Spiritual Master. Amazingly, those who minimize or completely deny the need of the Spiritual Master are themselves trying to be a spiritual master, in their writing and speaking concocted notions that a Guru is unnecessary. In truth, we are always listening to others, and since you must listen to someone, the central question in human existence is, “Who are you going to listen to?” There are true masters and false masters. Therefore the scripture says, “Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.” (*Josh. 24:15*)

By inquiring and hearing submissively from an imposter spiritual master, we become bound up in material life; by inquiring and hearing submissively from the bona fide Spiritual Master, we become free from material duality and are reborn to walk the spiritual path. Even to perform ordinary mundane activities, such as farming or manufacturing, we accept tutelage. If such teaching is required for learning the sciences within the realm of our sense perception, how much more is it needed to learn the spiritual science which is beyond the range of material senses. Thus for acquiring spiritual knowledge and experience – knowledge inherently beyond material perception – all authentic scriptures point out the absolute necessity of approaching a bona fide Spiritual Master. Furthermore the sacred texts carefully delineate the qualities by which one can recognize the right source. *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (11.3.21) states: “Any person who seriously desires to achieve real happiness must seek out a bona fide Spiritual Master and take shelter of him by initiation. The qualification of the Spiritual Master is that he must have realized the conclusion of the Scriptures by deliberation and be able to convince others of the same. Such great personalities, who have taken shelter of the Supreme Godhead, leaving aside all material considerations, are understood as bona fide Spiritual Masters.”

The Supreme Godhead certainly dwells in everyone’s heart, in His manifestation as *Paramatma*, Supersoul. Krsna declares in the tenth chapter of the *Gita* that from within He gives His devotee the intelligence how to attain Him. We must be careful to note, however, the qualification Krsna requires for one to receive guidance from Him in his heart. In the same verse He asks that one be constantly absorbed in His service with love. Then, and only then, is one a pure soul capable of hearing the Lord’s voice. To arrive at this state of devotional purity and clarity, Krsna requires that we learn at the feet of His representative, the bona fide Spiritual Master.

Just learn of this truth from a Spiritual Master
The self-realized soul is your real benefactor.
Humbly ask questions, render service in sooth;
Then he’ll impart Dharma, the Absolute Truth.

(*Gita*, Ch. 4)

So many voices lurk within the conditioned soul’s mind and heart. How will we distinguish the sound of the Lord’s voice amidst the endless chatter of the mind, the pressures of false ego, and the urges of uncontrolled senses? Even an celestial voice may be just an ethereal trick of the illusory energy.

Because of *maya*’s subtlety and because our material contaminations impede direct contact with the Lord within, Krsna manifests without, through the medium of His pure devotee, the bona fide Spiritual Master or Guru, the *sadhus* or congregation of devotees and the Holy Scriptures.

To bypass the agency of the Guru and attempt to directly approach God leads to pretense and the imagined spirituality. But when the disciple pleases the Spiritual Master, then the Lord agrees to activate His direct relationship and gradually manifest Himself to His devotee. As the great Vaishnava Preceptor, Narottama Das Thakur, stated: “Without serving a pure devotee, no one can escape the grip of material existence.”

Chapter Forty-Six: Uddhava Visits Vrindavana

The very intelligent Uddhava, a close friend of Lord Krishna, and a personal disciple of Brihaspati, was also the foremost counselor of the *Vrishni* dynasty. Once Lord Hari, Who relieves the distress of His surrendered souls, took His dearest friend Uddhava by the hand and requested: “Most gentle Uddhava, please travel to Vraja and bring comfort to Our parents. Also, you can simultaneously relieve the *gopis*’ pains of separation from Me by conveying My message to them. Their minds are always merged in Me, and their lives are totally devoted to Me. For Me they abandoned everything, renouncing family happiness now in this life and even spiritual happiness in the next. I alone am their most Beloved – indeed, I am their very Self! Thus it is My duty to sustain them always. O Uddhava, for them I am the dearest Object of Love. Remembering Me, now so far away, they are devastated by pangs of separation. It is only due to My promise to return that My faithful cowherd damsels continue to live.”

Respectfully acceding to Krishna’s request, Uddhava mounted his chariot the very next morning and left for Nanda-Gokula. Fortunate Uddhava reached the pastures of Maharaja Nanda at sunset, but due to the dust raised by the returning cattle herds, his chariot was unnoticed. Gokula reverberated with the sounds of cows – from bulls grazing over a fertile cow, to the sound of milking, to the frolicking of the calves, to the gentle mooing of the cows. This was enhanced by the loud vibration of many trees and the voices of *gopis* and cowherdsmen singing about the glorious exploits of Krishna and Balarama. All the homes were decorated for worship of the *brahmanas*, the demigods, their forefathers and the cows. In every direction lay a over-lleed forest, swarming with bees and flocks of birds, and beautiful lakes full of swans, ducks and lotuses. When Uddhava arrived at Maharaja Nanda’s house, Maharaja Nanda came out to greet him. Uddhava was embraced by the cowherd king with great joy, and worshiped just like Vasudeva.

After feeding him first-class food, seeing him comfortably seated on a bed, and relieving his fatigue by foot massage and such, Maharaja Nanda then inquired as follows: “O fortunate one, is the son of Sura, Vasudeva, faring well, now that he has been freed from bondage and reunited with his children and relatives? Auspiciously, due to his own *karma*, cruel and sinful Kamsa has been slain, together with his brothers. He was always envious and hateful toward the godly *Yadus*. Are we remembered by Krishna? Does He

ever think of His mother, friends and well-wishers here? Does He remember Vraja village, full of cows and cowherders, over Whom He is the Lord? Does He remember Govardhana Hill and the Vrindavana forest? Will He ever come to see His family members, even once? If He would, we could then gaze upon His lovely face and into His beautiful eyes and relish His enchanting smile.

“He saved us from forest res, wind and rain, from the serpent, bull demon and from innumerable other insuperable dangers. O Uddhava, remembering Krishna’s wonderful Pastimes, His happy sidelong glances, His loving smiles and His charming words, we neglect our mundane engagements. And when we look at all those places where Mukunda sported – the hills, rivers and forests, which He adorned with the impressions of His Lotus Feet – our minds merged totally in thoughts of Him. Balarama and Krishna must be two great demigods, here now to perform a great mission on behalf of the demigods. This was actually predicted by Garga *Rishi*.

“Just see how They killed Kamsa, who was equal to ten thousand elephants in strength, and how They also killed the mighty wrestlers, Chanura and Mustika, and the mad elephant Kuvalayapida. They did this as dextrously as a lion kills small animals. Krishna also broke the huge sacred bow with ease that a giant elephant breaks sugar cane. He even held up a great mountain for a whole week with one hand only. In Vrindavana, Balarama and Krishna easily killed powerful demons such as Dhenuka, Pralamba, Trinavarta, Arista and Baka.”

Thus recalling Krishna’s Pastimes with intense concentration and mind fixed on Him, Maharaja Nanda experienced great separation and fell silent, overwhelmed with emotions of love. When Mother Yasoda heard these descriptions of Krishna’s activities, she shed torrents of tears and milk oozed from her breasts due to her great love. Having witnessed the supreme loving attraction that Maharaja Nanda and Mother Yasoda felt for Krishna, Uddhava joyfully spoke to them: “O honorable Nanda, truly you and Mother Yasoda are the most fortunate and exemplary souls in the whole world, for you have perfected your loving attitude for Lord Narayana, the Spiritual Preceptor of all! These Two Lords, Balarama and Mukunda, are the Womb and Seed of the entire universe, its Creator and Creative Potency. In the hearts of all living beings, They control their awareness. The primal Supreme are They!

“Even an impure person, if he merges his mind in Him at the time of death for only a moment, neutralizes all sinful reactions and at once attains His supreme transcendental abode in a spiritual form as brilliant as the sun. You have performed superlative loving service to Him, Who is Lord Narayana, the Cause of all, the Supersoul of all and the Great Soul Who, despite being the original Cause of all that is, now has a human-like Form. How can there be further pious deeds required of you?

“Krishna, the infallible Lord of His devotees, will soon come back to Vraja and satisfy His loved ones. Having now removed Kamsa, the enemy of the *Yadus*, by slaying him in the wrestling arena, He will surely keep His promise to come back here. Do not lament, O most fortunate ones! Very soon you will see Krishna again! Furthermore, He is in the heart of all, even as He is present in wood. To Him no one is repugnant or very dear, inferior or superior; nor is He indifferent to anyone. He is without desire for anyone’s respect for Himself, yet offers respect to all others. Devoid of father, mother, wife, children

or relatives and unrelated to any, still, no one is an outsider to Him. He is without material body and never takes birth. There is nothing He has to do in this world, and nothing obliges Him to be born in any species of life, be it pure, impure or mixed. Only to enjoy His Transcendental Pastimes and to please His saintly devotees does He manifest Himself. Although beyond goodness, passion and ignorance, the three modes of material nature, the transcendental Lord associates with them for His sport. Even as a person spinning around sees the world as moving, so one conditioned by false ego thinks that he is the doer of his activities, although, in truth, only the mind is acting.

“Lord Hari is surely not only your Son, for, being the Supreme Lord, He is the Soul, Father, Mother and Son of everyone. Nothing exists separate or independent of Lord Achyuta – nothing seen or heard, nothing in the present, future or past, nothing moving or non-moving, large or small – for He **is** everything and the Soul of all!”

Krishna’s emissary, Uddhava, talked with Maharaja Nanda throughout the night. At night’s end, the village cowherd women arose from their beds, lit the lamps, performed morning worship to their household deities, and then started churning their yogurt into butter. As Vraja’s ladies loudly sang lotus-eyed Krishna’s glories, their singing blended with the soft sounds of the churning and spread throughout the sky, driving away all inauspiciousness. At sunrise, Vraja’s ladies noticed a golden chariot parked near Maharaja Nanda’s doorway. “To whom does this belong?” they queried. “Perhaps Akrura has come back. He satis ed Kamsa’s desire by stealing away lotus-eyed Krishna. What does he want now – to use our ash for Kamsa’s funeral oblations?” While speaking among themselves, Uddhava appeared, having just finished his morning purification duties.

.Commentary on Chapter Forty-six

This chapter presents another intriguing problem. Maharaja Nanda and the cowherd men returned to Vrindaban, but without Krsna. How could Krsna and Balarama not return to Vrindaban, when They had promised the *gopis* that they would return as soon as They killed the demons in Mathura? Superficially, it appears that either Krsna was unable to keep His word, or that He is a cheater. Devotees, however, know that Krsna is never dishonest, nor is He unkind to His devotees. The *acharyas* have carefully verified the mystical truth that Krsna actually did return to Vrindaban with Nanda and the cowherd men in His *bhava* manifestation. The *acharyas* further explain that He stayed at Mathura not in His original Form, but in His *vaibhava* and *prabhava* expansions, which one properly calls Vasudeva. The original Krsna remains eternally in Vrindaban in His *bhava* feature as the Lord of lords and engages in His eternal *lila* with Radha and the *gopis*.

The real intended beneficiary of Krsna’s sending Uddhava to Vrindaban was not the residents of Vrindaban, but Uddhava himself. Because the devotees in Vraja practiced the highest level of ecstatic love of Godhead, Krsna sent Uddhava there to learn how to love Him even more than he did, especially from the *gopis*. They are the masters *par excellence* in loving Krsna perfectly and living with Him eternally, even though they are materially separated. But because the *gopis* were very much aggrieved, Krsna wanted to reciprocate with them in a loving mood. Thus He sent Uddhava with a message expressing

His love for them. This is just in accord with what the Lord says in the *Gita*:

In the same measure that one surrenders to Me
I reciprocate with him accordingly. (Ch.4)

Every hour of the day, the residents of Vrindaban were thinking of Krsna in separation; similarly, Krsna was always thinking of them. Although He was, in one sense, far away from them, in fact, spiritually, He was right there with them, for He is the Lord in the Heart. Krsna knew how the *gopis* were transcendently aggrieved, and so He wanted to send His representative, Uddhava, to console them.

Having Uddhava visit Vrindaban was Krsna's supreme benediction upon Uddhava, His closest friend, for it gave him a chance to see firsthand how Krsna's greatest devotees associate with Him eternally by *lila-smarana*, intense remembrance. Lord Chaitanya especially recommends this unique process.

By remembering Krsna's Pastimes in Vrindaban, Mathura, or Dwaraka, and by serving Him with intense feelings, we too, wherever we are, can become highly elevated in Krsna Consciousness and live with Krsna always. Even just **trying** to serve Him in this way is *lila-smarana*. To think of Krsna is to be with Krsna! Therefore the most important thing to do at each moment of our lives is to ask, "How can I serve You now, my Lord?"

Chapter Forty-Seven: The Song of the Bee

Vraja's *gopis* became astonished at seeing Krishna's messenger with long arms, eyes resembling a newly blown lotus, wearing a lotus garland, yellow clothing, and whose glowing lotus face was adorned by highly polished earrings. "Who is this handsome young man?" they asked. "Where has he come from, and whose servant is he? Those are Krishna's clothes he's wearing, and His ornaments, too!" Thus the *gopis* eagerly surrounded Uddhava, whose only shelter was Lord Uttamasloka's [Krishna's] Lotus Feet.

With great humility, the *gopis* duly lowered their eyes and properly honored Uddhava by their shy but smiling glances and their pleasing words. Then they led him to a quiet bower, comfortably seated him and questioned him. The *gopis* said: "We can see you have come from Krishna, foremost of the *Yadus*, just to give pleasure to His parents. We can think of nothing else in Vraja's cow pastures that He would consider worthy of remembrance. Even sages find it very difficult to break the bonds of affection for family members.

"Relationships outside one's family are motivated by self-interest, and thus last only as long as they serve one's purpose. It is like the friendship a man has with a woman, or the attraction of bees for flowers. Prostitutes forsake a pauper; citizens a deposed king;

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students their teachers after having finished the course; and a priest a man once he has paid for the sacrifice. Birds leave a tree when the fruit is gone; guests a home after having eaten; animals a burnt forest; and a lover the consort he has enjoyed, even if she is still attached to him.”

Talking like this, the *gopis*, whose bodies, minds and words were wholly dedicated to Govinda, neglected their chores now that Uddhava, Krishna’s messenger, had come to them. Merged in remembering their beloved Krishna’s activities and childhood Pastimes, they sang continuously about Him, shedding tears without shame.

One *Gopi*, while contemplating Her previous association with Him, saw a honeybee and supposed it to be an agent sent by Her Lover. The *Gopi* said: “O honeybee, you servant of a Cheater, don’t touch Me with your whiskers! They are covered with the *kumkum* that stuck to His garland when it rubbed against the breasts of one of My rival lovers! Krishna can satisfy Mathura’s ladies! Sending an agent like you here would certainly be ridiculed in the assembly of the *Yadus*.

“After allowing us to drink the bewitching nectar of His lotus lips only once, He abandoned us, just like you abandon lovers after taking their nectar. Oh honeybee, why do you sing so much of the Yadu’s Lord to homeless people like us? We’ve heard all this before! Better you sing of His new friend, Arjuna, to His new girlfriends, the burning desires of whom He has now relieved. Let those lucky ladies give you the charity you seek. On earth, in heaven or under the earth, what woman is not available to Him? He merely smiles and raises His eyebrows with His alluring charm and they are His! Even the supreme Goddess worships the dust of His Lotus Feet. What then is our position? All we wretched souls can do is chant His Holy Name, Uttamasloka.

“Keep off my feet! I know you! You’re an expert diplomat coming from Mukunda. You have come here as His representative with your flattering words. He abandoned us, who for Him alone forsook our husbands, children and other relatives. How ungrateful! Why should I forgive Him and make up now? In the manner of a hunter He pierced the monkey king with arrows. Under the control of His consort, He mutilated a lady who had approached Him for sexual satisfaction. And even after taking King Bali’s gifts, He tied him up with ropes like a crow. We want to avoid all friendship with this Blue-complexioned Boy; still, we can never give up talking about Him.”

After a little while, the honey bee returned. That special *Gopi* continued: “To hear Krishna’s Pastimes is nectar to the ears. Relishing but a single drop of that sweet nectar destroys one’s attachment to material duality. For Him many persons have abandoned their miserable families and homes, only to become more miserable, wandering about Vrindavana like birds, begging for sustenance. Accepting His cheating words as true, we have become like the black deer’s silly wives, who follow the cruel hunter’s call. In the same way, we continuously experienced the sharp pangs of lust at the touch of His nails. O friend, please speak of something other than Krishna!

“O messenger of My Beloved, has He again sent you here again? Please choose a boon so I can honor you, My friend. Have you returned to take us to Him Whose conjugal pleasure is hard to avoid? His Consort, O gentle bee, is the Goddess Sri. She is ever with Him, residing on His chest. O Uddhava! It is most regrettable that Krishna lives in Mathura. Does He ever think of His father’s domestic affairs, or of the cowherd boys, His

friends? O exalted one! Does He ever speak of us, His loving servants? Will He ever put His *aguru*-scented hand on our heads again?"

Having thus heard the *gopis* lament, Uddhava tried to pacify them with sound philosophy, and after that narrated the message of their Beloved to them. "Truly, you *gopis* are most successful and universally worshipable, for you have merged your minds in the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vasudeva. Devotional service to Krishna is achieved by strict vows, charity, austerities and by *res acri æs*, by *study* of the *Vedic* texts, *japa*, observance of regulative principles and by the execution of many other auspicious performances. But by great good fortune, you have attained and established an insuperable standard of pure devotional service to Lord Uttamasloka, which even great saints find hard to follow.

"By great good fortune, you have forsaken your husbands, sons, bodily comforts, homes and relatives for the sake of the Supreme Male known as Krishna. You have truthfully claimed the distinction of unadulterated love for the transcendental Lord, O most auspicious and glorious *gopis*. By your exhibition of pure love for Krishna in separation, you have shown great mercy to me. O fortunate ladies, please hear the message your Beloved has entrusted to me, His confidential servant, *whi d i s t h e* purpose for which I have come:

"The Supreme Lord says: 'Actually, My dear *gopis*, you have never been separated from Me, for I am the Soul of all creation. Just as nature's elements – earth, water, fire, air and ether – are present in everything that has been created, in like manner, I am present in the mind, senses and life air of everyone, as well as within the material elements and nature's modes. By the power of My own personal energy, in the Form of nature's modes, senses and elements, I by Myself create, sustain and dissolve Myself within Myself.

"Made of pure consciousness or knowledge, the soul is different from the material body and is not entangled in nature's modes. The soul is conscious in the three states: wakefulness, sleep and deep sleep. As a person upon awakening may continue to contemplate a dream he had while sleeping – despite its being illusory – so with the mind one contemplates sense objects, which the senses then manifest. As the ocean is the ultimate rest of all rivers, so the ultimate conclusion of the *Vedas*, of *yoga*, of *Sankhya*, of renunciation, austerities, sense control and truthfulness is simply this: that everything material is a creation of the mind. Therefore one should be very careful and bring the mind under perfect control.

"The true and ultimate reason why I have stayed away from you, although I am the most beloved object of your sight, is that I desire to heighten and concentrate your contemplation of Me, and thereby draw your minds nearer to Me. When a woman's lover is far away, she thinks of him more intensely than when he is present with her. Being totally merged in Me, your minds are never diverted to anything else, and you remember Me always. Thus you will soon have Me again in your presence. Although some damsels were forced to remain in the village and could not participate in the *rasa* dance with Me in the forest at night, nevertheless they were fortunate and attained Me simply by thinking of Me."

Vraja's ladies were very happy to receive this message from Krishna, their Beloved. His sweet words having refreshed their memory of Him, they spoke to

Uddhava as follows.

“It is excellent news that Kamsa, that persecutor and foe of the *Yadus*, along with his followers, has been killed. It is also good to hear that Lord Achyuta is happy with His friends and relatives. Certainly all their desires are now fulfilled. O Uddhava, is Krishna now bestowing on Mathura’s women the pleasures that rightfully belong to us? Those ladies must worship Him with many enticing glances and affectionate shy smiles. Sri Krishna is proficient in all matters concerning conjugal love, and is the favorite of Mathura’s ladies. How could He not become ensnared by their constant adoring and enchanting words and gestures?

“O saintly Uddhava, does Govinda ever recall our loving dealings when He converses with Mathura’s women? Does He ever refer to us village damsels when He talks to them intimately? Does He ever mention those nights in the forest, fragrant with lotus and jasmine, and made brilliant by the full moon? While we sang His enchanting Pastimes, He made love to us, His beloved sweethearts, in the *rasa* dance circle, which reverberated with the vibration of ankle bells. Will Krishna ever return here and by the touch of His arm revive those who are consumed with a grief He Himself has caused? Will He save us, even as Lord Indra revives a parched forest with his life-giving rain? But after gaining a kingdom, slaying His enemies and being married to the daughters of kings, why should He come here? As Lord of the Goddess of Fortune, Krishna automatically gets whatever He wants. What do we forest dwellers have to offer Him, Who is already full in Himself?

“As Pingala the prostitute said, the greatest happiness comes from renouncing all desire. But despite knowing this, we cannot give up our desire for Krishna. Who can tolerate not talking with Lord Uttamasloka intimately? Although showing no interest in her, the Goddess Sri never moves an inch from His chest! O dear Uddhava, when Krishna was here with Balarama, He sported in all these forests, rivers and hills, tending His cows and playing His flute. These things all still remind us of Nanda’s Son; and because we see His footprints marked with divine signs everywhere, it is impossible for us to forget Him.

“O dear Uddhava, how can we ever forget Him? Our hearts have been captured and taken away by the enchanting way He walks, His alluring smiles, playful glances, and His bewitching honey-sweet words. O Lord of the Goddess of Fortune, O Master of Vraja! O Govinda, destroyer of sufferings, please save Your Gokula from the ocean of distress into which it is sinking!”

Having somewhat relieved their burning fever of separation, and recognizing Uddhava to be so much like Krishna, their Beloved, the *gopis* all worshiped him. Uddhava stayed there for several months, mitigating the *gopis*’ grief by narrating Krishna’s Pastimes, and thus brought joy and satisfaction to all the inhabitants of Gokula. All those days that Uddhava stayed there seemed but a moment to Vraja’s residents, for Uddhava always talked about Krishna. Inspired by the forests, rivers, valleys, mountains and flowering woods of Vraja, Uddhava much enjoyed enlivening Vrindavana’s inhabitants with narrations about Krishna. Seeing how the damsels of Vraja were always distressed by feelings of separation, due to their being totally merged in thoughts of Krishna, Uddhava was greatly pleased. Out of respect and adoration, Uddhava sang: “O earthlings, you milkmaids alone have

achieved life's perfection, for you have attained unalloyed love for Govinda, Lord Krishna. Such pure love is sought for by those fearful of material existence, by renounced sages and by myself, too. One who has once relished the descriptions of Krishna, the in ri teLor d has no desire f r birth as a hi gh- d æs *brahmana*, or indeed, even as Lord Brahma himself.

“It is truly amazing that mere forest dwellers, simple women, uncultured and uneducated, have attained the highest perfection - unalloyed love for the Supreme Soul, Lord Krishna! It is a fact, however, that He awards His benedictions even upon unintelligent worshipers, even as medicine is effective even on one ignorant of its ingredients. Dancing in the *rasa lila*, the *gopis* were clasped tightly by the strong arms of Krishna. This transcendental boon was never conferred on the Goddess of Fortune or any other consort in the Spiritual Sky. Truly, never was such a thing even dreamt of by the most gorgeous girls on the heavenly planets, what to speak of worldly ladies, however attractive by material calculation.

“Vrindavana's *gopis* not only left their husbands, children and relations, which is very hard to do, but they even abandoned the virtue of chastity in order to attain the Lotus Feet of Mukunda, Krishna, which is the ultimate goal of all *Vedic* knowledge. Oh, give me the good fortune of being one of the creepers, bushes or herbs here in Vraja, for the *gopis* tread on them and thus benedict them with their lotus foot dust. The Goddess of Fortune, Lord Brahma and all other demigods and masters of *yogic* perfection, are able to worship His Lotus Feet only within the mind. But while *rasa* dancing, Lord Krishna put His Lotus Feet on the *gopis'* breasts. By their embracing those Lotus Feet, the *gopis* lost all their distress. I continuously offer obeisances to the foot dust of the damsels of Maharaja Nanda's cowherd village. The vibration of these milkmaids loudly chanting the glories of Lord Krishna puri es the three worlds.”

With the *gopis'* permission and that of Maharaja Nanda and Mother Yasoda, Uddhava bade farewell to them and all the cowherd men. Then He mounted his chariot and got ready to leave. At that time, Nanda and the others came forward, bringing different items of worship, and with tear- lled eyes t hey spoke as f ollows: “May our minds a lways rd shelter at the Lotus Feet of Krishna; may our tongues always chant His Holy Names; and may our heads ever bow down to Him and our bodies always engage in His service. Wherever we are destined to wander in this world by our fruitive reactions and His perfect will, may our pious credits grant us unalloyed love for Krishna.”

Sukadeva Goswami concluded: “O King Pariksit, thus respectfully honored by Nanda's cowherd men with sentiments of pure devotion for Sri Krishna, Uddhava returned to Mathura, a city under Krishna's protection. After offering respectful obeisances, Uddhava described the intense devotion all the residents of Vraja maintain for Him. He also described the same to Vasudeva, King Ugrasena and Lord Balarama, presenting the gifts of tribute he had brought to each.”

Chapter Forty-Eight: Krishna Pleases His Devotees

After hearing and relishing Uddhava's report, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna, the omniscient Soul of everything that be, decided to go to satisfy the courtesan Trivakra, who had experienced lust for Him, and thus went to her house. Trivakra's place was lavishly decorated and replete with all manner of sensual accoutrements and paraphernalia designed to arouse sexual passion. Seeing Him at her home, Trivakra quickly got up and, accompanied by other courtesans, she graciously welcomed Lord Achyuta, offering Him a comfortable seat and various articles of worship.

Uddhava was also offered a seat of honor, because he was a saintly soul, but being very humble, he simply touched it to show respect, and sat on the floor. Then Krishna, in imitation of ordinary men, made Himself comfortable on Trivakra's extravagant bed. Meanwhile Trivakra got herself ready by bathing, smearing her body with cosmetics, dressing seductively and decorating herself with jewelry and garlands. She also scented herself with perfumes and consumed intoxicants like betel nut and fragrant liqueurs. Then she approached Lord Madhava, smiling shyly, but irritably.

Seeing her hesitating, Krishna took her bangled hands and pulled her onto the bed. He thus enjoyed with that beautiful lady, whose only pious asset was having given her excellent unguents to the Lord. Simply by smelling the aroma of Krishna's Lotus Feet, Kubja (Trivakra) purged her eyes, chest and breasts of the burning lust aroused by Cupid. With her arms she pressed the Personification of Bliss, Sri Krishna's Lotus face, between her breasts and thus relinquished her painful passion.

Having obtained the rarest prize, the Supreme Lord, simply by offering Him bodily ointment, forlorn Trivakra begged the Lord: "O my Beloved, please stay with me a few days and enjoy. I cannot tolerate your separation yet, O lotus-eyed one!" Promising to come back soon, compassionate Krishna, the Lord of all, paid His respects to Kubja and then went back to His residence with Uddhava. The Supreme Lord of all lords, Lord Vishnu, is difficult to approach by ordinary means. One who has successfully worshiped Him, and then seeks mundane sense gratification is truly less intelligent, for he has become enamored by a most insignificant boon.

Wanting to satisfy another devotee, Lord Krishna, together with Balarama and Uddhava, went to Akrura's home. In great happiness, Akrura stood up when he saw Them. After embracing and greeting Them, Akrura offered obeisances to Krishna and Balarama and was embraced by Them in return. Having taken Their seats, Akrura worshiped Them properly according to sacred rules and regulations. Akrura washed the feet of Lord Balarama and Lord Krishna, and then reverently sprinkled that water on his head. He then gave Them gifts of new clothing, sandal paste, expensive jewelry and flower garlands.

Thus worshiping the Two Lords, Akrura bowed his head to the ground in obeisance. Then he massaged Lord Krishna's Lotus Feet, placed them on his lap, and with bowed head spoke to Krishna and Balarama: "It is very auspicious for us that You Two Lords have slain the evil, cruel Kamsa and his men, thus relieving Your dynasty of untold suffering and bringing it prosperity. You Two are the Supreme Persons, the universe's Cause and its Substance as well. There is no gross or subtle cause, nor any material or spiritual manifestation apart from You. By Your own personal energies You create the universe and

then enter into it, O Supreme Absolute Truth. Thus by hearing from authorities, as well as by direct experience, one can perceive You in many varied Forms. Just as earth and the other primal elements manifest themselves in varied moving and non-moving forms, so You, the one Supreme independent Soul seem to be manifold in the diverse objects of Your creation. By Your personal energies – nature’s modes of goodness, passion and ignorance – You create, maintain and dissolve this universe, but You are never tainted by these modes or the activities they beget. As the Primal Source of all knowledge, what could cause Your bondage to illusion?

“Having never been covered by bodily designations, it is conclusive that for You there is no birth or duality. You do not experience bondage or liberation, but when You appear to, it is due only to Your desire for us to see You like that, or merely due to our lack of proper perception. You 1st spoke t he ancient *Vedic* path of religiousness for the welfare of the total universe. When that path becomes polluted by wicked men and atheists, You incarnate in one of Your Transcendental Forms, which are all in the mode of pure goodness.

“My Lord, You are that same Supreme Personality. Now You have incarnated in the home of Vasudeva, together with Your plenary portion. You have come to mitigate earth’s burden by annihilating the armies of demonic kings and to increase the fame of our dynasty. My home is most blessed today, my Lord, for You have visited it. You are the Supreme Truth and embody all demigods, forefathers and ordinary beings. Indeed, You are the Spiritual Preceptor of the whole universe, O Transcendental One, and water from bathing Your Lotus Feet sancti es the three worlds.

“What intelligent person would take shelter of anyone but You, the loving, grateful and faithful well-wisher of Your devotees? Worshiping You in genuine friendship awards one everything he may desire, even Yourself, although You never increase nor decrease. O Janardana, it is our great good fortune that You have made Yourself visible to us, for even the foremost demigods and masters of *yoga* achieve this boon only with the greatest dif ul ty. Please sever the ties of our deluding attachment for family, friends, possessions and body. These attachments are all the effect of Your material illusory energy.”

Thus worshiped and glori ed by Hi s pur e devot e e, Lor dHa ri sm lirl g l y s poke charming sweet words to Akrura: “O paternal uncle, spiritual preceptor and honorable friend, We are as sons to you, completely dependent for sustenance, compassion and protection. Elevated souls, such as you, are the real objects of service and the highest authorities for persons who seek the greatest good in life. Generally, demigods are concerned with themselves, but pure devotees never are.

“Certainly it is true that there are holy places and sacred rivers; and the demigods are present in their deities made of earth or stone. But these can purify the soul only after extensive and prolonged worship, whereas great saints - like you - purify at once, simply by being seen. You truly are Our real friend, so I am asking you to go to Hastinapura and, as a sincere well-wisher of the Pandavas, see how they are faring. We have heard that after their father died, the Pandava boys and their aggrieved mother were brought to Hastinapura by King Dhritarashtra, where they are now residing.

Unfortunately we have heard that the son of Ambika, weak-minded Dhritarashtra, has come under the sway of his evil sons, and thus is not dealing with his nephews properly.

Please go and observe whether blind King Dhritarashtra is treating them fairly or not. When we know that, We will do what is required to aid Our dear cousins.”

After giving this instruction to Akrura, Hari, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, returned to His residence in the company of Lord Sankarsana and Uddhava.

Chapter Forty-Nine: Akrura's Mission in Hastinapura

Thus Akrura journeyed to the city of the glorious Kaurava rulers, Hastinapura, and met with Dhritarashtra, Vidura, Bhishma and Kunti, as well as Bahlika, Somadatta, Dronacharya, Kripacharya, Duryodhana, Karna, Asvatthama, the Pandava brothers and many other good friends. After Gandini's son, Akrura, had duly greeted everyone, they requested to hear from him news about their relatives, and he, in turn, inquired of their welfare. Akrura remained in Hastinapura for some months just to study the situation of the wily King, who was controlled by his evil sons and mischievous advisers.

Vidura and Queen Kunti gave Akrura a detailed account of the wicked machinations of Dhritarashtra's sons, who were envious of the virtuous sons of Queen Kunti's, and of the great affection Hastinapura's citizens had for them. Vidura and Kunti further revealed to Akrura the details about how Dhritarashtra's sons attempted to poison the Pandavas and also about a number of other unsuccessful attempts on their lives. Taking advantage of her brother's inquiry, Kuntidevi spoke to Akrura confidentially, with tears in her eyes, saying: “O gentle Akrura, do my family members and friends still remember us? Does Krishna, my dearest nephew, the Supreme Personality and loving shelter of His devotees, as well as lotus-eyed Rama remember Their poor aunt and fatherless cousins? I am now harassed by many foes, and feel like a doe chased by a pack of wolves. Will Sri Krishna ever come to comfort me and my orphaned sons with His soothing words? Krishna! Krishna! Great mystic *yogī*! Supreme Soul and Universal Protector! O Govinda! Please protect us. We are surrendered to You, and are now being overwhelmed by tribulation. Those who are fearful of rebirth and death have no other shelter than Your Lotus Feet, for You are Mukunda, the Lord of liberation. I offer my respectful obeisances to You, Krishna, the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Pure, the Supersoul, the Source of all knowledge and Lord of pure devotional service. I call upon You for shelter.”

Thus thinking of her immediate family and also of Krishna, Queen Kunti wept. Both Vidura and Akrura consoled the Queen by reminding her of the supernatural heritage and fatherhood of her sons. Nevertheless, the inordinate affection King Dhritarashtra had for his own sons made him act cruelly toward the Pandavas. Before leaving, Akrura went personally to the King and told him of Lord Krishna's and Lord Balarama's concern for the Pandavas.

Akrura cautioned: “O scion of Vichitravirya, expansion of the Kuru's glory, in Pandu's absence you have illegally assumed the throne. But if you carefully protect the earth, delight and inspire your subjects by your virtuous character and treat all your relatives

equally, surely you will attain great success and glory. If you do not, however, and act otherwise, everyone will condemn you now in this world, and after death you will enter the darkest regions of hell. Therefore, treat Pandu's sons and your sons equally!

"Relationships are never permanent in this material world, O King. We cannot remain indefinitely even in our own body, what to speak of remaining with wife, children and such. Every living being is born alone and ultimately dies alone, and then one must experience the due results of his good or bad *karma* also alone. Under the guise of beloved dependents, strangers pillage the illicitly-gained wealth of an unsuspecting man, even as the spawn of a fish consume the water that sustains the fish. A fool performs illicit acts to maintain himself, his children, his wealth and relations, for he imagines, 'These things are mine.' At last, however, these things all forsake him, causing him great frustration. Then forsaken by his supposed beloved dependents, unaware of life's true purpose, callous to his real duty and thus failing to fulfill his life's purpose, the ignorant soul passes into hell's darkness, followed by his sinful reactions. Therefore, O King, see this world as a dream, an illusion or sight of fancy created by a magician, and thus please control your mind by your intelligence and be equipoised and peaceful."

Dhritarashtra replied: "O expert in charity, I will never be satiated with hearing your kind auspicious words of wisdom. Truly, I am a mere mortal, who has been given the nectar of the gods. Nevertheless, compassionate Akrura, due to my unsteady heart's inordinate attachment for my devious sons, these wise words of advice do not stay fixed there, anymore than lightning remains fixed in a cloud. Who can thwart the purposes of the Supreme Lord, Who is now incarnated in the *Yadu* dynasty to lessen the earth's burden? I offer my respectful obeisances to Him, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Who produces this creation by the incomprehensible action of His material energy and then enters into His creation through the various modes of nature. From Him, Whose Pastimes are unfathomable, come both *maya* and its ensnaring cycle of birth and death, and the means of liberation from it."

Having thus understood the King's mind, Akrura took permission from his relatives and friends and returned to Mathura, the *Yadu* capital. There Akrura reported Dhritarashtra's treatment of the Pandavas to Lord Krishna and Lord Balarama.

Chapter Fifty: Krishna Establishes Dwaraka City

When Kamsa was killed, his two queens, Asti and Prapti went home to their father, King Jarasandha of Magadha. In great distress they told him all that had happened in Mathura. Hearing their sad lament, Jarasandha became very aggrieved and angry and decided to rid the earth of the *Yadavas*. Amassing twenty-three military divisions, he laid siege to Mathura, the Yadava capital.

Although the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna, is the primal Cause of creation and thus of this world, when He descends here as Krishna, He plays the part of an

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ordinary man. When He observed Jarasandha's forces surrounding His city and perceived the great fear afflicting His subjects, the Lord contemplated a suitable response. "Because Jarasandha's vast army of soldiers, chariots, horses and elephants is a great burden to the earth, I will utterly destroy it. But Jarasandha personally I will not kill, for in the future he will serve another purpose. My present incarnation is meant to mitigate the earth's burden, to protect the pious and annihilate the impious, to protect real religion and to stop irreligion. I have assumed many other bodies also, according to necessity and time."

While thinking in this way, two chariots as brilliant as the sun at once appeared before Lord Govinda from the sky. His divine weapons also manifest before Him. When Sri Krishna saw these, He addressed Lord Sankarsana: "My dear Elder Brother, see the peril confronting the *Yadus*, Your dependents; also note how Your chariot and personal weapons have appeared here before You. We have incarnated, My Lord, to protect Our devotees, so now please destroy these twenty-three divisions of soldiers that are burdening the earth."

Thereupon Krishna and Balarama, fully armored with their Their divine weapons, drove forth on Their chariots, surrounded with a small retinue of honor guards. when he sounded His conchshell as He went forth, all the opposing soldiers' hearts quaked in fear. Looking straight at Them, Jarasandha shouted: "Krishna, You are the lowest of men and I don't want to fight You for You appear to be a mere boy, O murderer of Your kin! But You, Rama, if You gather up Your courage and are so inclined, You may fight me. When You are sliced by my sharp arrows, You may give up Your body and attain heaven. Or, perhaps, You will kill me!"

Lord Krishna responded: "True heroes do not brag, but demonstrate their valor in action. We do not take seriously the ranting of someone full of fear and about to die!" As wind covers a fire with dust, or the sun with clouds, Jarasandha marched toward Krishna and Balarama, surrounding Them and Their men with his many contingents of warriors. The women of Mathura watched from the rooftops and high places in the city, and when Krishna and Balarama's chariots were no longer visible, they were overwhelmed with grief and fainted. Observing that His men were being harassed by the ceaseless and brutal barrage of arrows from the innumerable opposing soldiers closing in around Him, Lord Hari took up His infallible bow Sarnga, which is worshipable for both gods and demons and twanged it mightily. Drawing arrows from His inexhaustible quiver, He red them in an endless bombardment of sharp shafts, which fatally struck the foe's elephants, chariots, horses and infantry. Krishna's dazzling display of archery resembled a whirling circle of fire. Elephants with foreheads split open and horses with severed heads lay everywhere on the ground, as did broken chariots with their drivers, as well as foot soldiers, with their arms, legs and heads severed.

Across the battle field, countless streams of blood poured from severed limbs of horses, humans and elephants. With the strikes of His infallible plow, the unlimitedly powerful Lord Balarama annihilated Magadhendra's [Jarasandha's] mighty force. Even though that force was as unconquerable and terrifying as an impassable ocean, to Vasudeva's Two Sons, the Masters of the universe, the encounter was mere play. For

One Who arranges the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the entire cosmos, and Who has innumerable spiritual Qualities, therefore is not liable to be bound by any material military force. Nevertheless, when He does so, in imitation of human behavior, great sages glorify His Pastime.

Jarasandha, devoid of men and even of a chariot, remained with only his breath. Then Balarama grabbed him just as one lion might grapple another. Jarasandha, who had murdered many enemies, was then tied up by Balarama with the ropes of Varuna as well as ordinary ropes. Lord Govinda, however, had a plan to unfold through Jarasandha and thus requested His brother to release him. Humiliated by this mercy, the greatly respected and highly honored warrior, Jarasandha decided to retire and undergo penance. But during his journey home, Jarasandha encountered several kings who convinced him not to pursue such a life of renunciation, telling him: "Your loss to the *Yadus* was merely bad *karma*." Still, having lost all his armies and been treated insultingly by the Personality of Godhead, Jarasandha returned to his kingdom of Magadha, but in a depressed mood.

Lord Mukunda had successfully traversed the vast ocean of enemies with His own forces untouched. The denizens of heaven congratulated Him with a shower of flowers, while the citizens of Mathura, now relieved of their anxieties and singing for joy, came out to greet Him, accompanied by bards and minstrels chanting His victory in poetic verses. When the Lord entered Mathura, kettledrums and conchshells loudly vibrated, and various kinds of drums, *vinas* and *utes* played in concert. The roadways were sprinkled with water, the gateways adorned in celebration and banners waved everywhere. Mathura's citizens were overjoyed and the atmosphere resounded with the transcendental vibration of *Vedic* hymns.

As Mathura's ladies lovingly gazed upon the Lord, their eyes expanded with affection and they threw flowers, yogurt, rice and newly sprouted grains on Him. Lord Krishna then presented King Ugrasena with all the booty that had been collected from the battle field. The King of Magadha met defeat in this same way seventeen times. Despite these defeats, he remained determined to overwhelm the *Yadu* dynasty, with his innumerable divisions of military forces, not realizing that they were protected by the infallible Supreme Lord Krishna.

Due to Lord Krishna's protection, the *Vrishnis* always exterminated the whole of Jarasandha's forces. When there were no remaining soldiers, they released King Jarasandha in an insulting manner. Just as Jarasandha's eighteenth attempt was about to commence, a barbarian chieftain named Kalayavana arrived, having been directed there by sage Narada. When he arrived at Mathura, Yavana Kalayavana besieged the city with thirty million *acewarriors*. Throughout his long military career, Kalayavana had never encountered a human rival competent to fight him, but he had heard from Narada that the *Yadavas* might be a match.

Seeing Kalayavana's approach, Lord Krishna considered: "Alas, a great danger threatens us on two fronts; this Yavana is besieging us and the formidable King of Magadha will be here tomorrow or the day after. If mighty Jarasandha comes here while we are engaged with Kalayavana, he may murder or carry off our relations to his capital as hostages. Let us immediately make an impenetrable fortress to place our kith and kin

within for safekeeping and then annihilate this barbarian king.”

After discussing the situation with Balarama, the Supreme Personality of Godhead had a fortress constructed within the sea, which was about one hundred miles in circumference. Within that fortress, He built a city of amazing design and opulence. For the building of that city, Visvakarma, the demigod engineer, employed his perfect scientific knowledge and architectural skill. There were broad avenues, streets of commerce and courtyards laid out on large plots of land. Beautiful parks and exotic gardens replete with trees and creepers from the heavenly planets were designed in appropriate central areas. The elaborate gateways were topped with golden spires that seemed to touch the sky. Gold-plated houses were ranked in front with golden pots and paved with jeweled rooftops and the doors were inlaid with priceless emeralds. Alongside the residences there were the treasury buildings, stables for their horses, and warehouses made of brass and silver. Every residence had its own guard house, and also a temple for the household Deity. The city was filled with citizens of all four social orders, and was specially and especially beautified by the eighteen thousand palaces of Lord Krishna, the Lord of the *Yadus*.

Lord Indra presented Sri Krishna an assembly hall named Sudharma, from the heavenly planet, wherein a mortal man remains immune from the laws of mortality. He also gave the *parijata* tree. Lord Varuna gave a gift of horses as sweet as the mind, some pure white and others black. Kuvera, the heavenly treasurer, gave his eight mystic perfections. Similarly, all the planetary monarchs presented opulences according to their ability. Now that the Supreme Lord had incarnated on earth, all the various demigods took the opportunity to offer Him a portion of the opulences He had first given to them.

After evacuating all of Mathura's residents to Dwaraka by His mystic power, *yogamaya*, Lord Krishna conferred with Lord Balarama, Who remained in Mathura to protect it. Then, weaponless and wearing a lotus garland, Lord Krishna departed Mathura by its main gate.

Chapter Fifty-One: Deliverance of Muchukunda

Kalayavana observed Lord Krishna emerging from Mathura's gates like the rising full moon, for He was most lovely to behold, His dark blue bodily hue being enhanced by His yellow silken garments. He bore the mark of *Srivatsa* on His chest, and his neck was adorned with the *Kaustubha* jewel. His four arms were stout and long, and His ever-joyous lotus face with lotus-pink eyes, radiant cheeks, enchanting smile and dazzling shark-shaped earrings, altogether rivaled the sun in brilliance.

Kalayavana thought, “He must surely be Vasudeva, for He has all the characteristics mentioned by Narada. He cannot be anyone else. But since He is unarmed and proceeding on foot, I will confront Him similarly.” Deciding thus, Kalayavana ran after the Lord very quickly, hoping to catch Him, Whom even great mystic *yogis* cannot capture. Always

just beyond Kalayavana's reach, Lord Hari led the Yavana far away into a mountain cave. While pursuing the Lord, the Yavana hurled insults at Him, taunting, "I thought You were the Chief of the *Yadus*! Why are You running away?" Still, Krishna remained just beyond his grasp, for he was not yet cleansed of his sinful reactions.

Despite the insults, the Lord kept going, rally entering a cave and the Yavana s till following Him . There Kalayavana saw a man lying on the ground, as if sleeping. Thinking the man to be Krishna, Kalayavana said, "So You led me all this way just to lie down and pretend You are some kind of saint!" And with that the deluded fool kicked the sleeping man with all his might. Thus rudely awakened after a very long sleep, the man slowly opened his eyes and quickly glanced about very angrily. Fixing his gaze on Kalayavana, he reduced him to a pile of ashes within a second.

King Pariksit asked: "Who was that sleeping man, O *Brahmana*? What was his lineage and where did he get his great power from? Why was he lying down sleeping in that cave?"

Sukadeva Goswami replied: This great personality was Muchukunda, son of Mandhatta of the Ikshvaku dynasty. He was a devoted follower of *brahminical* culture, as well as a great hero in battle. At the request of Indra and the demigods, Muchukunda defended them when they were terrorized by the demons. He did this for a long time.

Upon Karttikeya's assuming the mantle of defender of the demigods, they then said to Muchukunda, "Now you may forsake your difficult task of protecting us, O King, leaving behind a flourishing kingdom in the material world of men, O heroic one, you did not care for your personal interests, but simply protected us.

"The family members, associates and subjects you knew are no longer living. Time has swept them all away. Stronger than the strongest, inexhaustible Time is the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself. As His Pastime, He moves all mortal beings, even as a herdsman moves animals around. We wish you all good fortune! Now you may ask for a benediction from us: Anything can be asked for except liberation, which Lord Vishnu alone, the infallible Supreme Lord, can grant."

Requesting undisturbed sleep, King Muchukunda respectfully left the demigods and retired to this mountain cave to sleep. After Kalayavana was burnt to ashes, Lord Krishna revealed Himself to the intelligent Muchukunda. Fixing his gaze upon the Lord, Muchukunda saw that the hue of His complexion resembled a dark blue cloud. He had four arms and His body was covered with a yellow silken garment. On His chest was the *Srivatsa* mark and from His neck hung the brightly glowing *Kaustubha* jewel. Sporting a *Vaijayanti* garland, He showed His attractive, serene face, which draws the eyes of everyone with its stunning shark-shaped earrings and beaming, loving glances. The spectacle of His beautiful Form was unsurpassed, and He moved about with the grandeur of an angry lion.

Muchukunda was overpowered by the Lord's radiance, which revealed Him to be insuperable. In utter humility, Muchukunda questioned the Lord: "Who are You? why have you come to this cave, traversing the thorny ground on Your Lotus Feet, which are as soft as lotus petals? Are You the Potency of all potent beings? Or perhaps You are the powerful re god, sun god, moon god, King of heaven, or the supreme monarch of some other demigod planet? Indeed, I think You must be the Supreme Personality, Who is the

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lord of the three chief gods, for You are driving away the darkness of this cave, just like a lamp dispels darkness with its light. O Foremost of Men, if You will, please tell us of Your birth, lineage and activities, we are very anxious to hear. O Tiger among Men, as for ourselves, we are a descendent of King Ikshvaku. I am the son of Yauvanasva, and my name is Muchukunda. I was very fatigued from long fighting for the demigods, and my senses became overpowered by sleep in this lonely place until I was rudely awakened. The one who awakened me was burned to ashes due to his sinful reaction. Fortunately, at that time I also saw You, the possessor of a glorious countenance and power to defeat Your enemies. Your unbearable effulgence is overwhelming us and we cannot keep our gaze fixed upon You. O most exalted One, You are certainly to be worshiped by all beings.”

Thus spoken to by Muchukunda, Krishna, the Source of creation and the Supreme Personality of Godhead, smiled sweetly and answered him in a voice like a rumbling cloud: “My friend, My birth and lives are unlimited, as are My Names. No one can count them, not even Myself. Great sages describe My Pastimes and births – past, present and future – but they can never come to the end of them. Still, My friend, I will describe to you My present birth, Name and occupation. Listen carefully.

“Long ago, Lord Brahma asked Me to destroy the demons who were afflicting the earth and to protect the religious principles. Thus I have incarnated in the *Yadu* dynasty, in the family of Anakadundubhi, and because I am the Son of Vasudeva, I am called Vasudeva also. I have killed Kamsa, who in a former life was the great demon Kalanemi, as well as killing demon Pralamba and other foes of righteousness. Now, O King, by My arrangement, this brutal barbarian has been burnt to ashes by your mystic glance. Since you repeatedly prayed to Me in your past, I have come to this cave Personally to give you My mercy, for I am always lovingly inclined to My devotee. Now ask a benediction from Me, O holy King, and I will grant it. One who satisfies Me never laments.”

Muchukunda then humbly bowed to the Lord, recognizing Him to be the Supreme Lord Narayana. “O Lord, both men and women in this world are bemused by Your illusory energy. Unaware of their true welfare, they do not adore You, but rather seek material happiness by enmeshing themselves in household affairs- which are, in truth, sources of misery. One certainly has an impure mind, if, despite obtaining this rare and valuable human life, he does not adore Your Lotus Feet. Like one fallen into a blind well, he has fallen into the darkness of material life.

“I have wasted my life, O Unconquerable One, being more and more captivated by my kingdom and wealth as a king of this world. Misidentifying myself as the body and becoming attached to family, home and possessions, I have suffered unlimited and ceaseless anxiety. Arrogantly I accepted the body as the Self, although the body is but a material object, such as a wall or a pot. A god among men, I thought myself, traveling the earth in the company of my charioteers, cavalry, infantry, elephants and generals. In my deluded and arrogant pride, I disrespected and ignored You. A person obsessed with thoughts of things he needs to do, being very greedy and reveling in sense pleasure, is suddenly faced with You, the cruel Death, as frightful as a famished snake, licking its fangs as it devours a mouse. The body that once rode high on royal elephants, and in chariots covered with gold, who was called ‘king’ is then, by the inconceivable power of Your

Time, called ‘ashes’, ‘worms’ or ‘feces.’ Although conquering all directions and thus being free of opposition, and then sitting on a regal throne, praised by those who were once his comrades, when he goes within the ladies quarters, where sex indulgence is enjoyed, he is led about by a woman, like a pet animal on a chain, O Lord.

“A king who truly wants to increase his power must execute his duties very carefully, undergoing austerities and foregoing sense pleasure. For if one indulges himself materially, thinking, ‘I am supreme and independent,’ he never attains happiness. When a wandering soul’s material life ceases, O Achyuta, he can then gain the company of Your devotees. By associating with them, he awakens pure devotion unto You, the devotees’ only goal. My dear Lord, You have already shown me the greatest mercy, for my attachment to a material kingdom has disappeared. This freedom is devoutly sought by saintly monarchs of great empires, desiring to go to the forest for a life of renunciation. O Almighty Lord, I desire nothing more than Your service, a boon most prized by those devoid of material desire. O Lord Hari, what enlightened being who venerates You, the Bestower of Liberation, would ask for a boon that entangles him in further bondage?

“Please, dear Lord, having forsaken all objects of sense gratification – all products of the material modes of goodness, passion and ignorance – I am coming to You, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, for shelter. You are without material designation. Rather, You are complete in perfectly pure knowledge and transcendental to nature’s modes. You are the Supreme Absolute Truth. Up until now I have been disturbed by troubles here in this world and have been consumed with lamentation. My six enemies (the five senses and the mind) are ever active and never satisfied. I have no peace. Therefore, O Deliverer, O Supreme Soul, please save me! O Lord, by good fortune I have approached Your Lotus Feet in the midst of my tribulation. Your Lotus Feet are the Truth that makes one fearless and free of sorrows.”

The Supreme Lord responded: “O great ruler and emperor, your mind is potent and pure. Though I tempted you with the offer of benedictions, your steady mind was not diverted by material desires. Understand, please, that I did this just to demonstrate that you could not be deceived. My pure devotee’s intelligence is never turned aside by any material benediction. Non-devotees may engage in severe practices like *pranayama*, but their minds are not completely free of material desires. Material desires may again arise in the mind, O King, if the mind is not dovetailed in My service.

“Wander the earth wherever you want, but keep your mind fixed on Me! Thus I bless you to always have unflinching devotion to Me. Due to your following the principles of *kshatriya* life, you have killed many living beings while hunting and executing your other duties. You should neutralize all these sins by carefully performing penances and being fully surrendered to Me. In your very next life, O King, you will become an elevated *brahmana*, the highest benefactor of all creatures, and you will surely return to Me.”

Chapter Fifty-Two: Rukmini’s Message to Krishna

Thus blessed by Lord Krishna, Muchukunda circumambulated the Lord, bowing in humble obeisance. Then he left the cave. Seeing all humans, animals, plants and trees to be greatly reduced in size, Muchukunda could understand that *Kali-yuga* was upon him, and thus he went north. Sober Muchukunda, free from materialistic association and free from doubt, knew well the value of austerity. With his mind absorbed in Lord Krishna, he took shelter of Gandhamadana Mountain. There, at *Badarikashrama*, the place of Lord Narayana, he peacefully worshiped Lord Hari by executing severe austerities and tolerating of all dualities.

Lord Krishna in the meantime returned to Mathura, which was still under siege by the Yavanas, and destroyed the hordes of barbarians and took all the booty to Dwaraka. When the booty was being taken away, Jarasandha suddenly appeared, leading twenty-three more armored divisions. Seeing the vast expanse of the foe's army, Krishna and Balarama ran away very swiftly, as if They were ordinary mortals. Leaving Their riches, feigning fear although truly fearless, They ran a great distance on Their Lotus Feet.

When powerful Jarasandha saw Them coming, he laughed loudly and gave chase. Jarasandha could not comprehend the supreme position of the Two Lords. After running a great distance and apparently fatigued, They climbed the high mountain called Pravarshana, which Lord Indra incessantly showers with rain. Despite knowing They were on the mountain, Jarasandha could not reach Them. Thus he piled wood all around the mountain and set it ablaze. It was a furious conflagration, but Krishna and Balarama, by Their *yogic* powers, easily jumped from the high mountain to the ground. Unobserved in this adventure by Their opponent or his men, the Two Brothers happily returned to Dwaraka, Their city encircled by the ocean. Thinking that he had consumed the Two Yadava Brothers in the fire, Jarasandha withdrew his huge military force back to Magadha.

Next, Govinda, the Supreme Lord Himself, married the daughter of King Bhismaka of Vaidarbha. She was directly expanded from the Goddess of Fortune. This was done by the Lord at her request. In the presence of many kings and princes, Sri Krishna snatched Rukmini as boldly as Garuda took nectar from the demigods.

King Pariksit said: "I want to hear about how the Almighty Lord Krishna won His bride over such kings as Salva and Magadha. O *Brahmana*, what intelligent listener could ever become satiated listening to the charming, pious and ever-fresh narrations of Lord Krishna, which wash away this world's delusion?"

Sukadeva Goswami said: "King Bhismaka, the lord of Vaidarbha, had five sons and a daughter of exquisite countenance. Her name was Rukmini and her eldest brother was Rukmi. Hearing from visitors to the palace about the glories of Mukunda's personal beauty and prowess, and of His transcendental character and opulence, Rukmini firmly determined that He would be the perfect match for her. Lord Krishna also knew of Rukmini's superior qualities and concluded that she would make a perfect wife for Him. Thus He decided to marry her.

"Due to Rukmi's animosity toward Krishna, he forcefully opposed giving Rukmini to Him, although that was her desire, as well as her father's. Dark-eyed Vaidarbhi, Rukmini,

was very upset by her brother's plan. Thinking deeply about the situation, she sent a trusted *brahmana* to Krishna with a letter. When the *brahmana* arrived at Dwaraka, he was immediately ushered into the primeval Lord's presence, Who was sitting on a golden throne. Sri Krishna, the Lord of all *brahmanas*, descended from His throne, seated the *brahmana* and then worshiped him in the same manner that He Himself is worshiped by the demigods."

Feeding the *brahmana* sumptuously and putting him to rest, Sri Krishna massaged the *brahmana's* feet with His lotus hands and then questioned him: "O foremost of *Brahmanas*, are your spiritual practices going well? Is your mind peaceful? When one is satisfied with whatever happens and does not deviate from his spiritual path, those religious principles become for him as a wish-fulfilling cow, supplying all his desires. A dissatisfied person, on the other hand, wanders endlessly from one place to another, even if he becomes the lord of heaven. A satisfied *brahmana*, however, though he has nothing, is content, rests peacefully and lives without distress. I bow My head repeatedly in obeisance to *brahmanas* who are content with what they have. They are the greatest well-wishers of living beings, for they are saintly, peaceful and prideless.

O *Brahmana*, is your monarch seeing to the welfare of the citizens? Truly, that ruler in whose kingdom the citizens are protected and happy is very dear to Me. From where have you come? Why have you taken the trouble to cross the impassable sea? Tell Us your purpose, if it is not a secret, and let Us know what We can do for you."

Thus asked by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the *brahmana* revealed everything and read Rukmini's letter. "O most Handsome One, having heard of Your Transcendental Qualities and bodily beauty, which fulfills the desires of everyone, I have shamelessly fixed my mind upon You, dear Krishna. In lineage, character, knowledge, beauty, youthfulness, in virtue and opulence, O Mukunda, You are equal to Yourself alone. For this reason, O Lord, I have selected You for my mate: I surrender to You! Please come quickly, Lord Almighty, and accept me as Your Consort. My dear lotus-eyed Lord, please do not allow Sisupala to touch the Lord's share. It would be like a jackal stealing the food of a lion.

"If I have any pious credits from worshipping the Supreme Personality of Godhead with sacrifices, rituals, charity and vows, or from worshipping the *gurus*, *brahmanas* and demigods, then please come and take my hand, and let not Sisupala or anyone else. O Almighty One, my marriage ceremony commences tomorrow! Please arrive in Vaidarbha unseen as quickly as possible, and with Your army crush the armies of Sisupala and Jarasandha, and marry me in the *Rakshasa* way, Your valor being the only bridal price.

"As I am living within the palace, You may wonder, 'How can I kidnap Rukmini without killing some of her kin?' Here's the way: Just before the marriage, there is a big procession to the temple of my family's deity. At that time, the prospective bride goes outside the town to worship Goddess Girija, Ambika, in her temple. Great souls like Lord Shiva long to roll in the dust of Your Lotus Feet and in this way destroy their ignorance, O lotus-eyed One. If I fail to get Your mercy, I shall surely give up my life and perform severe penances to satisfy You. I shall do this life after life until I attain Your mercy."

The *brahmana* concluded: "I have brought this confidential message, O Lord of the *Yadus*, for your consideration. Whatever You want to do, we must do at once."

Chapter Fifty-Three: Krishna Kidnaps Rukmini

Hearing the confidential message of Princess Vaidarbhi, Lord Yadunandana took the *brahmana's* hand and with a smile said, "Just as Rukmini's mind is fixed on Me, My mind is fixed on Rukmini. I cannot sleep at night from thinking of Her. I know that, out of envy, Rukmi has forbidden our marriage. She has given Herself exclusively to Me, and Her beauty is wonderful. I will carry Her here after first thrashing those useless kings in battle, even as one extracts ree out of wood."

Lord Madhusudana already knew the exact time for Rukmini's wedding. Thus He ordered His driver: "Daruka, get my My chariot at once." Daruka brought his chariot, yoked with his four special horses: Saibya, Sugriva, Meghapuspa and Balahaka. He then stood respectfully before the Lord with joined palms. Krishna mounted His chariot and invited the *brahmana* to do likewise. Then the Lord's set horses took them to Vaidarbha in but a single night.

King Bhisma, the lord of Kundina, having fallen under affection's sway for his son was just about to hand over his daughter to Sisupala. King Bhisma saw to every detail of the required preparations. He had the main avenues, intersections, and commercial roads thoroughly cleansed and then sprayed with water, and he also decorated the city with victory arches and multicolored flags on poles. The residents of the city, dressed in spotless garments and smeared with fragrant sandal paste, and also wore costly necklaces, fragrant ornaments and bejeweled ornaments. Their opulent dwellings were filled with the fragrance of *aguru* smoke.

According to the prescribed rituals, Maharaja Bhisma worshiped the demigods, forefathers, and *brahmanas*, feeding them sumptuously. Then the standard *mantras* were chanted for the welfare of the Bride. The Bride brushed her teeth and bathed, and after that She donned the lucky wedding necklace. Then She was attired with new upper and lower garments and ornamented with most excellent jewels. Qualified *brahmanas* chanted *mantras* of the *Vedas* for the protection of the Bride and the priest offered oblations to appease the controlling planets. Known for his knowledge of regulative principles, the King remunerated the *brahmanas* with cows, silver, gold, clothing, and sesame seeds mixed with sugar.

Likewise King Damaghosa, ruler of Chedi, had also gotten *brahmanas* expert in chanting *mantras* to perform all the necessary rituals to insure his son's prosperity. King Damaghosa had come to Kundina together with herds of elephants, chariots pulled by golden chains, a regiment of cavalry and innumerable infantry soldiers. Bhisma, the King of Vaidarbha, came out of his city to greet King Damaghosa, giving him tokens of respect. Bhisma then took Damaghosa to a residence especially constructed for his use.

Sisupala's supporters – Jarasandha, Salva, , Dantavakra and Viduratha – came, along with thousands of other kings, including Paundraka. To insure the Bride for Sisupala, all these kings, who envied Krishna and Balarama, came saying among themselves: "If Krishna comes with Balarama and other *Yadus* to abduct our Bride, we shall stand together and fight Him." Thus they came to the wedding bringing large armies and many military conveyances.

When Lord Balarama heard about these military preparations of the envious kings and that Lord Krishna had gone alone to abduct the Bride, He was sure that a fight would ensue. Having great affection for His Brother, He rushed to Kundina with a powerful army, riding on chariots, horses and elephants.

The beautiful daughter of Bhisma, Princess Rukmini, eagerly awaited Krishna's arrival, but when She did not see the *brahmana* come back, She thought: "Alas, my wedding is set for tomorrow morning! How unfortunate I am that lotus-eyed Krishna is not here! Even the *brahmana* has not returned. Perhaps the all-perfect Lord, while pondering whether to come, thought of something abominable in Me, and therefore does not want to come and take My hand. I am so very unfortunate, for the Supreme Lord is not pleased with Me, nor is the great Lord Shiva. Perhaps Devi, Shiva's consort, who is known as Gauri, Girija, Rudrani and Sati, has turned against me."

Thinking in this way, the young virgin, whose mind was stolen away by Krishna, closed Her tearful eyes, hoping against hope that He would come. As She waited the arrival of Govinda, She experienced a twitch in Her left arm, thigh and eye. These were sure signs that something auspicious was about to happen. suddenly that learned *brahmana*, on Krishna's order, came there to see Princess Rukmini. Noting the *brahmana's* smiling face and calm manner, saintly Rukmini, who could correctly read body language, asked him, with a sweet smile, for information about Krishna.

The *brahmana* told Her of the arrival of Lord Yadunandana and also of his promise to marry Her. Princess Vaidarbhi was jubilant to hear of Krishna's arrival. Not wanting anything there befitting to offer the *brahmana*, She just bowed to him in gratitude. The King, upon hearing of Krishna and Balarama's arrival and that They were eager to witness Rukmini's wedding, left the city with suitable offerings to welcome Them. Offering Them *madhuparka*, and presentations of new clothing and other valuable gifts, he worshiped Them with all the proper rituals. Generous King Bhisma made arrangements to suitably accommodate the Two Lords, as well as Their army and entourage. In this way he gave Them proper hospitality. In a similar way, Bhisma gave desirable things to every king who assembled there for the occasion, honoring them in a way befitting their station.

When the inhabitants of Vidarbha-pura learned that Lord Krishna had come, they all went out to see Him. With the vessel of their eyes they drank the nectar of His lotus face. The people said: "Rukmini, and no one else, should become His wife, and He too, possessing such perfect beauty, is the sole mate for Princess Bhaismi [Rukmini]. May Lord Achyuta, the Creator of the three worlds, be satisfied with the pious work we may have done and show His causeless mercy by excepting the hand of Vaidarbhi." Bound by their ever increasing love for Rukmini, the city's residents spoke in this way.

Then the Bride, surrounded by guards, left the inner palace to visit Ambika's temple.

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Rukmini silently walked on foot to see Deity Bhavani in great expectation. Along with her mother and girlfriends and guarded by the King's valiant warriors, who held their weapons upraised and ready, Rukmini absorbed Her mind only on Krishna's Lotus Feet. Accompanying the procession, *conchshells*, *mridangas*, horns, *panavas*, and other instruments all sounded merrily. Following the bride were thousands of courtesans carrying various offerings and presentations, as well as well-dressed *brahmanas'* wives singing and chanting prayers and bearing gifts of clothing, jewelry, garlands and *ra s cents*. There were also professional musicians, singers, bards, heralds, and chroniclers.

Upon reaching the Goddess's temple, Rukmini first washed Her hands and feet, and then sipped water in purification. Thus purified and peaceful, She entered the presence of mother Ambika. The elder *brahmana* wives, expert in the ways of such ceremonies, guided the young Princess in offering respect to Goddess Bhavani, who was there with Her consort, Lord Bhava. Princess Rukmini prayed: "Dear Mother Ambika, consort of Lord Shiva, I offer my obeisances unto you again and again, and also to your children. Please let Lord Krishna be My husband. Please grant this!"

Rukmini worshiped the Goddess with fragrant water, whole grains, incense, garlands, clothing, necklaces, jewelry and other prescribed items and gifts, and then with many lamps. The married *brahmana* ladies each performed worship with similar items simultaneously, as well as offering cakes and savories, betel nut, fruits, sugar can juice and sacred threads. The ladies offered the remnants of the offering to the Bride and then blessed Her. She in turn offered obeisances to them and the Deity, and accepted the sacred remnants as *prasadam*. The Princess then broke her vow of silence and departed for the Ambika temple, holding onto an assistant with Her beautiful hand, nicely adorned with a jeweled ring.

Rukmini looked as enchanting as the Lord's illusory potency, who bewilders even the grave and sober. All the kings gazed intently upon Her virgin beauty, Her thin waist, and Her beautiful face adorned with glittering earrings. Her hips were girdled with a jewel-studded belt, Her breasts were bulging and Her eyes perfectly framed by surrounding locks of hair. She smiled sweetly, causing Her jasmine-bud teeth to reflect the hue of Her bimba-red lips. As She walked with the grace of a royal swan, Her tinkling ankle bells' brilliance beautified Her feet. Seeing Her, the gathered heroes were totally overwhelmed. Lust tore at their hearts. Indeed, upon beholding Her lovely broad smile and shy glance, the kings all became stupefied, dropped their weapons and fell unconscious from their elephants, horses, and chariots.

On the excuse of the procession, Rukmini showed Her exquisite beauty (actually for Krishna only). Slowly She put forward Her two lotus-whorled feet, still anxious for the arrival of Her Supreme Lord. With Her left hand, She pushed Her hair away from Her face, and slyly looked from the corners of her eyes at the different kings standing before her. Then suddenly, She saw Krishna! While His enemies watched, the Lord boldly lifted the Princess, who eagerly mounted His chariot.

When the Princess was on His chariot, Whose *ag bore* the likeness of Garuda, Lord Madhava drove back the surrounding kings. With Balarama in front, He slowly left, like a lion taking his prey from a pack of jackals. The kings envious of the Lord,

headed by Jarasandha, could not take the humiliating defeat and exclaimed, “Damn us, though we be mighty archers, a mere Cowherd has stolen our honor, even as a small animal might steal the honor of a lion.”

Chapter Fifty-Four: The Marriage of Krishna & Rukmini

Having spoken thus, all those angry kings brandished their weapons and got on their chariots. Each king, with a bow in hand and encircled by his warriors, pursued Krishna. The Yadava commanders, seeing the enemy racing toward them, turned to face them, standing on their bows. Riding on horseback, elephant shoulders or seated on chariots, the enemy kings, expert warriors all, showered arrows upon the *Yadavas* like clouds pouring water on the mountains.

Thin-waisted Rukmini, upon seeing Her Lord’s forces harrassed by torrents of arrows, timidly looked at His face with fearful eyes. The Lord merely laughed, assuring Her, “Don’t be afraid, O Beautiful-eyed One. This enemy is about to be annihilated by Our warriors.” The heroes of the Lord’s army, headed by Gada [Lord Krishna’s younger brother] and Sankarsana, did not tolerate the attack of the envious kings. Counter attacking with arrows, they quickly nullified the enemy’s attack. The heads of soldiers, horses and elephants began to fall to the ground by the million; and earrings, helmets and turbans were scattered across the landscape, piled high with severed limbs clutching swords, bows and clubs, and also the heads of humans, horses, elephants, donkeys, camels and wild asses.

Seeing their armies being decimated by the *Vrishnis*, who were also very eager for victory, the kings led by Jarasandha became discouraged and retreated. The kings went to Sisupala, who was as disturbed as a man who has lost his wife. His complexion was pale, his enthusiasm gone, and his form shriveled. The kings said to Sisupala: “Listen, Sisupala, O lion among men, don’t be depressed. After all, a man’s happiness or distress is never permanent. After all, O King, just as a puppet dances according to the desire of the puppeteer, so in this world, which is controlled by the Supreme Lord, one must be equipoised in both happiness and distress. In fighting with Krishna, I and my twenty-three divisions were defeated seventeen times; but in the eighteenth encounter, I defeated Him. Still I neither lamented nor rejoiced, for I know this world is controlled by Time and Fate. For now, we great commanders have been defeated by the *Yadavas*, who are protected by Krishna. Our foe has conquered us because Time is now favoring them; but in the future, when Time favors us, we shall again conquer Them.”

Thus convinced by his friends, Sisupala and his followers returned to his capital. The other surviving warriors also went back to their respective states. Rukmi, however, who was especially envious of Krishna, could not tolerate the fact that Krishna had carried off his sister to wed in the *Rakshasa* way. Thus he chased after the Lord with a full army

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division. In frustration and rage, mighty-armed Rukmi, garbed in armor and wielding his bow, swore devoutly before the assembled kings, "I shall never enter Kuntina again if I do not kill Krishna and bring Rukmini home with me. I vow this to you."

Having thus spoken, he mounted his chariot and ordered his charioteer, "Drive my horses to where Krishna is now! I must get Him now! This evil Cowherd Boy, proud of His prowess, has abducted my sister. This very day I will smash His pride with my pointed arrows."

Boasting like that, foolish Rukmi, unaware of the extent of Lord Krishna's power, raced toward Him in his chariot and challenged Him: "Stand up and get!" Drawing his bow with great strength, Rukmi struck Krishna with three arrows. Then he said, "Stand still for a moment, O disgrace of the *Yadu* dynasty! You are carrying off my sister like a crow stealing butter meant for sacrifice, but I will follow You wherever You go. Today I shall relieve You of Your foolish pride, You fool, You imposter, You cheater in battle! Let my sister go before You are struck down by my arrows and forced to lie down forever!"

In reply to this, Lord Krishna smiled, and with six arrows struck Rukmi and severed his bow. The Lord then struck Rukmi's four horses with eight more arrows, the driver of his chariot with two more, and the chariot's gear with three more. Rukmi picked up another bow and hit Krishna with five arrows. Although struck with these arrows, Lord Achyuta once more severed Rukmi's bow. Rukmi grabbed yet another bow, but infallible Krishna broke that one into many pieces as well. Then Rukmi picked up various other weapons - iron bludgeon, sword, trident, shield, javelin, pike - but whatever weapon Rukmi seized, Lord Hari destroyed it effortlessly. Then Rukmi jumped down from his chariot, and with sword in hand, rushed madly toward Krishna to kill Him. As Rukmi charged Him, the Lord shot arrows that smashed Rukmi's sword and shield into little pieces. Krishna then brandished His own sharp sword and got ready to kill Rukmi. Seeing the Lord about to kill her brother, saintly Rukmini was overwhelmed with despair. She fell at Her Husband's Lotus Feet and piteously cried, "O immeasurable One, O Controller of all mystic power, Lord of lords and Master of the universe! O mighty armed and all-auspicious One, please do not slay my brother."

Rukmini's great fear caused Her arms to tremble and Her mouth to go dry, while Her throat became constricted due to sorrow. And in Her agitation, Her golden necklace scattered. She clasped Krishna's Lotus Feet, and Krishna, feeling compassion, desisted. Lord Krishna tied up the evildoer with a piece of cloth, and then proceeded to disgrace him by shaving his head here and there, leaving parts of his mustache and hair in a funny way. The heroic *Yadu* warriors had crushed the huge army of their foe, just like elephants crush lotus flowers.

When the *Yadus* approached Krishna, they observed Rukmi in a very sorry condition, almost dying of grief. When all-powerful Lord Balarama saw Rukmi's condition, He compassionately untied him and criticized Lord Krishna severely: "My dear Krishna, Your action is not proper! This action will bring disgrace upon Us, for to disgrace a near relative by shaving his mustache and hair here and there is tantamount to killing him." To Rukmini, He advised, "Pious lady, please do not be angry with Us out of sympathy for your

brother's defacement. Only one's own self is responsible for one's happiness and distress, for a man experiences but the reactions of his own *karma*."

Again speaking to Krishna, Balarama said: "A relative should never be killed, even if his offense warrants such punishment. Rather, throw him out of the family! Since he is already dead due to his sin, why kill him again?"

Balarama continued to instruct Rukmini: "A warrior's code of sacred duty - established by Lord Brahma himself - dictates that one may sometimes have to kill even a brother. That code is most inexorable."

Again Balarama spoke to Krishna: "Blinded by pride in their personal opulences, conceited men offend others over such things as kingdom, wealth, land, power, women and honor."

Balarama then said: "Dear Lady, your attitude is unjust, for like an unintelligent person you desire good for those who are hostile to everyone and who perform evil to your real well-wishers. The Supreme Lord's *maya* makes us forget our real Selves, and thus accept the body as the Self, and to consider other people to be enemies, friends or neutral parties. Those who are thus bewildered think the One Supreme Soul, Who dwells in all beings, as many, even as one may think the light in the sky, or the sky itself, to be many. This material body, having a beginning and end, is composed of physical elements only. The bodily conception imposes ignorance on the Self and causes one to undergo birth and death repeatedly.

"O intelligent lady, the Soul never undergoes contact with or separation from insubstantial material objects, because the Soul is their origin and illuminator. Thus the Soul resembles the sun, which never comes in contact with nor separates from the sense of sight and what is seen. Birth and other bodily changes are experienced by the body but not by the Self, just as transformations occur in the moon's phases but never in the moon itself, although the new-moon day may be commonly referred to as the moon's 'death.' As a sleeping person falsely perceives himself, the objects of sense enjoyment and the results of his acts within the fantasy of a dream, so one who is ignorant also thinks material existence to be real. Therefore, with transcendental knowledge destroy the grief that is confusing and bewildering your mind. Please resume your innate transcendental mood, O Princess with a pristine smile."

Sukadeva Goswami said: Thus enlightened through Lord Balarama's instruction, slender-waisted Rukmini gave up Her depression and pacified Her mind by spiritual intelligence. Left with only his breath, defeated by his enemies and having lost his strength and bodily luster, Rukmi was not able to forget how he had been defaced and disgraced. In frustration he built for his residence a city called Bhojakata. Because he had vowed, 'I will never reenter Kundina without first killing Krishna and bringing back my sister Rukmini,' in a mood of mad frustration Rukmi thereafter resided at that place.

After defeating the opposing kings, Krishna brought Bhismaka's daughter Rukmini to His capital, Dwaraka, and married her according to scriptural injunctions, O King. At that ceremony there was great rejoicing by everyone in Yadupuri, for they loved only Krishna. The residents there, being full of joy and ornamented with shining jewels and earrings, all brought wedding gifts which they gave to the exquisitely

garbed Bride and Groom.

“The *Vrishnis*’ city appeared exquisitely beautiful: there were festive tall columns, and also over garland decorated archways, precious gems and cloth banners. Arrangements of auspicious, all waterpots, a guru smoke and lamps graced every entrance. The streets of the city were cleansed by intoxicated elephants which belonged to kings who were wedding guests, and these elephants furthermore enhanced Dwaraka’s beauty by putting branches of betel-nut and plantain trees beside all the doorways. The royal families who belonged to the various *Kuru* clans happily met one another in the crowds of people eagerly going here and there. The kings and their princesses were totally amazed to hear the story of Rukmini’s abduction, which was glorified everywhere in song and poetry. Dwaraka’s inhabitants were full of joy to see Krishna, the all-opulent Lord, united with Rukmini, the original Goddess of Fortune.

Chapter Fifty-Five: The History of Pradhyumna

Cupid, or Kamadeva, is an expansion of Vasudeva. He had been burnt to ashes previously by Rudra’s anger. Now, to get a new body, he had merged back into Lord Vasudeva’s body and taken birth from the womb of Rukmini by the semen of Lord Krishna. He was given the name Pradhyumna, and in every respect, he was just like his father.

A demon called Sambara, who was able to assume any form he wished, stole the infant before He was ten days old. Knowing that Pradhyumna was his enemy, Sambara threw Him into the ocean and contentedly returned home. A very huge fish, however, swallowed Pradhyumna and this very fish was caught in a fisherman’s net. The fishermen sold that very large fish to Sambara, who gave it to the cooks in his kitchen, whereupon they began to cut it up with a sharp knife.

Seeing a female child in the fish’s belly, the cooks gave the baby to Mayavati, who was quite astonished. Narada *Muni* then manifested himself to her and explained everything about the infant’s birth and how he had gotten into the fish’s belly. In fact, Mayavati was Cupid’s former wife whose name was Rati. While waiting for her spouse in a new body - his previous body having been consumed by Lord Shiva - she had been given the duty of preparing rice and vegetables by Sambara. Mayavati immediately understood that this baby was actually Kamadeva, her long awaited Husband. Thus she felt great love for Him.

Within a short span of time, this scion of Krishna, Pradhyumna, miraculously attained adulthood. He was most charming for all women to behold. With raised eyebrows and a bashful smile, Mayavati displayed various symptoms of conjugal attraction as she affectionately served this child who was actually her Husband. His eyes were as broad as lotus petals, and His arms were long, making Him the most handsome of men. Observing His mother’s amorous behavior, Pradhyumna said to her, “Dear mother, your

behavior has changed. You are going beyond the proper sentiments of a mother and are acting more like a lover.”

Rati replied: “That is due to your actually being the Son of Lord Narayana, who was kidnapped from Your home by Sambara. I, Rati, am actually Your legitimate wife, my dear, because You are Cupid. That demon Sambara threw You into the sea before You were even ten days old, and a mystic *sh* swallowed You. In this very kitchen, we saved and recovered You from the *sh*’s belly. O Master, immediately kill this wicked Sambara, Your powerful enemy. Although a skilled magician, You can destroy him by superior magic. Your dear mother, having lost Her Baby, weeps for You like a Kurari bird. She is filled with intense love for Her child, even like a cow cries for its lost calf.”

So speaking, Mayavati imparted to great-souled Pradhyumna the mystic knowledge of *Mahamaya*, which supasses all black arts. Pradhyumna then approached Sambara and boldly challenged him, throwing intolerable insults at him to cause him to get. Deeply offended by his cruel words, Sambara became as irate as a kicked serpent. With club in hand, he ran toward Him, his eyes red with rage. Sambara whirled his club furiously and then threw it at Pradhyumna, causing a sound as deafening as a thunder crack.

As Sambara’s club flew toward Him, Pradhyumna knocked it down with his own club. Pradhyumna then angrily threw His club at Sambara. Then, resorting to the black magic taught him by Maya Danava, he suddenly flew in the air and let loose a barrage of weapons upon Lord Krishna’s Son. Distraught by this hail of weapons, Pradhyumna, the mighty warrior, made use of *Mahamaya*, a mystic science manifest from the mode of goodness, which can overcome all other mystic powers.

Sambara then unleashed hundreds of mystic weapons, but Pradhyumna countered every one. Drawing His own razor-sharp sword, Pradhyumna quickly severed Sambara’s head with its red mustache, earrings and helmet. As the inhabitants of the heavenly planets showered Lord Pradhyumna with flowers and loudly chanted His praises, His wife suddenly manifested in the sky and took Him back to Dwaraka.

Lord Pradhyumna and His spouse looked like a cloud full of lightning as they dropped from the sky and landed in the inner chambers of Lord Krishna’s opulent palace, which was filled with lovely ladies. Upon seeing His blue complexion, the same color as a rain cloud, His yellow silk clothing, His long arms and pinkish eyes, His enchanting lotus face with a charming smile, His rare ornaments and His curly jet-black hair, the palace women all thought He was Lord Krishna. Thus they became bashful and tried to hide themselves.

Gradually, from small differences between His Form and Krishna’s, the ladies knew that He was not Krishna. Astonished and delighted, they eagerly went to Pradhyumna and His consort, who appeared to be a jewel among women. Seeing Pradhyumna, dark-eyed, sweet-voiced Rukmini thought of her lost son, and Her breasts oozed milk out of affection. Srimati Rukminidevi thought: “Who is this lotus-eyed paragon among men? What man’s scion is He, and what woman had Him in her womb? And who is this lovely lady He has taken as His spouse? If my lost Boy, Who was taken from the maternity chamber, were still alive, He would be the same age and have look just like this young man. How is it that this boy so much resembles Lord Krishna, the carrier of Sarnga, in His physical Form, in His walk and even the tone of His voice? Yes, I think He must be the same Boy I carried in my womb,

since I feel great love for Him and furthermore my left arm is twitching.”

As Queen Rukmini pondered in this way, Lord Krishna, Devaki’s Son, arrived there with Vasudeva and Devaki. Although Krishna knew perfectly all that had transpired, He was silent. But Sage Narada appeared there and told everything, starting with Sambara’s abduction of the Baby. When the women of Krishna’s palace heard this amazing narration, they joyfully welcomed Pradhyumna, who had been away for so many years, but was now back, as if from the dead.

Vasudeva, Devaki, Balarama, Krishna and all the palace ladies, especially Queen Rukmini, embraced the newly arrived couple and greatly rejoiced. Upon hearing that kidnapped Pradhyumna had come home, the Dwaraka’s residents declared, “By causeless mercy Providence has let this Boy return, as if from the dead!” It is not surprising that the palace ladies, who should have felt motherly affection for Pradhyumna, secretly felt conjugal affection for Him, as if He were their Husband. Indeed, the Son exactly resembled His Divine Father. Pradhyumna was, in fact, a perfect replica of Lord Krishna, and looked to them like Cupid Himself. Since even those in the position of His mother felt sexual attraction for Him, then what can be said of what other women felt for Him when they saw Him?

Chapter Fifty-Six: The Syamantaka Jewel

Having offended the Lord, Satrajit atoned for his misbehavior by presenting Krishna with his daughter together with the *Syamantaka* Jewel.

Maharaja Pariksit inquired: “O great *Brahmana*, tell me what Satrajit did to offend Lord Krishna so greatly? From where did he acquire the *Syamantaka* Jewel? And what made him give his daughter to Krishna?”

Sukadeva Goswami said: The sun god, Surya, had great affection for Satrajit, his faithful devotee. Acting as an affectionate friend, the demigod gave him the *Syamantaka* Jewel as a token of his satisfaction with him. When Satrajit wore the Jewel on his neck, he shone like the sun itself, O King, and thus was unrecognized. When the inhabitants of Dwaraka saw Satrajit, even from a distance, his effulgence blinded them, and they thought he was Surya, the sun god. They then proceeded to inform Lord Krishna, Who was leisurely playing with dice: “Obeisances to You, O Narayana, Holder of the conch, disc and club, O Govinda, O lotus-eyed Damodar, O most dear descendant of Yadu. Lord Savitra is here to see You. He has blinded everyone’s eyes with his brilliant effulgence. Even the most exalted demigods in all three worlds are anxiously seeking You out, O Lord, now that You have hidden Yourself in the *Yadu* dynasty. The unborn sun god is here to see You.” Hearing these innocent but ignorant words, the lotus-eyed Lord smiled and said, “He is not the sun god, but Satrajit, who is brilliantly glowing because of his Jewel.”

King Satrajit meanwhile entered his well-appointed home and began to execute

auspicious rituals. He employed qualified *brahmanas* to install the *Syamantaka* Jewel in the temple room of his house. Every day the gem would yield about one hundred sixty pounds of gold, and the whole surrounding area in which it was kept and properly worshiped would be free of tragedies, such as untimely death, famine, as well as evils like mental and physical disorders, snake bites and the presence of deceitful persons.

Once Lord Krishna asked Satrajit to present the Jewel to Ugrasena, the *Yadu* King, but being greedy, Satrajit refused, not considering the seriousness of the offense he was committing by refusing the Lord's request. His sinful reaction soon manifested. It happened like this: Prasena, Satrajit's brother, with the brilliant Jewel hanging from his neck, mounted his steed and went hunting in the forest. There, a lion attacked Prasena and his horse and took away the Jewel. The lion was then killed by Jambavan, who wanted the Jewel for his child to play with. When Jambavan got home to his cave, he gave the "toy" to his young child.

Meanwhile, when Prasena did not return home, Satrajit became very disturbed and said, "Probably Krishna killed Prasena when he was wearing the Jewel around his neck." The people in general heard this accusation and began to whisper maliciously. When Lord Krishna heard this accusation, He wanted to remove the blot on His reputation and so took some of Dwaraka's leading citizens, and with them retraced Prasena's path. There in the forest they found Prasena and his horse, as slain by the lion. Further down the path they found the lion's carcass, as slain by Jambavan, who lived in a cave nearby. The Lord left His companions outside the fearsome, dark cave, which was home to the King of the Bears, and entered it alone.

There He saw the most desirable of jewels, *Syamantaka*, being used as a child's toy. Set on taking it away, Krishna approached the child. The child's nurse, however, screamed in fright upon seeing the Stranger standing before them. Jambavan, the King of Bears and strongest of the strong, upon hearing her scream, angrily charged the Lord. In great anger, unaware of His real identity, Jambavan began fighting very ferociously with the Supreme Lord, his real Master. They fought furiously, each determined to prevail. Fighting against each other with different weapons and then with tree trunks, stones and finally their bare fists, They fought like two hawks fighting over a morsel of food.

The fighting continued without interruption for twenty-eight days, the two combatants striking each other with their iron-like fists, like lightening bolts. His bulging muscles, sore from the blows of Lord Krishna's fists, his strength failing and his limbs perspiring, Jambavan was bewildered and astonished, and finally said to the Lord: "You must be the life air and the bodily, sensory and mental strength of all living beings! You are the Original Person, Lord Vishnu, the Supreme, All-powerful Controller! You are the Original Creator of all creators; and of everything created, You are the actual substance! You are the Supreme Lord and Supreme Soul of all souls, the Subduer of all subduers! You are He Who forced the ocean to give passage when Your angry, sidelong glances, disturbed the sea creatures within the watery depths! You are He who built a very long bridge over the ocean, just to establish Your Fame, and Who then burned down Lanka City, and Whose arrows severed Ravana's heads, removing the heavy burden of that horrid demon from the earth."

Lord Krishna then spoke to the King of Bears, who had at last realized the Truth. Touching Jambavan with His lotus hand, which bestows all blessings. He spoke most

affectionately to His devotee in a voice as grave and deep as a resounding cloud: “It is for the Jewel, O Lord of the Bears, that We have come to this cave. I want to use the Jewel to prove that the accusations against Me are false. Thus requested, Jambavan happily honored Lord Krishna by giving Him the Jewel, together with his maiden daughter, Jambavati.

When Lord Sauri first entered the cave, the Dwaraka citizens accompanying Him waited for Him to come out for twelve days, but when He did not come out, they finally gave up and returned home in great sorrow. When Rukminidevi, Devaki, Vasudeva and Krishna’s other friends and relatives heard what had happened, they all grieved greatly. They cursed Satrajit and approached the Durga Deity, called Chandrabhaga, praying to Her for Krishna’s quick return. When Dwaraka’s citizens finished worshipping Chandrabhaga, She spoke to them, promising to answer their prayer.

Then suddenly Lord Krishna, having achieved His purpose, appeared before them with a new wife, giving them all great joy. Seeing Lord Hrishikesh come back, as if from death itself, accompanied by a new wife and also wearing the *Syamantaka* Jewel from His neck, all the people became most jubilant. Lord Krishna then called Satrajit to the royal assembly hall, and there, in front of King Ugrasena, Krishna told about the recovery of the Jewel and then presented it to Satrajit.

Hanging his head down in shame, Satrajit accepted the gem and then returned home, but he felt very remorseful for his offensive behavior. Pondering over his great offense and concerned about the possibility of a clash with the Lord’s powerful devotees, Satrajit thought: “How can I purify myself of my offense, and how can I make Lord Achyuta satisfied with me as a gain? What is there I can do to again become fortunate and avoid being cursed for being so miserly, shortsighted, foolish and avaricious? I know! I can offer my daughter, Satyabhama, the crest jewel of women, to the Lord along with the *Syamantaka* Jewel. Such, indeed, is the only way to appease Him.”

Having thus intelligently determined, Satrajit personally went to present Lord Krishna with his beautiful nubile daughter and the *Syamantaka* Jewel. The Lord then married Satyabhama according to religious principles. Because she possessed most excellent behavior, together with rare beauty, broad-mindedness and all other good qualities, Satyabhama had been desired and sought after by many noble men.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said, “We do not want to possess the Jewel, O King. You are a great devotee of the sun god, so it should remain in your possession. In this way We will all enjoy its benefits.”

Chapter Fifty-Seven: Satrajit Murdered, the Jewel Returned

Sri Sukadeva Goswami said: Although Lord Govinda was fully aware of all that had occurred, when He heard reports that the Pandavas and Queen Kunti had been burned to

death, He and Lord Balarama went to the *Kurus'* kingdom to fulfill the family obligations. The Two Lords there met with Bhishma, Vidura, Kripa, Drona and Gandhari. Showing grief equal to theirs, They said, "Alas, what a tragedy this is!"

Taking advantage of this opportunity, Akrura and Kritavarma approached Satadhanva and said, "Why don't you take the *Syamantaka* jewel? You were promised Satrajit's jewel-like daughter, but then she married Krishna instead, thus contemptuously neglecting you. So Satrajit should not follow his brother's path?" His mind inflamed by these words, Satadhanva cruelly murdered Satrajit in his sleep due to his greed. But in this way the sinful Satadhanva also quickly insured the end of his own life as well. Nevertheless, while the women of Satrajit's palace wept and screamed uncontrollably, Satadhanva stole the Jewel and ran.

When Satyabhama saw her father's dead body, she fell into deep despair, crying, "My father, my father! Now I am dead!" and fell unconscious. Upon regaining consciousness, Satyabhama had her father's corpse put in a large vessel of oil, and then went to Hatinapura, where she sorrowfully told Krishna all about her father's murder. Despite His being already aware of the situation, when He and Balarama heard this sad tale, They exclaimed, "Alas! What a great tragedy for Us!" Thus imitating the behavior of ordinary humans, They lamented bitterly, and Their eyes filled with tears. The Supreme Lord returned to His capital with His wife and Brother. Upon arriving in His capital, Dwaraka, He got ready to avenge Satrajit's death and take back the Jewel from his murderer.

Hearing that Lord Krishna was going to kill him, Satadhanva became struck with great fear. To save his own life he went to Kritavarma and begged for assistance, but Kritavarma replied, "I will never offend the Supreme Lords, Krishna and Balarama. Indeed, no one who troubles Them can expect good fortune! Kamsa and his men lost both their lives and their wealth because of hostility toward Them. After fighting Them seventeen times, Jarasandha had not even a chariot left to his name."

His plea refused, Satadhanva next went to Akrura and begged his protection. But Akrura also told him, "Who can oppose the Personalities of Godhead, knowing Their strength? The Supreme Lord creates, maintains and destroys this universe as a Pastime. Even the universal creators cannot understand His purpose, since even they are bewildered by His illusory *maya*. As a seven-year-old Boy, Krishna lifted up an entire mountain as easily as a young boy holds up a mushroom, and held it up for a whole week. I offer my humble obeisances to Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Whose every deed is amazing! He is the unlimited Source and Center of all existence, the Supreme Soul."

His appeal for help thus denied by Akrura also, Satadhanva left the precious gem in Akrura's care and led on a steed that could cover eight hundred miles in a single day. Krishna and Balarama then got on the chariot riding the *Agof* Gauda and yoked with Krishna's special swift horses. They then pursued Satrajit's murderer. In a garden near Mithila, the horse Satadhanva was on collapsed. Being very scared, Satadhanva left the horse and ran as fast as he could, with Krishna in hot pursuit.

Since Satadhanva was running on foot, the Supreme Lord also ran on foot. When He caught him, He at once cut off Satadhanva's head with His razor-sharp disc. Then the Lord searched Satadhanva's clothing for the *Syamantaka* jewel. When He didn't find

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the Jewel, Krishna went to His Brother Balarama and said, "We have slain Satadhanva uselessly, for the Jewel isn't here."

To this Lord Balarama responded, "Satadhanva must have put the Jewel for safekeeping with someone in Dwaraka. Go back to Dwaraka and find that person. For a little while, I want to visit My good friend King Videha." Having thus spoken, Lord Balarama, *Yadu's* beloved descendent entered the City of Mithila. Mithila's King immediately stood up when he saw Lord Balarama coming. With great affection the King honored that most highly worshipable Lord by giving Him elaborate adoration, according to scriptural injunctions. All-powerful Lord Balarama remained in Mithila for several years, entertained most excellently by His loving devotee, Janaka Maharaja. During this time the son of Dhritarashtra, Duryodhana, learned club fighting from Balarama.

When Lord Keshava got back to Dwaraka, He described the end of Satadhanva, as well as His own failure to find the precious *Syamantaka* jewel., but in such a way that would satisfy His beloved, Satyabhama. Lord Krishna then took charge of the various funeral rites for His dead relative, Satrajit, to the satisfaction of all the well-wishers there. When Kritavarma and Akrura, who had actually incited Satadhanva to commit the murder, learned that he had been slain, they fled Dwaraka in fright and went elsewhere. While Akrura was absent, ill omens were seen in Dwaraka. The citizens started to suffer from mental and physical disorders, as well as from disturbances by earthly creatures and by higher powers. Some people said that the disturbances were due to Akrura's absence. They had completely forgotten the Supreme Lord's glories, which they had previously so often described. How can there be calamities in a place which is the residence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and where great sages reside?

The Elders said: "Formerly, when Lord Indra withheld rain from Kashi [Benares,] the King gave Gandini, his daughter, to Svapalka, who was staying with him at the time, and then it rained in Kashi. And wherever his son, Akrura, who is equally powerful as his father, stays, Lord Indra always provides sufficient rain. That place, indeed, is free of miseries and premature deaths."

Hearing these words, Lord Janardana, though well aware that Akrura's absence was not the cause of the evil omens, immediately summoned Akrura back to Dwaraka. Upon His arrival, Lord Krishna honored Akrura, contentedly peering at him. Krishna, Who was aware of Akrura's heart, due to His being the Supersoul, smiled and said to him: "O master of charity, I know the precious *Syamantaka* Jewel was left in your keeping by Satadhanva and that it is still with you. Although We have known this all along, We have not spoken of it because Satrajit left no sons; his grandson, however, should get his inheritance. Let him be responsible for arranging memorial offerings of *pinda* and water, clear his grandfather's debts and keep the rest of the inheritance for Himself. Nevertheless, let the Jewel remain with you, O trustworthy Akrura, as no one else can care for it properly.

"But please, I request you, show the Jewel, as My Brother Balarama does not believe what I have said. In this way, O fortunate one, you will satisfy My relatives. Everyone suspects you have the Jewel, for you are always performing sacrifices on altars of pure gold."

Feeling much ashamed at hearing Krishna's words, Svapalka's son, Akrura, showed

the Jewel from where it was hidden in his clothing and humbly offered it to Krishna. The rare Gem shone as brilliantly as the sun. After Krishna had thus shown the *Syamantaka* Jewel to His family members, thus disproving the false accusations against Him, Krishna gave the Jewel back to Akrura.

This narration, full of descriptions of the prowess of Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, nullifies sinful reactions and bestows great auspiciousness. Anyone who hears, recites or remembers it will destroy his own infamy and sins, and will obtain peace.

Chapter Fifty-Eight: Krishna Marries Five Princesses

Once, the all-opulent Personality of Godhead went to Indraprastha to visit the Pandavas, who had again appeared publicly. With the Lord on His journey were Yuyudhana and other friends. When the Pandavas saw that Krishna, Lord Mukunda, had arrived, Pritha's heroic sons all stood up, as if they were corpses responding to the return of their life air. The heroes embraced Lord Achyuta, Krishna, and contact with His body freed them from all sin. Looking into His affectionate, smiling face, they became overwhelmed with joy. After Krishna bowed down at Yudhisthira and Bhima's feet, and warmly embraced His friend, Arjuna, He also accepted humble obeisances from the twins, Nakula and Sahadeva.

Sinless Draupadi, the Pandavas' recently acquired wife, slowly and reverently approached Lord Krishna, Who sat on an elevated seat, and offered Him her obeisances. Satyaki also took a seat of honor, after accepting worship and greeting from the Pandavas. The Lord's other associates, being duly honored, also sat down. Then the Lord visited His aunt, Queen Kunti. He bowed to her and she embraced Him, her eyes wet with tears of affection. Lord Krishna inquired from her and Draupadi, her daughter-in-law, about their welfare, and they questioned Him about His relatives in Dwaraka. Being so overcome by love that her eyes filled with tears and her throat choked up, Queen Kunti recalled all the troubles she and her sons had endured. Thus she spoke to Lord Krishna, Who comes to His devotees to mitigate their distress.

Queen Kunti said: "My dear Krishna, our prosperity was assured when You remembered us, and showed us your concern by sending my brother, Akrura, to visit us. For You, Who are the Supreme Soul and well-wishing Friend of the universe, there is never the illusion of 'us' and 'them'. Still, residing within the hearts of everyone, You relieve the suffering of those who remember You always."

King Yudhisthira said: "O Supreme Controller, I can't imagine what pious deeds we have performed to be able to see You, Whom even the masters of *yogic* perfection rarely see." Asked by the King to remain with them for some time, Almighty Lord Krishna happily stayed in Indraprastha for the months of the rainy season, giving great joy to the city's residents.

Once Arjuna, the destroyer of powerful enemies, put on armor, mounted his chariot

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with the æg of Hanuman on it, took up his bow and his two inexhaustible quivers and went sporting with Krishna in a nearby forest lled with ferocious animals. With arrows Arjuna shot boar, tiger and buffalo, along with many other animals, such as rabbits, deer and porcupines. Servants carried the slain animals, which were t for offering in sacri æ, back t oKi rg Yudhi stli ra. Then, feel ing tired and t li rsty. They we nt t ot he bank of the Yamuna for a break.

While Krishna and Arjuna bathed, they drank deeply of the river's crystal clear water. The great Warriors then saw an attractive damsel walking nearby. Sent by the Lord, Arjuna approached the lovely lady, who had beautiful hips and a lovely face, and inquired, "Who are you, O slender-waisted lady? Whose daughter are you, and where is your home? Why are you here? I think you must be looking for a spouse. Please tell me everything, O beautiful lady."

Sri Kalindi said: "I am the sun god's daughter. I desire to have the most excellent and muni ænt Lor dVi shnu as my husband, and t ot læt end I ame xecut ing s ever e penances. I will accept no other spouse than He, the Shelter of the Goddess of Fortune. May that Supreme Personality, Lord Mukunda, the Shelter of the helpless, be satis æd with me. I am called Kalindi, and I live in a palace my father built for me under Yamuna's waters. There I shall remain until I meet Lord Achyuta." Arjuna repeated this to Lord Vasudeva, Who was aware of it already. The Lord then put Kalindi onto His chariot and returned to King Yudhisthira.

Then Lord Krishna, with the permission of Arjuna and other well-wishing relatives and friends, went back to Dwaraka with Satyaki and His entourage. The supremely merciful Lord then married Kalindi on a day when moon and sun and all other heavenly bodies were all propitiously situated. In this way He gave the greatest pleasure to His devotees.

Vindya and Anuvindya, who shared the Avanti throne, were followers of Duryodhana. When it came time for Mitravinda, their sister, to select her husband in a *svayamvara* assembly, they forbade her to select Krishna, although she was greatly attracted to Him. Lord Krishna, however, forcibly took Princess Mitravinda away, in front of all the rival kings.

Nagnajit, the pious King of Kausalya, had a beautiful daughter named Satya, or Nagnajiti. The kings who were suitors could not marry her without subduing seven sharp-horned bulls. The bulls were very vicious and unmanageable, and they could not endure even the smell of a prince. When the Master of the *Vaishnavas*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, heard of the Princess who could be won only by defeating the wild bulls, He travelled to the capital of Kausalya with a large army.

The King of Kausalya, happy to see Krishna, worshiped Him by getting up from his throne and offering Him a seat of honor as well as valuable gifts. Lord Krishna also addressed the King very respectfully. When the King's daughter saw that Krishna, the most desirable of handsome suitors, had come, she immediately desired Him as her husband. She prayed, "May Krishna become my husband. For all the sacred vows I have observed, let the sacred rey id dt he f ul llm t of this desire Goddess Laksmi, Lord Shiva Lord Brahma and the rulers of the different planets, all put the dust of His Lotus

Feet on their heads; and to protect the principles of religion, which He created, He accepts Pastime Incarnations at various times. How can I please that Supreme Personality of Godhead?"

King Nagnajit then worshiped the Lord properly and addressed Him, "O Lord of the universe, Lord Narayana, You are replete in Your own spiritual pleasure, so what can this tiny person do for You?"

Sukadeva Goswami said: O King Pariksit, O noble descendant of Kuru, Lord Krishna was very pleased, and after taking a comfortable seat, He smiled and spoke to the King in a voice as deep as a rumbling cloud: "O ruler of men," said the Supreme Lord, "Learned authorities decry begging for One in the royal order, Who is doing his duties religiously. Even so, because I desire your friendship, I ask you for your beautiful daughter, even though We will give no dowry in exchange."

The King said: "My dear Lord, who could be a superior husband for my daughter than You, the sole abode of all Transcendental Qualities? The Goddess of Fortune Herself resides on Your body, and never leaves You for any reason. But to recognize my daughter's proper husband, O Chief of the *Satvatas*, we set a condition to test the qualities of her suitors. These wild bulls are very difficult to tame, O Hero. They have defeated all princes who have come so far, breaking their bones. If You subdue them, O descendant of *Yadu*, You will show Yourself to be the right Bridegroom for my daughter, O Lord of Sri."

Upon hearing these stipulations, the Lord tightened His belt, expanded Himself into seven Krishna Forms and then easily subdued the bulls. Lord Sauri, Krishna, tied up the bulls, causing their prideful spirit to be broken. He then pulled them around with ropes, even as a child pulls a wooden toy bull in play. Then King Nagnajit, astounded but satisfied, happily handed over his daughter to Lord Krishna. The Supreme Personality of Godhead then accepted this bride in the proper *Vedic* way. All the King's wives experienced the greatest pleasure when the royal Princess got Lord Krishna as her Husband, and an atmosphere of great festivity prevailed. Horns, conchshells and drums blared, together with instrumental and vocal music as well as the sound of *brahmanas* chanting blessings, altogether it made a most transcendental sound.

As a dowry, powerful King Nagnajit gave three thousand young handmaidens, dressed in rare garments with golden ornaments hanging from their necks, ten thousand cows, nine thousand elephants, a hundred times more chariots than elephants, a hundred times more horses than chariots, and a hundred times more menservants than horses. The King of Koshalā, his heart overwhelmed with affection, had the newlyweds seated on Their chariot and then sent Them on their way, escorted by an army of guards.

When the envious kings, who had been rival suitors, heard all that had happened, they attempted to stop Lord Krishna on the roadway as He took His new bride home. But just as the bulls had had their strength broken by the Lord, so too the *Yadu* warriors now broke the prowess of the royal suitors and their armies.

Arjuna, wielder of the Gandiva bow, was eager to please his friend, Krishna, and thus he pushed back those opponents. He did this as deftly as a lion chases away small

animals. The Chief of the *Yadus*, Lord Devaki-suta, then took His dowry to Dwaraka and lived there very happily.

Bhadra was a princess of the Kaikeya kingdom. She was the daughter of Srutakirti, Lord Krishna's paternal aunt. When her brothers offered her to Him, the Lord happily married her. The Lord then married Laksmana, the King of Madra's daughter. Krishna went to her *svayamvara* and took her away in the same way that Garuda once stole the demigods' nectar. Lord Krishna also accepted thousands of other wives equal to these when He slayed Bhaumasura and liberated the beautiful maidens the demon had held captive.

Chapter Fifty-Nine: The Killing of Demon Naraka

King Pariksit inquired: How was Bhaumasura, the kidnapper of many women, slain by the Supreme Lord? Please tell me this Pastime of Lord Krishna.

Sukadeva Goswami said: After Bhauma stole the earrings of Indra's mother and Varuna's umbrella, as well as the demigod playground on Mandara Mountain, Indra approached Lord Krishna and told Him of these crimes. The Lord with His wife, Satyabhama, then travelled on Garuda to Bhaumasura's capital, *Pragjyotisa-pura*, which was protected on all sides by many weapons, hills, water, wind and fire, and by the *mura-pasha* wire obstructions.

With His mace the Lord quickly broke through the rock obstructions, with His arrows, the many weapon defending it; with His disc, the water, fire and wind formations; and with His sword, He cut down *mura-pasha* wire cables. With the blast of His conchshell, Lord Gadadhara obliterated the fortress's magic seals and broke the spirit of its bold defenders. Finally, with His mighty club, He destroyed the surrounding earthen embankments.

The ten-headed Mura demon, who lived in the murky depths of the moat that lay all around the city, was bestirred upon hearing the vibration of Lord Krishna's *Panchajanya* conchshell, a vibration as terrifying as the thunder announcing the end of the age. Shining with a terrible, blinding effulgence, like the sun's rays at the millennium's end, Mura seemed to be able to swallow up the three worlds with his ten mouths. Brandishing his trident, he hurled it forcefully at Garuda, roaring with all ten mouths. The vibration filled land and sky in all directions to the limits of space, reverberating against the universe's outer shell. With two arrows the Lord hit the demon's trident streaking toward Garuda, breaking the trident into three pieces. Next Krishna sent several arrows into Mura's face. The demon furiously hurled his club in response at the Lord. As that club sped toward Him, Lord Krishna countered it with His own club, shattering Mura's club into thousands of pieces. Mura then lifted his arms and rushed toward the unconquerable Lord, Who deftly sliced off the demon's heads with His chakra weapon. Lifeless, Mura's headless body fell into the moat's water like a mountain peak smashed by Indra's thunderbolt. Enraged by their father's death, the demon's seven sons prepared to retaliate.

As ordered by Bhaumasura, the seven sons of Mura followed Pitha, their general, onto the battle d carrying their many weapons. These powerful warriors all simultaneously attacked the omnipotent Lord using swords, arrows, clubs, spears, tridents and lances, but Krishna, with perfect accuracy, cut every one of their weapons into little pieces with His arrows. Besides that, the Lord severed the arms, legs, heads and thighs, and smashed the armor of all the warriors led by Pitha, sending them to Yamaraja's abode. Narakasura, Mother Earth's son, could not restrain his fury when he realized the fate of his warriors. Thus he proceeded forth personally from his citadel with mad elephants born from the Milk Ocean.

Lord Krishna and Satyabhama, mounted upon Garuda, appeared to be a cloud full of lightning sitting over the sun. Upon seeing the Lord, Bhauma used his *Sataghni* weapon, and simultaneously all of Bhauma's soldiers attacked Him also. In response, Lord Gadagraja rained His deadly arrows at Bhaumasura's army - arrows with variegated feathers that soon turned that army to a pile of severed limbs. The Lord also killed all the enemies' horses and elephants. Simultaneously, Lord Hari struck down the weapons and missiles that the enemy soldiers rained at Him, destroying every one. Meanwhile Garuda, while carrying the Lord, attacked the enemy's elephants with his wings. Attacked by Garuda's talons, beak and wings, the elephants ran back into the city, leaving Narakasura alone to oppose Krishna.

Seeing his forces driven back and harassed by Garuda, Bhauma attacked Garuda with his spear, which had formerly defeated Indra's thunderbolt. But even though struck by that powerful weapon, Garuda was not hurt in the least. Truly, it was like an elephant being hit with a cover garland. Bhauma, thus thwarted in all his attempts, took up his trident, intending to kill Krishna. But before he released it, the Lord severed his head with His razor-sharp disc.

Falling on the ground, Bhaumasura's head glowed brightly, still adorned with earrings and helmet. Amid cries of "Alas, alas!" which were heard from the demons, and "Well done! Well done!" from the devotees, the sages and principal demigods all worshiped Lord Mukunda with a shower of flowers. The Earth Goddess then approached Lord Krishna and gave Him Aditi's earrings, which were made of gold and inlaid with gleaming jewels. She presented Him with Varuna's umbrella, the peak of Mandara Mountain and a *Vaijayanti* garland also.

After offering obeisances to the Lord and then standing with folded hands, the Goddess Bhumi, her heart filled with devotion, began to extoll the Glories of the Lord of the universe, Whom even the greatest of demigods worship: "Obeisances unto You, O Lord of the demigods, O Holder of the disc, conchshell and club. O Supreme Soul of the heart, You assume Your various Incarnations to fulfill Your devotees' desires. My humble obeisances I offer to You, O Lord, Whose abdomen has a depression like a lotus cover, Who is always decorated with lotus covers, Whose glance is as satisfying as a lotus, and Whose feet are marked with lotuses!

"My obeisances unto You, O Supreme Lord Vasudeva, Sri Vishnu, the primeval Lord and primal Seed! My obeisances unto You, O Omniscient One, full of limitless energies,

the unborn Father of the universe, the Absolute! O Lord of the high and the low, O Lord of the created elements, O all-pervading Supersoul, obeisances unto You! Desiring to create, O Eternal Master, You expand and then assume the mode of passion. You do similarly with the mode of ignorance, when You desire to withdraw the universe, and with goodness, when You desire to maintain it. Nonetheless, You remain aloof from all these modes. You are Time, the *Pradhana* and the *Purusha*, O Lord of the universe, yet You are always separate and distinct. It is *maya*, that earth, water, ether, sense objects, demigods, mind, the senses, false ego and the entire material energy exist independently from You! In fact, everything is within You, my Lord, Who are the One without a second!

“Here is Bhaumasura’s son. He is very frightened, but he is approaching Your Lotus Feet, since You mitigate the distress of all who seek shelter in You. Please protect him. Put Your lotus hand, which destroys all sins, upon his head.”

Sukadeva Goswami said: Thus asked by Goddess Bhumi, in tones of humble devotion, the Supreme Lord granted fearlessness to her grandson and then went to Bhaumasura’s palace, which was full of many luxuries. There Lord Krishna found sixteen thousand royal maidens, whom Bhaumasura had captured from various kings. The damsels became entranced when they saw Krishna, that best of Males! In their minds the princesses all accepted Krishna, Who had come there by destiny, as their chosen Husband.

With the prayer, “May Providence allow this Man to become my Husband,” each princess absorbed her mind and heart in contemplation of Krishna. The Lord had every princess arrayed in spotless garments and then carried on a palanquin to Dwaraka, together with a huge dowery of horses, chariots and other valuables. Lord Krishna also dispatched sixty-four special white elephants, descendants of Airavata, who each sported four tusks.

The Lord then went to the abode of Indra, the demigods’ King, and gave Mother Aditi her earrings back. There Indra and his wife worshiped Krishna and His beloved consort, Satyabhama. Then, at Satyabhama’s behest, the Lord uprooted a heavenly *parijata* tree and put it on the back of Garuda, which caused a *ghat*. After defeating Indra and all the other demigods, Krishna brought the *parijata* tree to His capital. Once planted, the *parijata* tree beautified the garden of Queen Satyabhama’s palace. Celestial bees followed the tree all the way from heaven, greedy for its fragrance and sweet sap. Even after Indra had bowed down to Lord Achyuta, touched His feet with the tips of his crown and begged the Lord to fulfill his desire, that exalted demigod, having achieved his purpose, chose to *ghat* with the Supreme Lord. What ignorance there is among the gods! To hell with their opulence!

Then the imperishable Supreme Personality, assuming a separate Form for each bride, duly married all the princesses simultaneously, each in her own palace. The Lord, Performer of the inconceivable, constantly remained in each of His Queens’ palaces, which were unequalled and unexcelled by any other earthly residence. Thus those women obtained as their Husband the Husband of the Goddess of Fortune, although even great demigods like Brahma do not know how to approach Him. With ever-increasing pleasure they experienced loving attraction for Him, exchanged smiling glances

with Him and reciprocated with Him in ever-fresh intimacy, replete with joking and feminine shyness.

Although the Supreme Lord's Queens each had hundreds of maidservants, they chose to personally serve the Lord, approaching Him very humbly, offering Him a seat, worshiping Him with excellent paraphernalia, bathing and massaging His Feet, giving Him pan to chew, fanning Him, anointing Him with fragrant sandalwood paste, adorning Him with over garlands, dressing His hair, arranging His bed and presenting Him with various gifts.

Chapter Sixty: Lord Krishna Teases Queen Rukmini

Sukadeva Goswami said: "Once, in the presence of Her servants, Queen Rukmini was personally attending Her husband, the Spiritual Master of the universe, fanning Him as He lay on Her bed. The unborn Personality of Godhead, Who creates, maintains and then destroys this universe simply as His sport, took birth among the *Yadus* to uphold His Own laws.

Queen Rukmini's quarters were extremely attractive, having a canopy ornamented with strings of pearls, as well as glowing jewels for lamps. Garlands of very fragrant flowers hung everywhere, attracting swarms of humming bees. The rays of the moon shone through the holes of the lattice windows, and *aguru* incense drifted out of the lattice holes. A breeze carrying the sweet aroma of the *parijata* grove brought the atmosphere of a garden into the room. As Queen Rukmini served Her husband there, He reclined upon a pillow on Her bed, which was as soft milk foam.

From the hands of a maidservant, Goddess Rukmini grasped a yak-tail fan having a jeweled handle, and then began to worship Her Lord by fanning Him. Her hand was decorated with rings, bangles and the *chamara* fan. Queen Rukmini looked most resplendent standing near Lord Krishna.: Her jeweled ankle-bells tinkling softly, and Her necklace glittering brilliantly, reddened by the *kumkum* on Her breasts, which were modestly covered by Her sari. Over Her hips She wore a jewel-studded belt. As He contemplated Her, Who is the Goddess of Fortune Herself, and Who desires only Him, Lord Krishna smiled. The Lord assumes many different Forms to enact His Pastimes, and He was satisfied that the form the Goddess of Fortune had assumed was just exactly suitable for Her to serve as His Queen. Her charming face was graced with curling hair, a locket on Her neck, earrings, and the sweet nectar of Her blissful smile. The Lord then said to Her: "My dear Princess, Your hand was sought after by many princes and kings as powerful as the rulers of planets. They were all richly endowed with wealth, political influence, beauty, physical strength and generosity. Since your father and brother offered You to them, why did You reject the King of Chedi and all those other suitors who were madly excited by Cupid? Why, rather, did You choose Me, Who am not Your equal in any way? Afraid of those kings, O lovely-faced one, I took shelter in the sea. I have become the foe of many

powerful men, and have completely neglected My royal throne.

“O re-faced Lady, women are destined to suffer when they remain in the company of those whose behavior is shady and who follow a path not approved by society. I have no material wealth and am dear to people who have nothing. Therefore, O thin-waisted One, the affluent hardly ever worship Me. Marriage and friendship should be between persons who are equal in terms of their birth, wealth, physical appearance, in essence and capacity for good progeny, but never between an inferior and superior. O Vaidarbhi, not being fully aware, You didn’t realize this, and thus You chose Me as Your Husband, despite My having no good qualities and are adored only by foolish beggars. Even now You should accept a more suitable mate, a first-class gentleman of the royal order who can assist You in achieving everything You want, both now in this life and in the hereafter. Kings like Jarasandha, Sishupala and Dantavakra all hate Me, O beautiful-hipped One, and so does Your elder brother, Rukmi. It was to dispel the pride of these kings that I stole You away, My lovely lady, for they were blinded with the intoxication of power. My purpose was to curb the strength of the wicked. What do I care for wives, children and wealth? I am always satisfied in Myself. I do not work for body or the home, but like a light, I merely witness.”

Rukmini considered Herself especially loved by Krishna because He never left Her company. By these cruel words to Her, He destroyed Her pride, and then He was silent. Goddess Rukmini had never heard such accusations from Her Beloved before, and She became afraid that He was about to leave Her. A tremor was felt in Her heart, and in great anxiety She started to cry. With Her soft foot, effulgent with the pinkish glow of Her toenails, She scuffed and scratched the earth, and tears blackened by Her eye makeup fell on Her *kumkum*-powdered breasts. There She stood, head hanging down and Her voice choked up by extreme grief.

Overwhelmed with fear and lamentation, Rukmini’s bangles fell from Her hand and Her fan dropped to the ground. In her bewilderment She fainted and Her hair scattered as Her body crashed to the ground like a banana tree blown down by the wind. Seeing His Beloved Rukmini so bound to Him in love that She had misunderstood the real meaning of His teasing, compassionate Lord Krishna became gracious toward Her. The Lord at once got down from the bed. Manifesting four arms, He picked Rukmini up, soothed Her hair and caressed Her face lovingly with His lotus hands.

Wiping Her tears away and cleansing Her breasts, which were spotted by tears of sorrow, the Supreme Lord embraced His dear wife, who desired naught else but Him. Expert in the art of soothing, Sri Krishna tenderly pacified His beloved Rukmini, whose mind and heart was bewildered by His humorous joking words and who did not deserve to suffer thus.

The Supreme Lord said: “O Vaidarbhi, do not be unhappy with Me. I know you are very devoted to Me. I only spoke these joking words, My Love, because I wanted to get your response. I only wanted to see your pretty face with lips trembling in affectionate anger, the pinkish corners of your eyes shooting sidelong glances, and the line of your lovely eyebrows knit in a frown. The happiest pleasure earthly householders can enjoy is to spend time joking with their beloved mate, My dear shy and sensitive Rukmini.”

Queen Vaidarbhi was completely pacified by the Lord understanding that His words had been spoken in jest. Thus She lost Her fear that Her Beloved would reject Her. Smiling shyly, She sent enchanting, affectionate glances upon the face of Her Lord. Rukmini spoke: “Actually, what You have said is correct, O lotus-eyed One. I am most unsuitable for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. What comparison is there between the Supreme Lord, Who is the Lord of the three primal deities, and myself, a woman of material qualities whose feet are touched by fools.

“Your movements are mysterious, even for sages who eagerly lick the honey of Your Lotus Feet. They are certainly incomprehensible for humans who live like animals. Similarly even as Your activities are transcendental, O Almighty Lord, so also are Your devotees’ activities. You possess nothing, for there is nothing outside You! Even the great material administrators - Brahma and other demigods - render worship to You. Only those blinded by wealth and absorbed in sense gratification do not recognize You a reason soon to come in the Form of Death.

You are the reason for all human endeavors and are Yourself the ultimate aim of life. Hoping to gain You, O Almighty Lord, intelligent persons give up everything else. They then are able to have Your association, but not people merged in the happiness and distress resulting from material lust. Knowing that all great saints and sages proclaim Your Glories, and that You are the Original Supreme Soul of all three worlds, and that You are so gracious that You give even Your Self to Your devotees, therefore I chose You as my Spouse, and reject all others, including Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva, for their endeavors are always frustrated by Time’s insuperable force, which originates from Your eyebrows. Why should I seek any other suitor?

“My dear Lord, as a lion chases away inferior animals and takes his proper spoils, You dispersed the assembled kings by the mere twang of Your Sarnga bow and then took me as Your fair share. Thus it is sheer nonsense, my dear Krishna, for You to say that You dwell in the ocean due to fear of those kings. Seeking Your association, the greatest of kings - Anga, Jayanta, Vainya, Gaya, Nahusha and others - gave up their absolute sovereignty to enter the forest and seek You.

“The fragrance of Your Lotus Feet is glorified by great saints and awards people liberation. Your Lotus Feet are the abode of Goddess Laksmi. What woman would take shelter of any other man after relishing that aroma? Since You are the Fount of all Transcendental Qualities, what woman, who knows her own true Self interest, would give up that fragrance and instead seek protection from someone who is himself subject to fear? Because You are the most suitable for Me, I have chosen You, the Supreme Soul and Master of all worlds, Who satisfies our desires in this life as well as the next. My Your Lotus Feet, which make Their worshiper free from *maya’s* illusion, give refuge to Me, who has been going from one material situation to another.

“O infallible Krishna, may each of the kings You have named become the spouse of a woman whose have never heard Your Glories, Glories that are sung in the assemblies of Lords Brahma and Shiva. After all, in the homes of such women, these kings can live like asses, dogs, cats, oxen and slaves, relishing sex unlimitedly. A woman who does

not relish the fragrance of the nectar of Your Lotus Feet becomes totally bewildered, and thus accepts a husband or lover who is nothing more than a living corpse covered over with skin, nails, whiskers, hair, and filled with flesh, bones, blood, parasites, mucus, feces, bile and air!

“O lotus-eyed One, though You are Self-satisfied and thus rarely look at Me, please bestow on Me love for Your Lotus Feet. It is only when You take on a predominance of passion, for manifesting the universe, that You glance upon Me, showing Me Your greatest mercy. Actually, I don't think Your words are false, Madhusudana.”

The Supreme Lord said: “O Princess, O saintly lady, I teased You only because only to hear You speak like this. Indeed, everything You have said in response to My words is true. Whatever benedictions You hope for are yours, O noble and fair Lady, for You are My Pure and Unalloyed Devotee. O sinless One, I have now directly seen the chaste attachment and pure love You have for Me, Your Husband. Even though disturbed by My words, Your mind could not be shaken or pulled away from Me.

“Although I can award spiritual liberation, lusty people worship Me with vows and penances in order to get material boons for family life. Such people are baffled by My illusory energy. O Supreme Reservoir of Love, they are most unfortunate who after obtaining Me, the Lord of both material riches and liberation, then seek only material treasures. These worldly treasures are to be found even in hell. Since such people are obsessed with sense gratification, hell is a suitable place for them.

“Fortunately, O Mistress of My house, You have always rendered faithful devotional service to Me, service which liberates one from material existence. Such service is very hard for the envious to execute, especially for a woman whose desires are all material, who lives solely to gratify her bodily cravings and who to that end indulges in diplomacy. Nowhere can I find a wife as loving as You, O most honorable One. When You were supposed to be married, You stepped over all the kings who gathered to seek Your hand, and simply because You had heard authentic narrations concerning Me, You sent Your confidential message to me by a *brahmana*.

“When Your brother, whom I defeated in battle and then disgraced, was later killed by Balarama, during a gambling match at Aniruddha's wedding reception, You experienced unbearable grief, but out of fear of losing Me, You said nothing. By Your silence, You conquered Me. When You sent the *brahmana* with Your confidential plan and I was delayed from coming to You, You saw the whole world as void and desired to quit Your body, which was never to be given to anyone but Me. May this supreme greatness of Yours be with You always; all I can do to reciprocate is to joyfully and gratefully thank You for Your great devotion.”

And so the Self-satisfied Supreme Lord of all creation enjoyed with the Goddess of Fortune, engaging Her in affectionate conversations and thus imitated the ways of mankind. The Almighty Lord Hari, Preceptor of the three worlds, similarly behaved like an ordinary householder in the numerous palaces of His many other queens, executing the religious duties of a *grihasta*, family man.

Chapter Sixty-One: Lord Balarama Slays Rukmi

Sukadeva Goswami continued his discourse: Each of Krishna's wives had ten sons, who were equal to their Father, possessing His opulences. Because Lord Achyuta never left Her palace, each of these Queens thought herself Krishna's favorite. They could not understand the complete truth about Him. The Supreme Lord's consorts were all enchanted by His beautiful, lotus-like face, His large eyes and long arms, His loving glances enhanced by laughter, and His charming, affectionate talks with them. But despite all their charms, these women could not capture the Almighty Lord's mind. Their arched eyebrows coyly expressed those ladies' secret desires through playful sidelong glances. Thus their eyebrows sent out conjugal messages of love. Yet neither by these amorous arrows of Cupid, nor by any other means, could they agitate Lord Krishna's senses.

Thus these ladies obtained as their Spouse the Master of the Goddess of Fortune, although even the foremost demigods like Brahma cannot approach Him. With more and more pleasure, they felt loving affection for Him, exchanged smiling glances with Him, eagerly anticipated meetings with Him in increasing intimacy, enjoying in ever-new ways. Although the Supreme Lord's Queens had hundreds of maidservants each, they desired to serve Him personally by approaching Him and humbly offering Him a seat, worshiping Him with the most paraphernalia, massaging His feet, bathing and giving Him spices to chew, fanning Him, smearing Him with fragrant sandalpaste, decorating Him with flower garlands, anointing His hair, making His bed, and offering Him various gifts.

Krishna had sixteen thousand one hundred eight queens, of whom eight were principal, and each queen had ten sons. I shall now recite for you the names of those eight queens' sons, headed by Pradhyumna. Queen Rukmini's first son was Pradhyumna, and her other sons were Charudeshna, Sudeshna, the powerful Charudeha, Sucharu, Bahdracharu, Charugupta, Charuchandra, Vicharu and Charu the last. None of these sons of Lord Hari was less than His Father.

Satyabhama's ten sons were Bhanu, Subhanu, Prabhanu, Svarbhanu, Bhanuan, Brhadbhanu, Chandrabhanu, Atibhanu (the eighth), Pratibhanu and Sribhanu. Samba, Sumitra, Purujit, Sahasrajit, Satajit, Vijaya, Chitraketu, Dravida, Vasuman and Kratu were the sons of Jambavati. These ten, headed by Samba, were Krishna's favorites. The sons of Nagnajiti were Chandra, Vira, Ashvasena, Vegavan, Citragu, Vrisha, Ama, Vasu, Shanku and the opulent Kunti. Sruta, Kavi, Vrisha, Vira, Subahu, Bhadra, Shanti, Darsha and Purnamasa were sons of Kalindi. Her youngest son was Somaka. Madra's sons were Praghosha, Gatravan, Bala, Simha, Prabala, Urdhanga, Mahashakti, Saha, Oja and Aparajita. Mitravinda's sons were Vrika, Harsha, Anila, Gridhra, Vardhana, Unnada, Mahamsa, Pavana, Vahni and Kisudhi. Sangramajit, Brihatsena, Sura, Pahaana, Arijit, Jaya and Subhadra were the sons of Bhadra, together with Vama, Ayur and Satyaka. Diptiman, Tamratapta and others were the sons of Lord Krishna and Rohini.

Lord Krishna's son Pradhyumna was the father of mighty Aniruddha from the womb of Rukmavati, Rukmi's daughter. O King, this occurred while they were living in Bhojakata.

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My dear King, the sons and grandsons of Lord Krishna's sons numbered in the millions. Sixteen thousand mothers gave rise to this dynasty."

King Pariksit asked: Why did Rukmi give his daughter to his foe's son? After all, Rukmi was defeated by Krishna in battle and he was only waiting for a chance to kill Him. Please explain this, O learned one – how these two hostile parties became united together by marriage. Mystic *yogis* can perfectly see past, present and future, as well as what is beyond the senses or concealed by physical obstacles.

Sri Sukadeva Goswami said: At her *svayamvara* ceremony, Rukmavati personally chose Pradhyumna, who was the incarnation of Cupid. Then, despite being single handedly Pradhyumna defeated all the assembled kings and bore Rukmavati away in his chariot. Though Rukmi was always conscious of his enmity toward Krishna, because of disgracing him, just to please his sister he allowed his daughter's marriage to Krishna's son.

O King, Rukmi also gave Rochana, his granddaughter, to Rukmini's grandson, Aniruddha, despite Rukmi's continued hostility toward Lord Hari. Although Rukmi thought this marriage improper, he desired to please his sister, being bound tightly by ties of affection. On the happy occasion of that marriage, O King, Lord Krishna, Queen Rukmini, Lord Balarama and several of the Lord's sons, led by Samba and Pradhyumna, came to Bhojakata.

After the wedding, some envious kings headed by the King of Kalinga told Rukmi, "You should challenge Balarama at dice. He's no good at dice, O King, but He's addicted to it." Thus advised, Rukmi challenged Balarama to a gambling match. Lord Balarama first made a wager of one hundred gold coins, then one thousand, then ten thousand. Rukmi won the first round, and the Kalinga King laughed at Lord Balarama, showing all his teeth. Balarama would not tolerate this for long.

Next Rukmi made a bet of one hundred thousand coins, which Lord Balarama actually won. But Rukmi cheatingly declared "I'm the winner!" Shaking with rage like the ocean on the full-moon day, good looking Lord Balarama, His innately reddish eyes now even redder due to His fury, wagered one hundred million gold coins.

Lord Balarama again truly and fairly won this bet also, but Rukmi once more resorted to cheating and asserted, "I have won! Let these onlookers here give their opinion!"

At that, a voice from heaven declared, "Balarama has won this wager! Rukmi is a liar!" Supported by the evil kings, Rukmi dismissed the divine oracle's voice. In fact, it was destiny itself that was urging Rukmi on. Thus he belittled Lord Balarama: "You Cowherds, Who wander about the forests, don't know much about dice. Playing with dice and shooting arrows are for kings, not commoners like You."

Thus insulted by Rukmi and ridiculed by the kings, Balarama became uncontrollably angry. In the midst of the celebrating wedding assembly, He lifted His club and struck Rukmi dead. The King of Kalinga, who had shown his teeth while laughing at Lord Balarama tried to flee, but the furious Balarama seized him before his tenth step and knocked out all his teeth. Terrified by Lord Balarama's club, the other kings in fear, their limbs broken and bodies bloody.

When brother-in-law Rukmi was killed, Krishna neither applauded nor protested, my dear King, for He did not wish to risk hurting His affectionate relationship with either

Balarama or Rukmini. Then *Dasarha's* descendents, headed by Lord Balarama, put Aniruddha and Rocana, His bride, on a chariot and departed from Dwaraka. Having taken refuge of Krishna, Lord Madhusudana, they had accomplished all their purposes.

Chapter Sixty-Two: The Meeting of Usa & Aniruddha

King Pariksit said: The foremost of *Yadus* married Banasura's daughter, Usa, and because of that a great, fearsome battle took place between Lord Krishna and Lord Shiva. Please narrate this incident, O greatest of mystics.

Sukadeva Goswami said: Bana was the eldest of the hundred sons of Maharaja Bali, who gave the entire earth in charity to Lord Vamanadeva when He appeared as a Dwarf. Banasura was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. His behavior was always proper and he was intelligent, generous, truthful and obedient in his vows. The beautiful city of Sonitapura was under his rule. Because Lord Shiva favored him, even the demigods served Banasura like lowly servants. Once, when Shiva was dancing his *tandava-nritya*, Bana pleased Lord Shiva very greatly by his drumming with his one thousand hands.

Lord Shiva, the compassionate shelter of His devotees, blessed Banasura by offering him any benediction he wanted. Banasura chose to have Lord Shiva personally guard his city. Banasura thereafter became intoxicated with his supposed invulnerability. Once when Lord Shiva was beside him, Banasura touched Lord Shiva's lotus feet with his helmet, which was as brilliant as the sun, and said: "O Lord Mahadeva, I worship you, the Spiritual Master and Controller of all three worlds. You are like the celestial tree that fulfills all desires. These thousand arms you gave me have become a heavy burden. Aside from you, I find no one anywhere worthy to fight."

Hearing this, Lord Shiva was amused and said: "O fool, your ego will be broken when you do battle with He Who is my equal and more. That fight will destroy your conceit." Thus advised, foolish Banasura was very happy. The fool then eagerly awaited that time which Lord Shiva had foretold.

In a dream Bana's virgin daughter, Usa, had a romantic encounter with Pradhymna's son, Aniruddha, though she had never heard or seen Him before. Losing sight of her Lover in her dream, Usa sat up suddenly and exclaimed, "Where are You, my true Love?" Immediately she felt greatly disturbed and embarrassed, being surrounded by girlfriends.

Banasura had a Prime Minister named Kumbhanda, whose daughter was named Chitrlekha. She was a bosom companion of Usa's, and upon seeing her strange behavior, she was filled with wonder. Thus she inquired from Usa, "Who are you looking for, O fair-faced one? What is this longing you are feeling? Until now, O princess, You have never been intimate with any man."

Usa said: "In my dream I saw a handsome prince who had lotus eyes, a dark complexion, powerful arms and yellow garments. He is the kind of man who forcibly

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subdues a woman's heart. It is He for whom I search. After allowing me to drink the honey of His lips, He has disappeared, and thus He has put me into an ocean of distress, for I can't stop hankering for Him."

Chitrlekha said: "I will end your distress. If your Lover is to be found anywhere within the three worlds, I will find Him and bring Him here, for He has stood on your heart. Just show me Who He is." At that, Chitrlekha began to draw pictures of different demigods, celestials and humans. Of human beings, Chitrlekha really drew portraits of the *Vrishnis*, including Surasena, Krishna and Balarama. When Usa saw Pradhymna's likeness, she became bashful, but when she saw Aniruddha's portrait she bowed her head in embarrassment. Then, smiling and filled with excitement, she exclaimed, "That's the man! It's Him! It's Him!"

Chitrlekha, by her mystic powers, knew Him to be Aniruddha, Krishna's grandson. Thus she at once transported herself mystically to Dwaraka, Lord Krishna's capital, where Aniruddha was asleep on His bed. By her mystic power Chitrlekha whisked Him away to Sonitapura, where she presented Usa with her Beloved. When Usa saw Him, the most handsome of men, her face lit up in ecstasy, and she took Aniruddha to her private quarters and enjoyed with Him.

Usa adored Aniruddha, giving Him constant and loving service, valuable garments, flower garlands, incense, lamps, fragrances, sitting places and much more. She also gave Him beverages, many types of savory food, always with her sweet words of love. As He remained most enjoyably in her quarters, Aniruddha was not aware of the passing of time, for His senses were intoxicated by Usa, whose love for Him grew more and more. The female guards, however, eventually observed unmistakable signs of sexual involvement in Usa. Obviously, she was being enjoyed by the *Yadu* Hero, for she was showing signs of conjugal love's fruit. The guards hurried to Banasura and said, "O King, we suspect your daughter of improper behavior, the kind that spoils the reputation of her family. We have been dutifully watching over her and never neglecting our posts. Therefore, O master, we do not understand how this maiden, whom no man has even seen, has been violated within your palace."

Agitated to learn of his daughter's corruption, Banasura at once rushed to the women's quarters. There he found Aniruddha, the pride of the *Yadus* Who looked like Cupid's own son. He possessed unexcelled beauty, having a dark blue complexion, lotus eyes, powerful arms and wearing yellow garments. His face was decorated with brilliant earrings and framed by jet black hair. As He sat across from His most fortunate lover, playing dice with her, there hung from His neck a garland of jasmine, which was smeared with *kumkum* from His lover's breasts from when embracing her. Banasura was amazed and aghast to see all this. Recognizing that Banasura had come with many armed guards, Aniruddha grabbed an iron club and stood defiantly, ready to fight anyone who dared to attack Him. He looked like Death Personified holding his rod of chastisement. As the guards closed in on all sides, ready to seize Him, Aniruddha attacked them, just like the leader of a wolf pack attacks dogs. Unable to defend themselves from His blows, the guards all retreated, running for their lives bleeding, with broken heads, thighs and arms. But as Aniruddha was routing Banasura's palace guards, that mighty son of Bali caught Him with his

mystic *Nagapasha* ropes. Upon hearing of Aniruddha's capture, Usa became overwhelmed with grief and despair; her eyes filled with tears and she wept bitterly.

Chapter Sixty-Three: Lord Krishna Fights Banasura

Because He did not return, the relatives of Aniruddha lamented continually throughout the four rainy months. After hearing from sage Narada about Aniruddha's abduction and subsequent capture, the *Vrishnis*, for whom Lord Krishna was their worshipable Deity, went to Sonitapura. With Lords Krishna and Balarama leading, Pradhyumna, Satyaki, Samba, Gada, Sarana, Nanda, Bhadra, Upananda and others – all converged on Sonitapura with an army of twelve divisions and surrounded Banasura's capital for a siege.

Banasura became very angry when he saw them destroy his city's ramparts, suburban gardens, gateways and watchtowers, and so he went and confronted them with a force of equal size. Lord Rudra came riding on his bull carrier, Nandi, together with Karttikeya, his son, determined to fight Krishna and Balarama on Banasura's behalf. A most astounding, fierce and hair-raising battle thus ensued, with Lord Krishna pitted against Lord Shankara, and Lord Krishna's son, Pradhyumna, fighting against Lord Shiva's son, Karttikeya. Lord Balarama fought against Kupakarna and Kumbhanda, Samba with a son of Bana, and Satyaki with Banasura himself. Brahma and the other great demigods, together with illustrious sages and celestials all gathered in their heavenly airplanes to watch. With sharp arrows propelled from His Sarnga bow, Lord Krishna dispersed all the followers of Lord Shiva.

Lord Shiva meanwhile, hurled various weapons at Lord Krishna, but Krishna was not fazed in the least by them. He countered each and every one of these weapons with just the right counter weapon: a *brahmastra* with a different kind of *brahmastra*, a fire weapon with a water weapon and a wind weapon with a mountain weapon. Lord Shiva's own *Pashupatastra* weapon He countered with His own *Narayanastra* weapon. After confusing Lord Shiva and making him yawn with His boredom weapon, Krishna proceeded to decimate Banasura's army with His sword, arrows and club. Lord Karttikeya was greatly harassed by the steady stream of Pradhyumna's arrows showering down from all sides, and thus he left the battle and his peacock carrier with blood pouring from his limbs. Kupakarna and Kumbhanda, badly beaten by Lord Balarama's club, fell flat on the ground dead. When their soldiers saw their commanders dead, they fled in all directions.

Upon seeing his entire fighting force being destroyed, Banasura became furious. Leaving his fighting with Satyaki, he sped a crossbow battle to attack Lord Krishna personally. In a frenzy, Banasura simultaneously worked a hundred bows with two arrows on each string. Lord Hari at once severed every one of Banasura's bows and simultaneously destroyed his chariot driver, horses and chariot. The Lord

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then blew His Pancajanya conchshell.

At that moment Kotara, Banasura's mother, wanting to save her son's life, appeared before Lord Krishna stark naked, her hair hanging loose. Lord Gadagraja [Krishna] turned away to avoid seeing the nude lady, and Banasura, without any chariot or even a bow, seized the chance to see. Lord Shiva's followers having been driven away, the *Shiva-jwara*, with his three heads and three feet, came forward to challenge Krishna. As the *Shiva-jwara* came near, he seemed to consume everything in all directions. When this person came near, Lord Krishna sent forth His *Narayana-jwara*, His personified weapon. The *Shiva-jwara* and *Narayana-jwara* then fought each other fiercely.

In the end, the *Shiva-jwara* was overpowered by the superior strength of the *Narayana-jwara* and roared in pain. But he could not escape, so he suffering *Shiva-jwara* went to Lord Krishna, the Lord of the senses, begging for shelter. With folded hands he praised Krishna: "I bow to You, O Lord of limitless potency, the Supersoul and Supreme Lord of all beings. You are pure and fully conscious, and the Cause of universal creation, maintenance and dissolution. Completely peaceful, You are the Absolute Truth, Whom the *Vedas* refer to as the Supreme Absolute.

"*Karma*, fate, time, the *jiva* and his qualities, the material body, the subtle material elements, the life air, the various senses, false ego and everything comprising the living being's subtle body – all this is Your material illusory energy, Your *maya*, an endless cycle of cause and effect, birth and death. I take shelter of You, the Master of this *maya*.

"For various purposes, You perform Pastimes to uphold the demigods, the codes of religion and saintly persons in this world. For Your Pastimes, You kill those who deviate from Your true way of surrender and live instead for personal sense gratification. Indeed, Your present Incarnation is to relieve earth's burden. But I am tormented by the terrible power of Your *Narayana-jwara*, which is so cold it burns. All embodied souls suffer, so long as they are bound to material ambitions and are therefore averse to serving Your Lotus Feet."

The Supreme Lord replied: "O three-headed one, I am satisfied with you. Let your fear of My *Narayana-jwara* be removed, and may whoever hears or remembers our conversation be free from fear also." Thus addressed, *Shiva-jwara* bowed to the Supreme Lord and then departed. But now Banasura appeared sitting on his chariot to challenge Lord Krishna. Holding numberless weapons in his thousand hands, the infuriated demon shot countless arrows at Lord Krishna, the Carrier of the *Sudarshana Chakra*.

As Banasura continued discharging weapons at Him, the Supreme Lord with His razor-sharp *Chakra* cut off Banasura's arms as if pruning tree branches. Feeling compassion for his devotee, Banasura, whose limbs were being lopped off, Lord Shiva approached Lord Krishna and spoke as follows: "You only are the Absolute Truth, the Greatest Light, the mystery pointed to by all bona fide teachings of the Absolute. Those whose hearts are clear can see You, for You are pure: the sky is Your navel, fire is Your face, water Your semen, and heaven Your head; the four directions are Your sense of hearing, plants are Your bodily hairs, and the clouds the hair on Your head; the earth is Your foot, the sun Your eye, and the moon Your mind; Lord Indra is Your arm, Lord Brahma Your intelligence,

the ocean is Your abdomen; the progenitor of mankind is Your genital and religion is Your heart. You are certainly the original *Purusha*, the Creator of all worlds!

“Your present descent into the material realm, O Lord of limitless power, is meant for upholding the principles of righteousness and benedicting the entire universe. We demigods all depend on Your grace and empowerment to develop the seven planetary systems. You are the Original Person, Transcendental and Self-manifesting, the One without a second. Without cause Yourself, You are the Cause of all, and You are the Original and Ultimate Controller.

“O Almighty One, just like the sun, which though covered by clouds, illuminates the clouds and all other visible forms as well; so You, although covered by the material qualities, remain Self-luminous and thus enlighten all those qualities, together with the living entities who possess them. When non-devotees, not engaged in Your service, their intelligence befuddled by Your *maya*, being fully attached to wife, children, home and the rest, are submerged in the ocean of *samsara*’s material misery, sometimes coming to the surface and sometimes going down under.

“One who has obtained this human form of life, truly a precious gift from You, but then fails to subdue his senses and worship Your Lotus Feet, is to be pitied, for indeed, he is cheating himself. One who rejects You - his real Self, dearest Friend and Lord – for the sake of sense gratification, which is always inauspicious, rejects nectar and instead drinks poison. I, Lord Brahma, all other demigods and sages of pure minds, have all surrendered fully unto You, our dearest Lord and Self.

“We worship You, the Supreme Lord, to be liberated from material life. You are the universe’s Maintainer, the Cause of its creation and dissolution as well. Equiposed and always peaceful, You are our true Self, Friend and worshipable Lord. You are the One without a second, the Shelter of all worlds and all Spirit Souls. This Banasura is my very dear, faithful follower. I have benedicted him with freedom from fear. Therefore, my dear Lord, please bestow upon him Your causeless mercy, even as You showed mercy to Pahlada, the King of the demons.”

The Supreme Lord said: “My son, Lord Shiva, for your pleasure I will certainly do as you have asked. I fully concur with your desire. I will not kill Bana, for I told Pahlada that I would never slay any of his descendants. Only to curb down Banasura’s false pride did I cut off most of his arms. I destroyed his mighty fighting force, for it had become a burden to the earth.

“This demon, who now has four arms, will remain immune to old age and death. Let him be one of your foremost attendants. He has nothing more to fear from Me.”

Thus attaining fearlessness, Banasura offered obeisances to Lord Krishna, touching his head to the earth. Bana then put Aniruddha and His spouse on a chariot and brought them to Krishna. Lord Krishna then placed Aniruddha and His bride at the head of the bridal party. They were gorgeously adorned with rare clothes and precious ornaments. The wedding party was surrounded by a large military escort, and thus Lord Krishna took leave of Lord Shiva and departed for Dwaraka, His capital city. Dwaraka was beautifully decorated with triumphal arches and victory flags atop towers. The monarch. As conchshells and drums resounded, the Lord’s relatives, the general populace and the

brahmanas all ran out to greet Them.

Whoever gets up early in the day and remembers Lord Krishna's victory in opposing Lord Shiva, never experiences defeat.

Chapter Sixty-Four: The Deliverance of King Nriga

Sri Badarayani said: "One day Pradhymna, Samba, Gada and Bhanu and other boys of the *Yadu* dynasty went to a forest grove to sport. After a while, they became thirsty. In the course of searching for water, they looked in a dry well and saw a funny creature. The boys were amazed to see a lizard as big as a hill. They felt compassion for it and tried to get it out of the well, latching on to the lizard with leather thongs and then with strong ropes. But they were unable get it out. So they went home to Lord Krishna and excitedly told Him of the strange creature."

The lotus-eyed Supreme Lord Krishna, Maintainer of the whole universe, went there and saw the lizard. He simply extended His left hand and easily got it out. Touched by the magnanimous hand of the Supreme Lord, that being at once lost its lizard body and assumed the form of a heavenly denizen. His complexion was the color of molten gold and he was dressed in wonderful garments, and was adorned with ornaments and garlands. Lord Krishna knew all about him, but to inform people in general, He asked: "Who are you, O very fortunate one? Seeing your beautiful form, I think you must be an exalted demigod. For what sinful activity were you brought to this state? It appears you did not deserve such a fate, O great soul. We are eager to know all about you, so please tell us about yourself – if, that is, you think this is the right time and place."

Thus questioned by Lord Krishna, Whose Forms are limitless, King Nriga, his helmet as brilliant as the sun, bowed down to Lord Madhava, Krishna, and said: "I am the king known as Nriga, Ikshvaku's son. Perhaps, my dear Lord, You have heard of me when charitable men were described. But what could be unknown to You, O Lord? With vision unmarred by Time, You know the minds and hearts of everyone. Nevertheless, on Your request, I will speak.

"I gave in charity as many cows as there are grains of sand on earth, stars in the sky, or drops of water the ocean. They were milk-laden cows, all well-behaved, beautiful and having all good qualities. They were all acquired legally, and had silver-plated hooves, golden horns and decorations of costly ornamental cloths and garlands – such were the cows, together with their calves, that I gave away in charity. In addition to that, I first honored the *brahmanas* to whom I gave charity by adorning them with rare ornaments. These exalted *brahmanas* had families in need, were young and had good character and qualities. They were faithful to Truth, renowned for their austerity, learned in the *Vedic* scriptures and godly in their behavior. I bestowed on them cows, land, houses and gold, and also elephants, horses and marriageable girls with attendants, as well as silver, sesame, rare beds, furniture, clothing, jewels and chariots. I also executed *Vedic* sacrifices and

performed various pious welfare activities.

“Once a cow I had donated to a *brahmana* wandered away from its owner and re-joined my herd. Not knowing this, I donated that cow to a different *brahmana*. As the two *brahmanas* argued, each claiming ownership, they came to me. One said, ‘You gave this cow to me,’ and the other said, ‘But you took her from me!’

“Hearing this, I was abbergasted. Finding myself in an terrible dilemma in relation to my duty, I humbly begged both *brahmanas*: ‘I will give you one hundred thousand of my best cows in exchange for this one. Please let me have her back. Your good selves should be compassionate to me, your servant. I was not aware what I was doing. Please save me from this terrible situation, or I will certainly fall into hell.

“The present possessor of the cow said resolutely, ‘I will not take anything in exchange for this cow, O King,’ and went home angrily.

“The other *brahmana* declared, ‘I won’t accept even more cows than you are offering,’ and he too went away.

“Because these circumstances, O Master of the universe, O Lord of lords, upon my death the agents of Yamaraja carried me to his abode. There Yamaraj personally questioned me.

“Yamaraj said: ‘My dear King, do you choose to experience the results of your offenses first, or those of your piety? Indeed, I don’t see an end to the righteous charity you have executed, or to your resultant enjoyment you will now experience in the radiant heavenly planets.’

“I replied, ‘First, my lord, let me endure my sinful reactions,’ and Yamaraj said, ‘Then fall down!’

“At once I began to fall, and while falling I become a lizard.

“O Keshava, as Your servant I honored the *brahmanas* and was generous to them, and I always desired to see You. O Almighty One, how is it that I see You before me now? You are the Supreme Soul, Whom the great masters of mystic *yoga* see within their hearts by using the spiritual eye of the *Vedas*. But how, O Transcendental Lord, are You directly visible to me, since I am blinded by the miseries of material life? Only one who has ended all material entanglement in this world can see You.

“O Devadeva, Govinda, Jagannath, Purusottama, Hrishikesh, Narayana, Achyuta! O Krishna, please allow me to go to the world of the demigods. But wherever I live, O Lord, may my mind always find shelter under Your Lotus Feet. I offer my humble obeisances unto You, Krishna, Sri Vasudeva’s Son. You are the Fount of all beings, the Supreme Absolute Truth, the Possessor of limitless potencies and the Master of every spiritual discipline.”

Having thus spoken, Maharaja Nriga circumambulated the Lord and touched his crown to His Lotus Feet. Granted permission to leave, King Nriga then ascended a wonderful celestial airship as all the people looked on. Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Son of Devaki, Who is particularly devoted to the *brahmanas* and Who personifies the essence of Religion, then spoke to His associates and there by instructed the royal order in general.

“How undigestible is a *brahmana*’s property, even when enjoyed only slightly

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and by one as powerful as re! What then is to be said of kings who attempt to enjoy it thinking themselves lords. I do not consider Halahala to be the most deadly poison, because it has an antidote. But if a *brahmana's* property is stolen, it can truly be called "real poison", for there is no antidote. Poison kills only the person who ingests it and an ordinary re may be put out with water. But the re resulting from taking a *brahmana's* property consumes the thief's whole family down to its root.

"If a person takes a *brahmana's* property without permission, that property destroys three generations of his family. But if he acquires it by force or by getting the government or others to help him take it, then ten generations of his forefathers and ten generations of his offspring are all destroyed. Members of the royal class, blinded by royal opulence, never foresee their own downfall. Foolishly hankering to enjoy a *brahmana's* property, they are hankering for hell.

"Greedy kings who take a *brahmana's* property, together with their royal families, are burned in the hell known as *Kumbhipaka* for as many years as the particles of dust touched by the tears of generous *brahmanas* whose property is stolen. Whether his own gift or another's, one who steals a *brahmana's* property takes birth as a worm in stool for sixty thousand years. I never desire the wealth of *brahmanas*! Those who do die quickly and are sure to be defeated. Their kingdoms will be lost and they will become snakes, troubling others!

"My dear sons and followers, never treat a quali æ *brahmana* harshly, even if he has committed an offense. Even if he physically attacks you or repeatedly curses you, just continue to offer him humble obeisances. Even as I always bow down to *brahmanas*, so all of you should also bow down to them. I will chastise anyone who does otherwise. When a *brahmana's* property is taken, even unknowingly, *it causes the person who has taken it to fall down, even as the brahmana's cow did to King Nriga.*"

Thus, having instructed Dwaraka's residents, Lord Mukunda, Puri æ of t he three worlds, entered His palace.

Chapter Sixty-Five: Lord Balarama Visits Vrindavana

Sukadeva Goswami said: O foremost of *Kurus*, one time Lord Balarama, being eager to visit His friends, mounted His chariot and went to Nanda Gokula (Vrindavan). Having suffered the anxiety of separation for a long time, the cowherd men and women welcomed Lord Balarama warmly. Lord Balarama then offered His respects to His foster parents, and they in turn joyfully greeted the Lord with sweet prayers.

Nanda and Yasoda prayed: "O Lord of the universe, O descendant of *Dasarha*, may You and Krishna, Your Younger Brother, ever protect us." Saying this, they put Balarama on their laps and embraced Him, wetting Him with their tears. The Lord then paid tting respects to the senior cowherd men, while the younger ones greeted Him very respectfully. He reciprocated with them all with smiles, handshakes etc., dealing with each one according

to seniority, degree of friendship and familial relationship. Then, after taking rest, the Lord took a comfortable seat and everyone gathered around Him. In voices faltering with love for Him, those cowherds, having dedicated their all to lotus-eyed Krishna, asked about the welfare of their dear friends in Dwaraka, and Balarama in turn asked about the cowherds' welfare.

The cowherds inquired: "O Rama, are our dear relatives faring well? O Rama, do all of them, with their wives and children, sometimes remember us? It is our good fortune that cruel Kamsa has been killed and our relatives freed from fear, and are now living in complete security in a great fortress."

Honored to be in the personal presence of Lord Balarama, the *gopis* smiled and asked Him, "Is Krishna, the Darling of the city women, living happily? Does He ever think of His family members, especially of Nanda, His father, and Yasoda, His mother? Will He ever come back just once to visit His mother and father? Does Almighty Krishna remember the intimate service we performed for Him? For His sake alone, O descendant of *Dasarha*, we left our fathers, mothers, brothers, husbands, sisters and children, even though they were very difficult to give up. But now, O Lord, Krishna has abandoned us and gone away, forgetting His affectionate ties with us. How can any woman trust His promises, and how can sophisticated city women trust the words of One Whose heart is so dark and so ungrateful? They believe Him because He speaks so cleverly and also because His beautiful smiling glances always arouse their lust. Oh, why bother discussing Krishna? Dear *gopis*, please, talk of something else! If Krishna can pass His time without us, then we should likewise pass our time without Him."

While speaking like this, the *gopis* remembered Krishna's laughter, His pleasing talks with them, His enchanting glances, His way of walking and His affectionate embraces. Even just the thought of Him made them cry. Lord Balarama, the Supreme All-attractive, being expert at various kinds of consolation, comforted the *gopis* by repeating to them the contented messages that Krishna had sent with Him. His words satisfied and deeply touched the hearts of the *gopis*.

Lord Balarama, the Personality of Godhead, remained there for two months and at night, He gave them conjugal pleasure. In the company of many *gopis*, Lord Balarama sported in a garden on the bank of the River Yamuna. This garden was bathed by the full moon's rays and caressed by breezes carrying the aroma of night-blooming lotuses. As sent by demigod Varuna, the heavenly Varuni liquor issued from a tree's hollow and made the forest even more aromatic with its sweet scent.

The wind brought Balarama the redolence of that sweet liquor, and when He smelled it, He ran to the tree. There He and His *gopis* drank deeply, while the *Gandharvas* sang Balarama's praises. He looked like the lordly Airavata, King Indra's elephant, enjoying in the midst of many she-elephants. Kettledrums echoed in the sky at that time, while *Gandharvas* joyfully showered flowers and great sages lauded Lord Balarama's heroic deeds.

As His deeds were sung, Balarama walked around the forests with His *gopis* as if inebriated. His eyes rolled from the liquor's intoxication. In His revelry, Lord Balarama wore fragrant *Vaijayanti* over garlands. He also wore a single earring and beads of

perspiration adorned His smiling lotus-like face like snow flakes. Lord Balarama then called the Yamuna River, desiring to play in her waters. The Yamuna, however, disregarded His order, thinking Him intoxicated. This angered the Lord and He began dragging the river with His plow's tip.

He shouted: "O sinful one! You have disrespected Me! You did not come when I called you. Therefore with My plow I shall force you to come!"

Thus cursed by the Lord, Goddess Yamuna hurried to Lord Balarama in great fright and fell at His Feet. Trembling she said: "O Rama, O Rama, O Almighty One! I knew nothing of Your power. With a single fragment of Yourself You hold up the earth, O Lord of the universe. Please forgive me, my dear Lord. I did not understand Your position as the Supreme Godhead, O Soul of the universe. Since I have now surrendered unto You, please be kind to Your devotee."

Sukadeva Goswami concluded: Lord Balarama forgave Mother Yamuna and, as the King of Elephants does with his retinue of she-elephants, He entered the river's water with His *gopi* entourage. The Lord then sported to His full satisfaction, and when He came out of the water, Goddess Kanti [Laxmi] gave Him blue garments, a brilliant necklace and precious ornaments. Lord Balarama dressed Himself in blue and put on the golden necklace. Smeared with fragrances and beautifully dressed, He appeared as gorgeous as Indra's royal elephant. Until today, O King, one sees that the Yamuna flows through many channels here, because it was dragged by the power of Almighty Lord Balarama. Thus she manifests His prowess.

All those nights passed as if a single night for Lord Balarama as He played with the *gopis* in Vraja, His mind enchanted by the wonderful charm and beauty of Vraja's *gopi* damsels."

Chapter Sixty-Six: Paundraka, the False Vasudeva

While Lord Balarama was visiting Nanda's Vraja village, foolish Paundraka, the ruler of Karusa, thought, "I am Vasudeva, the Supreme Lord!" and thus sent a messenger to Lord Krishna. Less-intelligent Paundraka had been encouraged to do this by the childish flattery of his supporters, who told him "You are the Supreme Lord Vasudeva, the Master of the universe, now incarnated on earth." And so he thought himself to be the Almighty Personality of Godhead. Foolish Paundraka therefore sent an agent to unfathomable Lord Krishna at Dwaraka. Paundraka was acting just like a silly child, whom other children pretend to be a king.

At Dwaraka, the messenger found lotus-eyed Krishna in His Assembly Hall and boldly repeated Paundraka's message for all to hear: "I am the only Lord Vasudeva. There is no other! I have descended to this world to show compassion upon the living beings. Immediately renounce Your phony Name and give up my unique symbols, which You now foolishly carry, and surrender to me. If You don't, then we must fight."

King Ugrasena and all the other assembly members laughed very heartily when they heard the silly words of crazy Paundraka. The Personality of Godhead, after relishing the humorous responses of the assembly, told the agent to relay His message to his master: "You are a fool! I will surely let loose My weapons of which you falsely boast. When you fall down dead, O foolish Paundraka, your body, surrounded by vultures, herons and other scavengers, will be but the shelter of dogs." Bowing in acknowledgement of Krishna's response, the messenger went back and repeated Krishna's insulting words to his master.

At once the Lord got on His chariot and started for Kasi. Upon seeing Krishna's eagerness for battle, powerful Paundraka went out to confront Him, accompanied by two military divisions. The King of Kasi, Paundraka's faithful friend and ally, followed behind with another three *aksauhini* divisions. Lord Krishna could see that Paundraka was carrying imitations of the Lord's personal symbols, the conchshell, disc, sword and club, and he also had an imitation Sarnga bow and *Srivatsa* markings. He wore an artificial *Kaustubha* gem, was adorned with a wild oer garland and wore upper and lower garments of brilliant yellow silk. His æ bore t he likeness of Garuda, a nd he had a valuable crown and dazzling, shark-shaped earrings.

Lord Krishna laughed very loudly upon seeing him dressed just like Himself, like an actor performing on a stage. Then Lord Hari's enemies attacked with a relentless shower and of all kinds of weaponry. Lord Krishna, however, successfully countered the armies of Paundraka and Kasiraja, which consisted of many many elephants, cavalry, chariots and infantry. Indeed, Krishna obliterated all of them, using His sword, club, arrows and *Sudarshana* disc, even as the re of a nnihilation destroys a ll creatures at t he end of a cosmic age. The battle dd, bestrewn with h umans, a nimals a nd dismembered c hariots - the work of the Lord's discus - looked like the ghastly playground of Bhutapati [Lord Shiva] giving great pleasure to the heroic.

Lord Krishna then spoke to Paundraka: "Dear Paundraka, those weapons you wantaed I now give you, you fool! I shall now make you stop using My Name, which you have ignorantly assumed. And I will surely take shelter of you - if I do not kill you rst!"

Having thus ridiculed Paundraka, Lord Krishna smashed his chariot with His sharp arrows. and then beheaded him with His *Sudarshana* disc. It was just like Lord Indra cutting off a mountain peak with his invincible thunderbolt weapon. With arrows, Lord Krishna likewise severed Kasiraja's head and propelled it into Kasi city, in the same way that a lotus over i s carried by t he wind. Håving k illed envious Paundraka and his cohort, Kasiraja, Lord Krishna went back to Dwaraka. As He approached Dwarka City, heavenly *Siddhas* chanted His transcendental Glories.

By always meditating upon Lord Krishna, Paundraka ended his material bondage. Indeed, just by imitating Lord Krishna's physical appearance, he indirectly became Krishna conscious. Upon seeing a head adorned with earrings lying on the ground near Kasi's royal palace, all the people were puzzled. Some of them said, "What is this?" while others exclaimed, "It is someone's head, but whose?" When they rally r ecognized the head t o be that of their dear King, Paundraka's queens, sons and other relatives, together with all Kasi's

inhabitants, wailed piteously: “Alas, now we are dead! O my lord, my lord!”

After Sudakshina, the King’s son, had performed the funeral rites for his slain father, he determined in his mind: “Only if I kill my father’s murderer can I avenge his death. To that end, Sudakshina and his priests began worshiping Maheshwara [Lord Shiva], with great care. Pleased by their worship, powerful Lord Shiva appeared there and offered Sudakshina whatever benediction he desired. The prince at once chose to obtain a means to kill his father’s murderer as his benediction.

Lord Shiva instructed him, “Together with *brahmanas*, worship the *Daksinagni*, following the procedures of the *abhichara* ritual. Then the *Daksinagni* will fulfill your desire, provided it is directed against someone hostile to the *brahmanas*.” Thus instructed, Sudakshina strictly observed the ritualistic procedures and directed the *abhichara* to kill Lord Krishna. At once the fire rose up out of the altar pit and assumed the form of a most terrifying creature. Stark naked, the fiery creature’s beard and tufts of hair glowed like molten copper and his eyes discharged blazing hot cinders. His face appeared very frightful, with dazzling yellow fangs and threatening arched and furrowed brows. Licking his chops with a viperish red tongue, the demon brandished a flaming trident. On legs like tall palm trees, the monster quickly raced toward Dwaraka, accompanied by ghostly spirits who shook the ground and burned the earth in every direction.

Seeing the fiery demon approaching, Dwaraka’s residents became panic-stricken, just like animals terrified by a wild rere Di straight and fearful, the people cried out to Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Who was at that time playing a game of dice in the royal court: “Help! Help, O Lord! Save us from this terrible fire which is burning up our city!”

When Krishna heard their sad pleas and saw that even His own associates were disturbed, that great sheltering Lord laughed and said, “Do not fear; I shall give you protection.” The Almighty Lord, Who is the internal and external observer of all, understood that the demon had come from Lord Shiva’s sacrificial fire. To annihilate the demon, Krishna dispatched His disc weapon, who was standing by His side.

Lord Mukunda’s *Sudarshana* disc blazed brightly like many millions of suns. His effulgence was like the fire of cosmic annihilation, and with his heat he penetrated the sky in every direction of heaven and earth, including the fiery demon.

Overwhelmed by the might of Krishna’s weapon, the fiery demon, producer of black magic, turned his face and ran away. Created for violence, the fiery demon then went back to Varanasi, surrounding the city, he consumed Sudakshina and his priests, who were his creators.

Lord Vishnu’s disc then went to Varanasi following the fiery demon, and proceeded to raze the city to the ground, destroying its assembly halls, residential palaces, numerous markets, gateways, warehouses, watchtowers and treasuries, including all the buildings housing horses, elephants, chariots and grains. After consuming the entire city of Varanasi, Lord Krishna’s *Sudarshana chakra* returned to Krishna’s side, His mission being accomplished.

Anyone who recounts this Pastime of Lord Uttamasloka’s or simply listens to it attentively, is immediately freed from all sins.

*Chapter Sixty-Seven: Lord Balarama Slays Dvidida
Gorilla*

The illustrious King Pariksit said: I want to hear more about Lord Balarama, the immeasurable and unlimited Supreme Lord, Whose deeds are all amazing. What more did He do?

Sri Sukadeva Goswami replied: There was an ape named Dvidida who was Narakasura's friend. That powerful ape, Dvidida, Mainda's brother, was taught by King Sugriva. In order to avenge the death of Naraka, his friend, Dvidida ravaged the whole countryside and set fire to cities, villages, mines and cowherd dwellings."

Once Dvidida pulverized a whole mountain range and used the stones to devastate the surrounding kingdoms, especially targeting the province of Anarta, wherein Lord Hari, his friend's killer, dwelled. Another time he jumped into the ocean and with the strength of ten thousand elephants in his arms, he churned the waters and flooded the coastal regions. The evil ape tore down the trees of hermitages housing exalted saints and sages, and desecrated their sacred reservoirs and forests. Even as a wasp traps small insects, this ape boldly trapped men and women and put them in mountain caves, sealing the caves with boulders.

While Dvidida was engaged in tormenting the surrounding kingdoms and violating the women of respectable families, he happened to hear sweet singing coming from atop Raivataka Mountain. At the source of this beautiful music, he found the Lord of the *Yadus*, Sri Balarama, wearing a garland of lotuses and looking very attractive in every part of His body. He was singing in the midst of many young damsels and since He was imbibing Varuni liquor, His eyes were rolling as if from intoxication. His body shone lustrously as He imitated an elephant in rut.

The dangerous ape climbed a tree and announced his presence by shaking the tree and making a "kila-kila." sound. Lord Balarama's consorts giggled at the ape's arrogance, being only young girls who were always liable to frivolity and silliness. Even with Lord Balarama looking on, Dvidida insulted the young *gopis* by making suggestive gestures with his eyebrows and coming near them and exposing himself. A very angry Lord Balarama, the greatest of fighters, threw a rock at him, but the clever ape dodged the rock and grabbed the Lord's Varuni pot. He further infuriated Lord Balarama by laughing and ridiculing Him. The evil Dvidida then broke the Varuni pot and offended Balarama further by pawing at the damsels' clothing. Then that mighty ape, puffed up with pride, continued to insult Lord Balarama. The Lord observed his rude behavior and also remembered the mischief he had created in the neighboring kingdoms. Thus the Lord took up His plow and club weapons, and decided to put the ape to death.

Mighty Dvidida likewise came forward to fight. Uprooting a tree with one hand, Dvidida rushed toward Balarama to hit Him on the head with the trunk of a tree. Lord Sankarsana, however, remained as immovable as a mountain and simply caught the log as it fell toward His head. He then struck the ape with Sunanda, His club. From the

impact of the Lord Balarama's club, Dvidida's skull was covered by a spattering of blood, like a mountain covered by red oxide. Ignoring his wound, Dvidida grabbed another tree, stripped off its branches and tried to strike the Lord again. Greatly enraged, the Lord shattered that tree too, whereupon Dvidida uprooted yet another tree and viciously tried to hit Lord Balarama again. This tree, also, the Lord smashed into smithereens. Thus the fighting continued, and the Lord again and again pulverized the trees. He was attacked with. Still Dvidida went on uprooting trees until the forest was treeless.

Angry Dvidida then released a shower of stones upon the Lord, but the Almighty Wielder of the Club easily battered them to dust. Dvidida, the mightiest of apes, now clenched his fists and came before Lord Balarama to beat his fists on the Lord's chest. Infuriated, Lord Balarama then put aside His plow and club and with His bare hands hammered Dvidida's collarbone, causing the ape to collapse in a pool of vomit and blood.

When Dvidida fell, Raivataka Mountain trembled, and its cliffs and trees were thrown about like a boat on a storm-tossed sea. In the sky the demigods, great sages and perfect mystics all cried: "Obeisances to You, O Lord! Excellent! Well done!" Thereupon they showered flowers upon Lord Balarama for having slain Dvidida, who had been disturbing the whole world. After that, Lord Balarama returned to Dwaraka, with everyone along the way shouting His glories.

Chapter Sixty-Eight: The Marriage of Samba

Sukadeva Goswami said: O King, Jambavati's Son, Samba, who was always victorious in battle, abducted Laksmana, Duryodhana's daughter, from her *svayamvara* ceremony."

The infuriated *Kurus* said: "This arrogant Boy has defamed us by forcibly abducting our unwed daughter against her will. Stop and arrest this ill-mannered Samba! What can the *Vrishnis* do? By our good will they rule the territory that we have given them. If the *Vrishnis* want to fight when they learn of their Son has been seized, we will break their necks. Thus their pride will become subdued like bodily senses brought under rigid control."

After so speaking and having their plan approved by senior members of the *Kuru* dynasty - Shala, Karna, Yajnaketu, Bhuri and Suyodhana - they all set out to arrest Samba.

Seeing Duryodhana and his company rushing toward Him, that great chariot-fighter, Samba, took up His excellent bow and stood like a solitary lion. Fixed on capturing Him, the angry warriors led by Karna challenged Samba, "Stop and fight! Stop and fight!" They approached Him, showering many weapons upon Him.

As Lord Krishna's Son was being illegally attacked by the *Kurus*, that Prince of the *Yadu* dynasty was not phased by their attack, even as a lion is not phased by the attack

by a puny dog. Twanging His illustrious bow, heroic Samba immediately struck the six attackers led by Karna. He pierced their six chariots with six arrows, each team of horses with four more arrows, and each driver with one arrow each, and he likewise struck the great warriors who commanded the chariots. Even the enemy warriors appaluded Samba for his marvelous display of fighting skill.

Nevertheless they rally forced Him to get down from His chariot, whereupon four of them killed His four horses, the fifth killed His chariot driver, and the sixth broke His bow. Having deprived Samba of His chariot, the *Kuru* warriors tied Him up and then went back to their city, taking with them Yadu Prince and their Princess Laxmana. When the *Yadavas* learned of this from Narada Muni, they became very angry. Encouraged by King Ugrasena, they got ready for battle against the *Kurus*. Lord Balarama, however, called for reason and calmed the tempers of the passionate *Vrishni*, who had already put on their armor. He Who purifies *Kali Yuga*, the Age of Quarrel, did not want to see a dispute between the *Kurus* and *Vrishnis*. Thus, accompanied by family members and *brahmanas*, He personally journeyed to Hastinapura on His effulgent chariot, shining like the sun. As he travelled, He appeared like the moon encircled by ruling planets.

Upon approaching Hastinapura, Lord Balarama stayed in a garden outside the metropolis and sent Uddhava into the city to find out King Dhritarashtra's intentions. After offering proper respects to King Dhritarashtra, as well as to Bhishma, Drona, Duryodhana and Bahlika, Uddhava informed them that Lord Balarama had come and was waiting outside their city.

Overjoyed to hear that their dearest Friend, Lord Balarama, had come, they first honored Uddhava and then hurried to meet Lord Balarama, carrying auspicious presentations in their hands. They approached Sri Balarama to worship Him with gifts of cows, calves and *arghya*. Those of the *Kurus* who realized His true power bowed to the Lord, touching their heads to the ground. After exchanging news of the condition of their relatives, Lord Balarama directly stated the purpose of his visit, "King Ugrasena is our lord and the ruler of many kings. With careful attention please hear his order and then fulfill it at once. King Ugrasena says: 'Even though by impious means several of you captured a single warrior who followed the religious principles, still I want to overlook this for the sake of friendship among family members.'"

Upon hearing these words from Lord Balarama, which were full of truth, courage and potency, well-suited to His transcendental position, the *Kauravas* became very angry and answered in fury: "Oh, how astounding this is! Time's force is indeed insurmountable: a mere shoe now aspires to sit upon the head which bears a royal crown! It is due only to these *Vrishnis* being bound to us by marital ties that we have bestowed upon them equality, allowing them to use our seats, beds and meals. In fact, it is we who have bestowed upon them their royal kingdom! Only due to our looking the other way have we allowed them to enjoy the yak-tail fan, the conchshell, white umbrella, the royal bed and throne!

"No longer shall the *Yadus* be permitted to display these royal symbols, which are now being turned against those who gave them. It is like feeding milk to venomous snakes. Having prospered by our largesse, these *Yadavas* now shamelessly command us!"

THE HEART OF THE BHAGAVATAM
CANTO X

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Sri Sukadeva Goswami said: O foremost of Bharatas, greatly puffed up by their opulence and high birth, the arrogant *Kurus* spoke harshly to Lord Balarama and then turned away and returned to their homes. Noting the *Kurus'* bad character and hearing their biting words, mighty Lord Balarama became full of rage. His countenance became fearful to behold and He laughed madly, saying: "Clearly the uncontrolled passions of these fools have made them so arrogant that they do not care for peace. Then let them be made peaceful by physical force. Animals are controlled by a stick! Alas, only with much difficulty did I persuade the outraged *Yadus*, including Lord Krishna, to seek a peaceful solution. Desiring peace for these *Kauravas*, I came here personally. But they are so dull-witted, fond of fighting and quarrelsome by nature that they have disrespected Me repeatedly, and dared to address Me with their harsh words! Such conceit!

"King Ugrasena, the ruler of the *Bhojas*, *Vrishnis* and *Andhakas*, is not able to command you when Indra and other universal rulers obey his orders? Sri Krishna, Who occupies the Sudharma Assembly Hall, and for His pleasure took the *parijata* tree from the heavenly demigods – that very same Krishna, they say, is not fit to occupy a royal throne! Even the Goddess of Fortune, ruler of the whole universe, worships His Lotus Feet! But the Lord of the Goddess of Fortune is not fit to use the paraphernalia of an earthly king!

"The dust of Lord Krishna's Lotus Feet, which is the sole source of holiness and sanctity for the places of pilgrimage, is adored by all the demigods. The presiding deities of all planets engage in His service, and consider themselves very fortunate to get the dust of Krishna's Lotus Feet on their crowns. Even Lord Brahma, Lord Shiva, the Goddess of Fortune and I, are but parts of Him, and we also respectfully carry that dust on our heads. And still you say Krishna is not qualified to use the royal insignia or to sit on the royal throne?

"We *Vrishnis* have whatever parcel of land the *Kurus* allow? Are we truly shoes, compared to the *Kurus* who are the head? Just see their impudence! These puffed-up *Kurus* are drunk with their power, just like ordinary drunkards! What real ruler having actual sovereignty would tolerate such foolish, vile words?

"Today I shall wipe the earth clean of the *Kauravas*!" shouted an infuriated Balarama. Lifting His plow weapon, He stood up as if to annihilate the three worlds. Angrily grabbing onto the city walls with His plow's tip, He intended to drag the entire city of Hastinapura into the Ganges. Seeing their magnificent city being tossed about like a raft at sea and about to disappear into the Ganges, the *Kauravas* fearfully approached the Lord, begging for shelter and placing their families in front of them.

With Samba and Laksmana leading the procession, they joined their hands in supplication and prayed, "O Rama, O Rama, You are the basis of everything. We knew nothing of Your Almighty power. Kindly excuse our offense, as we are but foolish and misguided children. You yourself cause the creation, maintain it and destroy it, but You have no prior cause. Indeed, O Lord Rama, authorities say that these worlds are mere toys for You, as You enjoy Your Pastimes. O Unlimited One with thousand of heads, for Your Pastime You carry this earthly planet upon but one of Your heads, and to effect annihilation, You withdraw the entire universe within Your Self and remain

alone to lie down and rest.

“Your anger is intended for everyone’s instruction; it is not a manifestation of envy or hatred. O Supreme Lord, You uphold the pure mode of goodness, and You show anger only to maintain and protect the world. We offer humble obeisances to You, O wielder of all potencies, O Soul of all being, O tireless Creator of the universe! Offering You humble obeisances, we take refuge in You.”

Thus pacified by the *Kurus*, whose metropolis was trembling and whose citizens were surrendering to Him in extreme distress, Lord Balarama became pacified and kindly disposed toward all of them. “Fear not,” He said, and thus allayed their fear, Duryodhana, being most affectionate to his daughter, gave her a dowry 1,200 sixty-year old elephants, 120,000 horses, 6,000 golden chariots shining like the sun, and 1,000 maidservants with jeweled necklaces hanging from their necks.

The Supreme Lord, the Lord of the *Yadavas*, gratefully accepted these gifts and then left for Dwaraka, taking Samba and Laksmana with Him, as His well-wishing friends bade Him an affectionate farewell. Then Lord Halayudha, Balarama, entered His city, Dwaraka, and met His family members, whose hearts were all bound to Him in love. In the Sudharma Assembly Hall, He related to all the *Yadu* leaders all about about His doings with the *Kurus*.

Even today the city of Hastinapura is noticeably elevated on its southern side along the Ganges, eternal evidence of Lord Balarama’s prowess.

Chapter Sixty-Nine: Narada Muni Visits Lord Krishna’s Palaces in Dwaraka

Upon hearing that Sri Krishna had slain Narakasura and had accepted numerous brides, Narada *Muni* wanted to see Him in the situation of household life. Narada thought, “How astounding it is that Lord Krishna married sixteen thousand women simultaneously, in one body, and housed each in a different palace.” Thus that sage amongst the demigods eagerly went to Dwaraka to see for himself.

The city resounded with the songs of birds and the buzzing of bees in the parks and pleasure gardens. Its lakes were full of blooming lotuses and resonated with the calls of cranes and swans. Dwaraka boasted of nine hundred thousand exquisite royal palaces, all built of crystal and silver and excellently decorated with emerald inlays. The interior of these palaces had furnishings bedecked with gold and jewels. The city traffic moved along on well planned boulevards and roads, and the plazas and marketplaces, assembly houses and temples were systematically placed to enhance the charming beauty of the city. The roads, commercial streets, courtyards and residential patios were regularly sprinkled with water and always shaded by banners fluttering atop lofty poles.

Within Dwaraka was a magnificent private quarter, which was adored by all the planetary rulers. This district, wherein demigod Visvakarma had used in full all his divine

skill, was the private abode of Lord Hari, and was gorgeously beauti ed by sixteen thousand unique palaces built for Lord Krishna’s queens. Narada *Muni* went into one of these amazing palaces. Surrounding the palace were coral pillars inlaid with *vaidurya* stones, while sapphires decorated the walls, and the floors shone with polished brilliance. In that particular palace Tvasta had made canopies adorned with strands of pearls. There were also beds and couches made of ivory and precious gems. For personal service there were many well-dressed men wearing bejeweled lockets on their necks, and also many armor-clad guards wearing turbans, rich uniforms and jeweled earrings. The glow of many lamps dispelled any darkness in the palace. On the palaces’ornate roof ridges peacocks danced, loudly calling from mistaking the fragrant clouds of *aguru* incense passing through the latticed windows for real clouds.

In that palace sage Narada saw Sri Krishna, Lord of the *Satvatas*, together with His consort, who fanned Him with a yak-tail fan having a golden handle. She personally served the Lord in this way, even though she herself was constantly attended by many many maidservants as qualified as she in personal character, youth, beauty and dress. The Supreme Lord Krishna is the greatest sustainer of religious principles. As such, when He saw Narada, He at once got up from Goddess Sri’s bed, touched His crowned head to Sri Narada’s feet and with joined palms offered sage Narada His own seat.

The Lord bathed sage Narada’s feet and then sprinkled that washwater on His own head. Although Lord Krishna is the Universal Spiritual Authority and the Lord of His devotees, it was perfectly proper for Him to so behave, for He is called Brahmanyadeva, “He Who favors the *brahmanas*.” Thus Sri Krishna worshiped sage Narada, even though the water that bathes the Lord’s own Feet becomes the Ganges, the ultimately sacred shrine.

After fully worshipping Narada, the great sage of the demigods, according to *Vedic* injunctions, Lord Krishna, Who is Himself the Original Sage – Narayana, the Friend of Nara – conversed with Narada. The Lord’s beautiful speech was as sweet as nectar to the sage. At last the Lord asked Narada, “What can I do for you, O lord and master?”

Narada replied: “O Almighty Lord, it is not surprising that You, the Ruler of all creation, simultaneously show friendship for everyone and subdue the envious. We know that You descend by Your Own sweet will in order to bestow the highest good upon this universe by maintaining and protecting it. Thus Your Glories are widely sung. Now I have seen Your Lotus Feet, which grant liberation to Your devotees, which even Lord Brahma and other great personalities of unfathomable intelligence can only meditate upon within their hearts, and which those who have fallen into the well of material existence resort to for deliverance. Please favor me, O Lord, so that I may constantly remember You as I travel about.”

Narada visited the palace of another of Lord Krishna’s queens. He was very eager to observe the spiritual power possessed by the Master of all supposed masters of mystic power. There he saw Lord Krishnaplaying at dice with His beloved consort and His dear friend Uddhava. Lord Krishna honored Narada by standing up and offering him a seat, and then, as if ignorant, asked him, “When did you come? What can lowly persons like Us do for a person like you who is complete in himself? My dear *Brahmana*,

please bless Me.” Hearing this, Narada was astonished. He stood silently and then went to another palace.

Here Naradaji saw Lord Krishna lovingly engaged as a Father playing with His small children. Then he went to another palace, where he saw Lord Krishna getting ready to take His bath. In another palace He was offering oblations into a sacrificial fire in another, He was performing the *maha-yajnas*; in another He was feeding *brahmanas*; and in yet another He was eating the remnants of *prasadam* left by *brahmanas*. At yet another palace, Krishna was performing the rituals for worship at sunset, silently chanting the *Gayatri mantra*. Somewhere else He was moving about with sword and shield in the arena used for sword practice.

In still another place Lord Krishna (Gadagraja), was riding on elephants, horses and chariots. Elsewhere He was reclining on His bed while minstrels recited His Glories. Yet again He was counselling with royal ministers such as Uddhava; and elsewhere He was sporting in the water, accompanied by many society girls and young ladies.

At one place He was donating well-decorated cows to qualified *brahmanas*; and elsewhere he was enjoying the auspicious narration of histories and *Puranas*. At another palace Lord Krishna was enjoying with a particular wife by speaking joking words to her. Somewhere else He was engaged with His wife in pious religious functions. At another place Krishna was found absorbed in matters of economic development; and somewhere else He was found engaged in having sex, according to regulative principles.

In another palace He was meditating upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Himself, Who is transcendental to this world of material nature; and somewhere else He was performing menial services for His Elders, offering them pleasurable things, as well as reverential worship. In one place Krishna was absorbed in planning military strategy with His advisers; and in yet another place He was signing a peace treaty. At one palace Lord Keshava and Lord Balarama were diligently scheming together for the welfare of the pious public.

At one palace Narada witnessed Yogeshwara Krishna getting His sons and daughters engaged and married to suitable brides and bridegrooms in marriage ceremonies of great splendor. Somewhere else Narada saw how Yogeshwar Krishna, the Master of all *yogis*, intelligently sent His daughters and sons-in-law away; and somewhere else He welcomed them home again for holiday celebrations. Somewhere else He was worshiping the demigods with gorgeous sacrifices; and elsewhere He was doing His religious duty by executing public welfare work, such as digging wells and constructing public parks and monasteries.

At another place He was leading a hunting party, mounted on His Sindhi steed. Together with other heroic *Yadus*, He hunted animals for offering in sacrifice. Somewhere else Krishna was moving about Dwaraka in disguise, in order to understand what people were thinking. Having thus observed the Lord's *yogamaya* display, Narada chuckled and then addressed Lord Hrishikesh, Who had adopted the demeanor of a human being: “Now we can comprehend Your mystic power, which is difficult to understand, even for great mystics, O Master of all mystic power. Only by service to Your Lotus Feet have I been able to understand Your potencies. O Lord, please allow me to leave. I will

travel about the worlds, loudly chanting Your Pastimes, and thereby purify the universe by proclaiming Your fame.”

The Supreme Personality of Godhead replied: “O *brahmana*, I am the voice of religion, its propounder and performer. I observe religious principles, My child, in order to teach them to the world, so do not be perplexed.”

Sukadeva Goswami said: Thus in each and every palace Narada observed the One Lord, in His unique Personal Form, performing the transcendental religious principles that purify even those engaged in household life. Having repeatedly seen the incredible mystic display of Lord Krishna, Whose mystic power is limitless, sage Narada was completely amazed and filled with wonder.

Lord Krishna honored Narada by faithfully and magnanimously presenting him with gifts of economic prosperity, enjoyable facilities and religious duties. Being fully satisfied, sage Narada departed, still chanting the Lord’s Glories.

In this way Lord Krishna mimicked the ways of ordinary human beings, manifesting His divine power for the welfare of all. Thereafter dear King, He enjoyed life in the company of His sixteen thousand exalted spouses, who served Him with their shy, loving glances and joyous laughter. Lord Krishna is the Ultimate Cause of cosmic creation, maintenance and dissolution. My dear King, anyone who hears about, chants about or simply appreciates the supernatural activities Lord Krishna performed in this world, which are not possible for anyone to imitate, will certainly develop pure devotion for Krishna, the Supreme Lord and Bestower of liberation.

Chapter Seventy: Lord Krishna’s Daily Activities

As dawn appeared on the eastern horizon, Lord Madhava’s wives, each lovingly embraced around the neck by her Spouse, cursed the crowing cocks. The queens were disturbed that now they would soon be separated from their Lord. The buzzing of bees, occasioned by the fragrant breezes wafting from the *parijata* garden, aroused the birds from slumber. In turn, the birds’s rhythmic chattering awakened Lord Krishna, even as court poets do by chanting His Glories.

Encircled by Her Beloved’s arms, Queen Vaidarbhi did not care for this so-called auspicious hour, for it meant She would soon lose His embrace. Lord Madhava always arose during the *brahma muhurta* hour and touched water. With a focused mind He would then concentrate His mind upon Himself, the sole Self-luminous, infallible and unequalled Absolute Truth known as *Brahman*. By His pure nature He dispels all contamination and Who by His personal energies, the cause of universal creation and destruction, He manifests His supremely pure blissful existence.

After bathing in sanctified water, that most Holy Personality would meticulously dress Himself in fresh garments and perform all necessary prescribed rituals, starting with worship of the dawn. Then, after making oblations to the sacred *re, Krishna*

would murmur the *Gayatri mantra*. Daily the Lord would worship the rising sun and the demigods, sages and forefathers - all Expansions of Himself. The Self-sufficient Lord would then dutifully worship His Elders and the *brahmanas*. To the *brahmanas* He would give tame and peaceful cows decorated with pearl necklaces and gold-plated horns. The cows were also covered with silk cloth and their hooves were plated with silver. Abundant milkers all, each cow had given birth only once and were accompanied by their calves.

Lord Krishna then offered obeisances to the cows, *brahmanas* and demigods, His Spiritual Masters, Elders and *rally to all living beings* - all of whom were His expansions. Then the Lord would touch certain auspicious articles. He would then adorn His body with heavenly clothes, jewelry and flower garlands. He then glanced upon ghee, a mirror, a cow, a bull, a *brahmana* and the demigods, checking to see that the members of all the social classes were satisfied with gifts. After this He would greet His ministers and satisfy them too.

After *rst offering* *or* garlands, sandalwood paste and *pan to the brahmanas*, Krishna would give these gifts to His ministers, friends and wives, and *rally* He would take some Himself. By then Daruka, the Lord's driver, would have brought His wonderful chariot, pulled by Sugriva and His other horses. Daruka would bow down to his Lord and then stand at attention. Gripping His charioteer's hands, Lord Krishna would mount the chariot, together with Satyaki and Uddhava. As They moved They resembled the sun rising over the eastern horizon.

The palace women would glance at Lord Krishna with affectionate, shy glances, and because of this He would leave their company only with much difficulty. As He left, His smiling face totally captivated their minds. Accompanied by all the *Vrishnis*, Lord Krishna would regally enter the Sudharma Assembly Hall. This hall protects all those who are within it from the six pangs of material life [hunger, thirst, old age, illusion, lamentation and *mal lydeat h*]. *Seat ing Hi m* *elf upon Hi s* *hi gh t hr one i nt hat assem bly hall*, the Almighty Supreme Lord shone with His own unique effulgence, shining to every quarter. Surrounded by the *Yadavas*, those lions among men, the Best of the *Yadus* looked like the moon surrounded by many stars.

Then jesters would entertain Lord Krishna by enacting various comic moods, as expert entertainers performed for Him and female dancers danced exotically. They performed to the sounds of *vinas*, *mridangas*, *murajas*, cymbels, *utes* and conchshells. Simultaneously professional poets, panegyrists and chroniclers would recite the Lord's Glories. *Brahmanas* present there in that assembly would perfectly chant *Vedic mantras*, while others narrated stories of previous kings of pious renown.

Once upon a time a person arrived in the assembly hall who had never been there before. The doorkeepers dutifully informed the Lord and then, with His permission, escorted him inside. That person offered obeisances to Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and with humility he described to the Lord how many kings were suffering from imprisonment by cruel Jarasandha. Altogether, the messenger said, twenty thousand kings had been imprisoned by him in the prison fortress named Girivraja because they had refused to render tribute to Jarasandha during his great world conquest.

As related through the messenger, the imprisoned kings implored: “O Krishna, dear Krishna, O Supreme Soul, destroyer of fear for anyone who surrenders to You! Despite our separatist mentality, we appeal to You for shelter. We are very fearful of material existence. People here are always absorbed in sinful activities and thus are bewildered concerning their real duty, which is to adore and worship You only, according to Your orders. Doing this truly makes one fortunate. We offer our humble obeisances to You, the Almighty Lord, Who appears as Time and strikes down one’s arrogant hopes for long life and prosperity in this world.

“You are the Almighty Lord of the universe and have incarnated in this world with Your personal energies to suppress the wicked and protect the saintly. O Lord, we cannot understand how anyone can disobey Your law and still be able to enjoy the fruits of his endeavor. O Lord, in this corpse-like body, so full of fear, we carry the burden of the supposed happiness of monarchs, which is but a dream. In so doing, we have neglected the real and eternal happiness of the soul, which is a result of rendering devotional service to You. Because of our wretchedness, we simply suffer under the whip of Your illusory energy.

“Therefore, O Lord, since Your Lotus Feet relieve the suffering of all those who surrender to Them, please, dear Krishna, release us, Your servants, from the bondage of *karma*, personified in the King of Magadha. All by himself, as he has the strength of ten thousand mad elephants, he has imprisoned us in his jailhouse, like captured sheep. Your strength is limitless, O Wilder of the disc, and thus You crushed Jarasandha and his military force seventeen times. But then, being absorbed in romantic affairs, You allowed Jarasandha to defeat You once. But now he is so puffed up with pride that he dares to terrorize us, Your devotees. O unsurpassable One, please correct this situation.”

The messenger concluded: “This is the plea of the kings incarcerated by Jarasandha, who all hanker for Your *darshan*, having surrendered fully to Your Lotus Feet. Please bestow Your mercy and good fortune upon these unfortunate souls.”

The kings’ messenger had just finished speaking when suddenly Nārada Muni, the sage amongst the demigods, appeared there. Having golden locks on his head, that greatly effulgent sage’s entrance was like the rising of the sun. Lord Krishna, Who is worshiped even by Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva, upon seeing that great sage Nārada Muni immediately and joyfully stood up along with His ministers and secretaries to receive the illustrious sage and to offer him respectful obeisances by bowing low His divine head.

After Nārada had seated himself, Lord Krishna honored the sage properly and gratified him with reverent words: “It is for sure that today all three worlds have been freed from fear, for that is the effect of association with a great soul like you, who can travel at will throughout all three worlds. Nothing remains unknown to you in God’s whole creation. Therefore please inform Us what the Pandavas intend to do next.”

Sri Nārada replied: “I have seen the insurmountable potency of Your *maya* many times, O Almighty One, a potency by which You bewilder even Lord Brahma, the creator of the universe. O all-embracing Lord, it is not surprising that You disguise Yourself under Your own energies while living amongst Your created beings, just like a reverb covers its own light under smoke. Who can truly understand Your ways? With Your inferior material

energy You first expand and then withdraw His cosmic creation, making it appear to have separate existence from You. Obeisances to You, O Lord, Whose transcendental position is unfathomable.

“The living being, trapped in the cycle of birth and death, does not understand how he can be freed from the imprisonment of a material body, which brings him untold miseries. But You, O Supreme Lord, descend to this world in Your various Forms and by performing Your transcendental Pastimes You light the soul’s path with the blazing torch of Your Pastimes. Therefore let me surrender unto You. Nevertheless, O Supreme Truth, Who plays the part of an ordinary human being, let me tell You what Your devotee, Maharaja Yudhisthira, Your father’s sister’s son, intends to do.

“Desiring unquestioned and unrivaled sovereignty, Maharaja Yudhisthira proposes to worship You in the greatest of sacrifices, the *Rajasuya*. We beg You to please bless his endeavor with Your presence. O Lord, all the exalted demigods and famous kings will come to that great sacrifice, being eager to serve You. O Supreme Lord, even outcasts are made pure by hearing and chanting Your transcendental Glories and by meditating upon You, the Supreme Absolute Truth. What then is to be said of those who actually see and touch You? O dearest Lord, You are the symbol of all that is auspicious. Your transcendental Name and Fame spreads everywhere like a canopy over the entire universe, including the middle, higher and lower planetary systems. The nectarine water that washes Your Lotus Feet is known in the upper planetary regions as the Mandakini River, within the lower planetary region as the Bhogavati, and within this earthly planetary region as the Ganges. This transcendental water flows throughout the entire universe, purifying conditioned souls wherever it goes.”

When the *Yadavas*, His supporters, objected to this proposal because of their eagerness to fight and defeat Jarasandha, Lord Keshava, the Personality of Godhead, turned to His confidential servant Uddhava and smilingly addressed him: “You are indeed Our closest friend and best eye, for you are perfectly aware of the relative value of different kinds of counsel. Therefore please inform Us of what We should do in this circumstance. We trust your decision and want to do as you advise.”

Thus requested by his Lord and Master - Who, though omniscient, now acted as if in doubt - Uddhava accepted this order on his head and answered the Lord.

Chapter Seventy-One: The Lord Travels to Indraprastha

Having thus heard Devarshi Narada’s statements, and understanding the desires of both the Yadus and Lord Krishna, the greatly intelligent Uddhava began to speak. “O Lord, as sage Narada advised, You should assist Your dear cousin Yudhisthira to fulfill his desire

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for performing a *Rajasuya* sacrifice; and You must also assist the kings who are seeking Your shelter. But only a king who has conquered in all directions is qualified to perform the *Rajasuya* sacrifice, my dear Lord. Thus, it is my opinion that conquering Jarasandha first will serve both needs.

“By so doing there will be much gain for us and You will simultaneously free the kings. For this, O Govinda, You will also be glorified. But invincible Jarasandha is as powerful as ten thousand elephants and no warrior can defeat him. But Bhima is his equal in strength. Still, Jarasandha can only be defeated one on one, not when he is surrounded by his military divisions. Another fact: Jarasandha is totally devoted to *brahminical* culture and can never refuse a *brahmana*’s request.

“Therefore I think Bhima should go to Magadha, Jarasandha’s capital, disguised as a *brahmana* and beg charity. In this way he can get single combat with Jarasandha and in Your divine presence, Bhima will surely kill him. Even Lords Brahma and Shiva act only by Your empowerment in cosmic creation and annihilation. Therefore these functions are ultimately done by You alone, O Supreme Lord, acting through Your invisible feature of Time. In their separate homes, the pious wives of the incarcerated kings sing of Your transcendental deeds – about how You will slay their husbands’ foe and deliver them. The *gopis* also always sing of Your glories – about how You slew the elephant king, Gajendra’s enemy; the enemy of King Janaka’s daughter Sita and Your own parents’ enemies as well. So also do all the sages who have received Your shelter magnify You, as we do ourselves.”

Sri Uddhava concluded, “Dear Krishna, the killing of Jarasandha will certainly be the reaction of his past sins and will bring great benefit to all. Indeed, it will enable the performance of the sacrificial ceremony You so much desire.”

Sukadeva Goswami said: O King Parikshit, Lord Krishna, the *Yadu* elders and Devarshi Narada all welcomed Uddhava’s suggestion, which was truly auspicious and infallible. The Son of Devaki, the Almighty Personality of Godhead, thus requested His counselors for permission to leave. Thereupon Krishna ordered Daruka and Jaitra, His servants, to prepare for Their departure. O killer of enemies, after arranging for His wives and children’s departure, and taking leave of King Ugrasena and Lord Sankarshana, Lord Krishna got on His chariot, ying a pair of Gauda, which had already been brought by His driver.”

As the vibrations of *mridangas*, *bheris*, kettledrums and conchshells filled the skies in all directions, Krishna started on His journey. With Him were His chariot corps, infantry, cavalry and elephants which were surrounded by His impregnable personal guard. Lord Achyuta’s dear and faithful wives, together with Their children, followed on golden palanquins carried by powerful men. The queens were dressed in rich clothing and adorned with costly ornaments, fragrant oils and fragrant flower garlands. They were surrounded by soldiers carrying shields and swords.

On all sides there were well-dressed maidens as part of the royal entourage, as well as many courtesans. All rode on palanquins carried by bulls, camels, buffalo, mules, donkeys and elephants. Their transport carriages were fully loaded with clothes, blankets, grass tents and other items needed for the journey. Krishna’s supplies included umbrellas,

fans, *chamaras* and large *agpoles* with banners. The sun's rays reflected brilliantly off the soldiers' polished weaponry, jewelry, armor and helmets. Thus the Lord's army which accompanied Him, noisy with shouting and clatter, looked like an ocean with agitated waves and teeming *tingilas*.

Honored by Lord Krishna, the Chief of the *Yadus*, Narada *Muni* bowed low to the Lord. All the sage's senses were fully satisfied just by his being with Lord Krishna. Having heard the Lord's decision and having been honored by Him through worship, Narada placed the Lord firmly within his heart and ascended into the sky and departed. With sweet words the Lord addressed the messenger from the kings: "My dear sir, I wish you all good fortune. I shall surely arrange for the disposition of the King of Magadha. Have no fear."

Thus addressed, the messenger departed and relayed exactly what Lord Krishna had said to the kings. Anxious for their freedom, the imprisoned kings waited expectantly for the Lord to come. As Lord Krishna journeyed through the provinces of Anarta, Sauvira, Marudesa and Vinasana, Lord Hari forded rivers and passed over mountains, as well as through countless cities, villages, quarries and cow pastures. After crossing the *Drsadvati* and *Saraswati* rivers, in and out of Panchala and Matsya, He finally arrived at *Indraprastha*.

King *Yudhisthira* was most delighted to hear that his Lord, Sri Krishna, Whom humans rarely see, had come. Together with his priests and dear associates, the King came out to meet Lord Krishna beyond the city gates. As songs were sung and musical instruments were played, together with the loud vibration of *Vedic* hymns, Maharaja *Yudhisthira* proceeded with great reverence to meet Lord *Hrishikesh*. *Yudhisthira's* heart melted with affection when he saw his dearest friend, Lord Krishna, after a very long time. He thus embraced the Lord repeatedly.

Lord Krishna's Form is the eternal abode of the Goddess of Fortune, *Laxmi*. Upon King *Yudhisthira* embracing his Lord, he became free of material contamination and at once experienced supreme transcendental bliss, merged into an ocean of bliss. With tears in his eyes his body trembled due to transcendental ecstasy. He completely forgot that he was in the material world. In a similar way, *Bhima*, his eyes also filled with tears, bellowed with joy as he embraced Krishna, his maternal Cousin. Likewise *Arjuna* and the twins, *Sahadeva* and *Nakula*, embraced Krishna, their very dear Friend, most joyfully. The infallible Lord inconceivably cried profusely.

After *Arjuna* embraced Him one more time, and *Nakula* and *Sahadeva* offered Him their humble obeisances, Lord Krishna Himself then bowed down to the *brahmanas* as well as to the elders present. He thus properly honored all the respectable members of the different clans. Simultaneously heavenly singers, jesters and *brahmanas* all glorified Lord Krishna – some by reciting prayers, some by dancing and some by singing. At that time kettledrums, *mridangas*, conchshells, *vinas*, *panavas* and *gomukhas* loudly resounded. Thus surrounded by His dear relatives and honored on all sides, the Crest Jewel of all the most renowned, Lord Krishna, entered the well-decorated city.

Indraprastha's roads were freshly sprinkled with water that had been perfumed with the liquid from elephants' foreheads. Colorful *ags*, over-covered golden gateways and

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huge full waterpots added to the city's splendor. Men and young virgins were beautifully arrayed in ornate garments, smothered with over garlands and ornaments and smeared with aromatic sandalwood paste. Each and every house displayed lamps and sacred offerings, and through the holes of delicately latticed windows floated clouds of incense, further beautifying Indraprastra City. Banners waved everywhere and the golden-domed rooftops reflected the sunlight brilliantly. This is how Lord Krishna observed the King of the *Kurus* royal city.

When the young ladies of the city heard that the Reservoir of Pleasure for human eyes, Lord Krishna, had arrived, they at once thronged the royal roadways just to have a glimpse of Him. They left their household duties and even left their husbands in bed, and ran to see Krishna. In their great eagerness their garments became loose and the knots of their hair fell open. Since the royal road was very crowded, being full of chariots, foot soldiers, elephants and horses, the women went to the rooftops of their houses in order to get a better view of Lord Krishna and His Queens. From there these ladies showered love upon the Lord and embraced Him. In their hearts, expressing their heartfelt feelings with broad smiling glances.

Seeing Lord Mukunda's wives going by on the road like stars surrounding the moon, the women all exclaimed, "Why do these these ladies deserve the blessing of the best of Men in always seeing and feeling the bliss of His affectionate smiles and sidelong glances?" In different places, residents of the city came forward bearing auspicious offerings for Krishna, and many pious leaders of the occupational guilds came forward to worship Krishna also. With wide eyes, the royal household eagerly came there to lovingly greet Lord Mukunda and carried Him into the royal palace.

When Queen Kunti saw her nephew Krishna, the Master of all three worlds, her heart overcame with intense love. Rising from her seat with Draupadi, her daughter-in-law she embraced the Lord. Then Maharaja Yudhisthira reverently brought that Supreme God of gods, Lord Govinda, to his private quarters. The King was so overwhelmed with happiness that he could not remember the proper rituals for worshipping Him.

Lord Krishna offered obeisance to His aunt and also His Elders, O Pariksit. Then Draupadi and the Lord's sister, Subhadra, bowed down to Him. Encouraged by Queen Kunti, her mother-in-law, Draupadi worshiped all the wives of Lord Krishna, including Rukmini, Satyabhama, Bhadra, Jambavati, Kalindi, Mitravinda, the descendants of Shibi, the chaste Nagnajiti, and all the other Queens who were present. Draupadi gave them each gifts of clothing, fresh over garlands and jewelry.

King Yudhisthira personally saw to Krishna's accommodation and also saw to accommodations for His huge entourage — His Queens, ministers, secretaries and soldiers. All were appropriately situated, and Yudhisthira also arranged that they would be enlivened with new feature of entertainment every day. Just to please King Yudhisthira, the Lord stayed at Indraprastha for several months. During this time He and Arjuna pleased the re-god by allowing him to consume the *Khandava* forest. While doing that, they saved Maya Danava, who in gratitude built a mystic assembly hall for King Yudhisthira. The Lord also sometimes took the opportunity to go riding about in His chariot with His friend Arjuna for sport.

*Chapter Seventy-Two: The Slaying of the Demon
Jarasandha*

One day, as Maharaja Yudhisthira sat within the royal assembly hall surrounded by renowned sages, *brahmanas*, *kshatriyas* and *vaisyas*, together with his Spiritual Masters, brothers, Elders, relations and friends, he addressed Lord Krishna: “O Govinda, I want to worship You and Your very auspicious expansions by the *Rajasuya* sacrifice, the king of *Vedic* sacrifices. Please bless our endeavor, O Lord, so that our efforts may be successful. Holy persons who meditate upon, serve and glorify Your Lotus Feet, which destroy all inauspiciousness, O lotus-naveled One, are sure to obtain liberation from material existence. Even if one desires something in this material world, he can obtain it; whereas those who do not surrender to You can never be satisfied.

“For that reason, O Lord of lords, let everyone see the potency of devotional service offered to Your lotus feet. Reveal for all to see, O Almighty One, the difference between those *Kurus* and *Srinjayas* who serve and worship You and those who do not. We know that within Your mind there is no differentiation like ‘This one is mine, and that is yours,’ because You are the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Soul of all beings, and are always equipoised, enjoying transcendental happiness in Yourself alone. Just like a heavenly desire tree, You fulfill the desires of all who properly worship You, granting their desires in proportion to the loving service rendered. What can be wrong in this?”

The Supreme Personality of Godhead replied: “Your decision is flawless, O King, and by this your name and fame will spread to all three worlds, O destroyer of enemies. Indeed, My lord, for the eminent sages, the demigods and the forefathers, for Our well-wishing friends, and for every other living being, the executor of this greatest of *Vedic* sacrifices is auspicious. But first conquer all other kings. Bring the earth under your dominion and collect all the necessary paraphernalia; then you execute this excellent sacrifice.

“Your brothers, O King, are partial expansions of the demigods who rule the various planets. And you yourself are so Self-controlled that you can conquer even Me, Who am unconquerable for anyone who has not controlled his senses. No one here in this world, not even a demigod, not to mention an earthly king, can overpower My devotee, not by physical strength, beauty, riches or fame.”

Sukadeva Goswami said: Upon hearing these powerful words spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, King Yudhisthira became very happy, and his face glowed like a lotus. At once he sent out his brothers, who were now empowered with Lord Vishnu’s potency, to conquer all directions. Sahadeva he sent to the south, Nakula to the west, Arjuna to the north and Bhima to the east. After defeating all the many kings by their prowess, the victorious brothers returned, bringing great wealth for Maharaja Yudhisthira, who was now anxious to perform the sacrifice.

But when Maharaja Yudhisthira heard reports of Jarasandha’s refusal to bow to him, and his apparent invincibility, he began to ponder what to do. Then the primal

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Lord Hari related to him the means, which Uddhava had described, for destroying the King of Magadha. Thus Arjuna, Krishna and Bhimasena disguised themselves to look like *brahmanas* and went to Girivraja, Jarasandha's capital. Looking like *brahmanas*, the royal warriors went to Jarasandha's home at the designated hour for welcoming guests. They then submitted their request to that dutiful householder, who was famous for being respectful to *brahmanas*.

The three "brahmanas" said: "O King, we are needy guests who have travelled here from afar. We wish all good fortune to you. Please grant Us our desire. What can those who are tolerant not bear? But what will the vicious not do? What will those who are generous not give in charity? And who do those of equal vision have to call an outsider? Indeed one is to be pitied if, though able to do so, fails to win with his temporal body the everlasting fame praised by great saints. Rantideva, Harischandra, Unchavritti, Shibi, Mudgala, Bali and many others all attained the eternal by means of the temporal."

From the tenor of their voices, their imposing physical stature and the obvious marks of bowstrings on their shoulders, Jarasandha knew that his guests were members of the royal order. He also thought that he had seen them before somewhere. "These are surely *ksatriyas* dressed as *brahmanas*," Jarasandha thought to himself. "Yet I must grant them charity, even if they ask for my body. Indeed, for this reason the glories of Maharaja Bali still vibrate throughout the three worlds. Lord Vishnu, wishing to gain back Indra's opulence from Bali, came before him in the Form of a dwarf *brahmana* and thus made Bali give up his powerful position. Though aware of the deceit and even forbidden by Sukracharya, his Guru, still Bali granted Vishnu whatever He requested, namely three steps of land. What is the use of a *kshatriya* who continues to live but loses his chance for timeless glory by sacrificing his temporary body for the good of the *brahmanas*?"

Having thus decided, the generous Jarasandha addressed his "*brahmana*" guests: "O learned *brahmanas*, whatever you choose is yours, even if you ask for my head."

Lord Krishna said: "O honorable King, please give us battle, one on one, if you think it proper. We are not *brahmanas*, but are here to challenge you to fight. That is our only request. This is Bhima, Pritha's son, and here is Arjuna, his brother. Know Me, O King, to be Krishna, their maternal cousin and your enemy."

Thus challenged, Jarasandha roared loudly and said contemptuously: "All right, you fools, I'll fight you! But I won't fight You, Krishna. You are a coward! In the midst of a battle, Your strength failed You and You fled Mathura, Your capital, to take shelter in the ocean. As for this puny runt, Arjuna, he is not my age, nor is he as strong. Since he is so inferior to me, he cannot be a contender. But Bhima appears to be my equal, so I'll fight him!"

Jarasandha gave Bhimasena a huge club and picked up another himself. Then they both went outside the city where the two valiant foes began to fight each other. With the fury of mortal combatants, they hit each other with lightning bolt-like club strikes, artfully circling each other like actors on a stage. The contest presented a magnificent spectacle to behold. The clash of their clubs colliding was like the crashing of dueling mad elephants' tusks, or the violent thunder of an electrical storm.

Their clubs were swung at each other with so much force and speed that when

their clubs hit their shoulders, collarbones, hips and thighs, the weapons snapped like branches of arka trees wielded by angry elephants furiously attacking each other. Their clubs destroyed, those herculean men angrily resorted to using their iron-hard fists. The sound of flesh smashing flesh was as violent as a tornado.

The fighting went on and on, but this battle between opponents of equal training, strength and determination could reach no end. Thus they kept on fighting without pause or mercy. Krishna knew the mystery of Jarasandha's birth and how he could be killed. He knew fully how Jarasanda had been given life by the joining of his body by Jara, the mystic demoness. Having decided to kill his enemy, Lord Krishna of infallible vision gave special empowerment to Bhima, and He also gave indication to Bhima how to do it by gently splitting a blade of grass down the middle. Understanding this instruction, mighty Bhima, the greatest of fighters, seized Jarasandha by his feet and threw him to the ground. Bhima pressed one leg to the ground with his foot and grabbed Jarasandha's other leg with his hands and ripped Jarasandha apart from the anus upward.

When the King's subjects saw his dismembered corpse thrown across the battleground in two gory halves, a great cry of despair arose on one side, while Krishna and Arjuna embraced Bhima and congratulated him on the other. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Benefactor and Sustainer of all living beings, then crowned Jarasandha's son, Sahadeva, to be the new ruler of Magadha. In fulfillment of the other purpose of His mission, the Lord then freed the many kings languishing in Jarasandha's prison.

Chapter Seventy-Three: Lord Krishna Blesses the Liberated Kings

Jarasandha had defeated and captured 20,800 kings and incarcerated them in prison. When these kings walked out of the Giridroni prison fortress, they looked dirty and bedraggled. They were thin from hunger, their tired faces were shrivled, and they were very weak from long imprisonment. Upon beholding the Lord before them, they at once felt rejuvenated. The Lord's complexion was dark blue like a monsoon cloud, and He wore yellow silken garments. He was uniquely adorned by the *Srivatsa* mark on His chest, by His four powerful arms, the pinkish color of His eyes resembling a lotus whorl, by His beautiful cheerful face, His gleaming shark-shaped earrings, what to speak of the lotus, club, conchshell and disc He carried in His four hands. A helmet, a jeweled necklace, a golden belt, golden bracelets and golden armlets adorned His Divine Form. On His neck the Lord wore the brilliant and precious *Kaustubha* gem, as well as a garland of wild flowers. Those just-released kings seemed to drink His beauty through their eyes, taste Him with their tongues, delight in His fragrance with their noses and embrace Him warmly in their arms. Their sins now all eradicated, the kings eagerly bowed to the Lord, touching their heads to His Lotus Feet.

Since the ecstasy of seeing Lord Krishna dispelled the weariness and distress of

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their long imprisonment, the kings stood up with folded hands and offered praise to the Supreme Master of the senses: “Obeisances to You, Krishna, O Lord of all demigods, O destroyer of Your fully surrendered devotees’ troubles, O indefatigable Krishna We have completely to You. Please save us from this miserable material existence, the cause of all despondency.

“O Madhusudana, dear Master, we do not blame Jarasandha, the King of Magadha, for our plight. It is truly Your mercy when kings fall from their royal thrones, O Almighty Lord. Bewildered by opulence, adoration and power, a king generally loses all self-restraint and cannot understand his real welfare. Thus illusioned by Your external energy, he imagines his temporary assets to be eternal. Even as foolish men consider a mirage in the desert to be actual water, so those who are not intelligent accept *maya*’s illusory representations as substantial.

“Previously, being blinded by the intoxication of wealth, we desired to conquer this earth, and thus fought one another to achieve victory, mercilessly tormenting our own subjects. We arrogantly disrespected You, O Great Warrior, Who constantly stood before us as Death. Now, however, O Krishna, Your powerful Form called Tme, which moves mysteriously and irresistibly, has relieved us of all our opulences. Having mercifully smashed our pride, we simply beg to always remember Your Lotus Feet. Never again shall we hanker for illusory kingdoms – kingdoms that require to be slavishly served by these mortal bodies, which are simply sources of disease and suffering, and which are dwindling at every moment. Nor will we, O Almighty Lord, hanker to enjoy the heavenly fruits of good works in some other lifetime, since the pledge of such benefits is simply enticement for the ears.

“Please tell us the way to constantly remember Your Lotus Feet, even if we continue in *samsara*’s cycle of birth and death. Repeatedly we offer our humble obeisances to You, Lord Krishna, Govinda, Son of Vasudeva, the Supreme Soul Who destroys the suffering of all those who surrender to Him.”

The kings, now free from bondage, gloried in the Supreme Lord Krishna. That merciful Giver of shelter graciously responded: “From this time on, My dear kings, I bless you with staunch devotion to Me, the Supreme Lord and Self of all that be. I guarantee that this will happen just as you desire. Auspiciously you have reached the proper conclusion, O noble kings, and what you have said is true. You have correctly understood that a human beings’ lack of self-control, which comes from being intoxicated with opulence and power, leads only to madness.

“Nahusha, Haihaya, Vena, Naraka, Ravana and many other powerful rulers fell down from their high positions due to being intoxicated by material opulence. Understanding that one’s material body and all that is connected to it has a beginning and an end, one should worship Me, and with transparent intelligence protect your citizens in accordance with religious principles. Live your life - whether begetting progeny or experiencing happiness and distress, or even birth and death - by always fixing your mind on Me. Be detached from your body and everything connected to it. Remain Self-satisfied, always keeping your vows while simultaneously concentrating your minds on Me. Thus you will at last attain Me, the Supreme Absolute Truth.”

Sukadeva Goswami continued: Thus having instructed the kings, Lord Krishna, the Supreme Lord of all worlds, engaged many servants to bathe and groom the kings. O descendant of Bharata, Lord Krishna then had the newly enthroned King Sahadeva honor all these kings with offerings of sandalwood paste, jewelry, garlands and rich clothing, such as is suitable for royalty. After properly bathing and decorating them, Lord Krishna had them fed very sumptuously. He also gave them various things befitting a king's pleasure, such as betel nut.

Having been honored by Lord Mukunda and relieved of all suffering, the kings shone brilliantly, their earrings gleaming like the moon shining in the sky after the rainy season. Finally the Lord made sure the kings were seated on chariots drawn by eight horses and adorned with jewelry and gold. Pleasing them with kind words, the Lord sent them back to their respective kingdoms.

Thus freed from all disturbances by the greatest of all Personalities, the kings departed, thinking only of Him, the Lord of the Universe, and of His transcendental deeds. When they got home, the kings told their ministers and other associates what the Personality of Godhead had done. Then they diligently tried to execute the orders Lord Krishna had given to them. Lord Krishna, Lord Keshava, accepted the worship of King Sahadeva and then departed for Indraprastha with Pandu's two sons.

Upon arriving at Indraprastha, the victorious heroes loudly blew their conchshells, bringing great joy to Their well-wishers but sorrow to Their foes. Almost all of Indraprastha's residents were exceedingly pleased to hear that glorious sound, for they knew that now Jarasandha, the King of Magadha, was dead. King Yudhishthira felt that now all his desires were fulfilled. Bima, Arjuna and Lord Krishna offered their obeisances to the King and told him all about what had happened in Magadha. Upon hearing their narration of the great boon Lord Keshava had mercifully bestowed upon him, King Yudhishthira, Dharmaraja, shed tears of loving ecstasy. He was speechless due to his intense emotions of love.

Chapter Seventy-Four: The Deliverance of Sisupala

Having thus heard of the killing of Jarasandha, and also of almighty Krishna's wonderful power, King Yudhishthira addressed the Lord with great pleasure: "All the exalted Spiritual Masters of the three worlds, together with the inhabitants and rulers of the various planets, carry on their heads Your orders, which are rarely obtained. That You, the Supreme Lord with lotus eyes, accept the demands of wretched fools who think themselves rulers is a great charade on Your part, O All-pervasive One.

"The power of the Supreme Soul, O Absolute Truth, the Primeval One without a second, is neither diminished nor increased by His activities, any more than the power of the sun is diminished nor increased by its movements. O insurmountable Madhava, even Your devotees do not distinguish between 'I' and 'mine,' or 'you' and 'yours,' for this is the mentality of animals."

After saying this, King Yudhisthira waited until the proper time for commencing the sacrifice. Then with the Lord's permission, he selected qualified priests, all of whom expert Vedic authorities, to perform the sacrifice. He selected Krishna-Dvaipayana Vyas, Bharadvaja, Gotama and Sumantu and many more. Other eminent personages who were invited included Bhishma, Drona, Krpa, Dhritarashtra with his sons, the wise Vidura, and many other *brahmanas*, *kshatriyas*, *vaisyas* and *sudras*, all eager to observe the sacrifice. Indeed, all the kings were in attendance with their entourages.

Brahmana priests then plowed the sacrificial arena with a golden plowshare and initiated King Yudhisthira for the sacrifice, all in accordance with the traditions of standard authorities. The utensils to be used in the sacrifice were made of pure gold, just as in the *Rajasuya* of old performed by Lord Varuna. Lords Brahma, Shiva, Indra and many other great demigods, *Siddhas*, *Gandharvas*, *Vidyadharas*, great serpents, sages, *Yakshas*, *Rakshasas*, celestial birds, *Kinnaras*, *Charanas* and earthly kings – all were invited, and came from every direction to the *Rajasuya* sacrifice of King Yudhisthira. They were not in the least astonished to see the opulence of the sacrifice, for it was only right and appropriate for Lord Krishna's devotee.

Powerful priests performed the *Rajasuya* sacrifice for King Yudhisthira in accordance with the *Vedic* injunctions, just as the demigods had previously performed it for Varuna. On the day of extracting the *soma* juice, King Yudhisthira properly worshiped the priests and the exalted personalities of the assembly.

The assembly members then pondered over whom among them should be worshiped first, but since there were many personalities qualified for this honor, they were unable to decide. Finally Sahadeva spoke: "Truly the one to be honored first is *Ahyuta*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and Chief of the *Yadus*. He deserves the highest position. In truth He Himself comprises all the demigods worshiped in sacrifice, along with such aspects of the worship as the sacred place, the time and the paraphernalia.

"This entire universe is founded upon Him, as are the great sacrificial performances, with their sacred rites, *mantras* and oblations. The aim of both *Sankhya* and *yoga* is to attain Him, the One without a second. O my dear assembly members, that unborn Lord, existing solely in Himself, creates, maintains and destroys this cosmos by His personal energies only. Thus the existence of this universe depends solely on Him. He creates all the activities of this world. By His grace the whole world endeavors for religiosity, economic development, sense gratification and liberation.

"Therefore the highest honor and respect should be given to Krishna, the Supreme Lord. If we do that, we will be honoring the whole creation, including ourselves. Anyone wishing the honor he renders to be reciprocated in return must honor Krishna, Supreme Lord, the perfectly peaceful and perfectly complete Soul of all beings, the Who sees nothing as separate from Himself."

Having spoken, Sahadeva, who was aware of Lord Krishna's powers, became silent. Accepting this potent endorsement, all the saints and sages present congratulated him, exclaiming, "Excellent! Excellent! Very well done!" King Yudhisthira was delighted to hear this confirmation of the *brahmanas*, which was the feeling of the entire assembly. With overwhelming love, thinking devotedly, he fully worshiped Lord Krishna, the

Master of the senses.

After bathing Lord Krishna's Lotus Feet, Maharaja Yudhisthira joyously sprinkled the water upon his own head, and then upon the heads of his family members and ministers. That water is so holy that it purifies the whole world. As the King honored the Lord with presentations of yellow silken garments and precious jewel studded ornaments, the King's tear-lled eyes prevented him from seeing the Lord clearly.

When others saw how Lord Krishna was honored, nearly all who were present joined their palms reverentially, and exclaimed: "Obeisances to You, O Krishna! All victory to You!" and then bowed down to Him. Flowers rained down from the sky. Damaghosa's intolerant son, Sisupala, became infuriated upon hearing all of the glorification and narration of Lord Krishna's Transcendental Qualities. Getting up from his seat and angrily waving his arms, he arrogantly blasphemed the Supreme Lord before the entire assembly: "The Vedic statement that Time is the inevitable controller of all has indeed been proven true, since the intelligence of wise Elders has now become trampled by the words of a mere Lad! O leaders of the assembly, you know best who is a qualified and best candidate for receiving the first worship. Therefore do not pay attention to the words of a boy claiming that Krishna deserves to be worshiped first. How can you pass over the greatly exalted members of this distinguished assembly – eminent sages dedicated to the Absolute Truth, qualified with powers of austerity, divine insight and rigid adherence to severe vows, sanctified by Vedic knowledge and honored even by the lords of the universe? How does this Cowherd Boy, the re- use of His family, deserve your worship?"

"How does a Person Who follows no principles of the social and spiritual orders, or even family ethics, Who has been shut out from all religious duties, Who acts capriciously, and Who has no good qualities – how can such a man deserve to be worshiped? Yayati cursed the dynasty of the *Yadus*, and ever since they have been shunned by honest men. They are addicted to liquor! How, then, is Krishna worthy of worship? The *Yadus* have abandoned the holy land of Bharatavarsha where saintly sages dwell and have taken shelter in the sea, a place devoid *brahminical* principles. There, they live just like thieves and harass their subjects."

Sri Sukadeva resumed his narration: Bereft of auspiciousness, Sisupala spoke very insultingly. But the Supreme Lord said nothing, even as a lion ignores the howls of a jackal. But upon hearing such terrible blasphemy of Krishna, many assembly members covered their ears and walked out, angrily cursing Sisupala, the King of Chedi, with great vehemence. If one fails to immediately leave the place where blasphemy of the Supreme Lord or His faithful devotee is heard, he will certainly fall down and lose all his pious credits.

Hearing that, the sons of Pandu became mad with fury, as did the warriors of the *Matsya*, *Kaikaya* and *Srinjaya* clans. Altogether they rose from their seats with weapons drawn, ready to kill Sisupala. Unmoved, Sisupala waved his sword and shield threateningly, hurling insults at anyone who sided with Lord Krishna. Then suddenly the Supreme Lord stood to check His devotees, but also compassionately sent forth His razor-sharp disc to sever the head of Sisupala, His enemy, who was attacking Him.

Upon Sisupala's demise, a tumultuous howl rose from the crowd. Taking advantage

of that tumult, the few kings who were supporters of Sisupala quickly left the assembly and ran for their lives. An effulgent light rose from Sisupala's body and, within everyone's vision, entered Lord Krishna just like a meteor falling to the earth. Obsessed with hatred of Krishna throughout three successive lifetimes, Sisupala at last attained the Lord's transcendental abode. Thus it is concluded that one's consciousness at the time of death determines one's future birth.

Emperor Yudhisthira thereupon bestowed generous gifts to all the sacerdotal priests as well as the members of the assembly, thus correctly honoring them all in the same manner prescribed by the *Vedas*. He also took the *avabhrittha* bath. In this way did Lord Krishna, the Master of mystic *yoga*, see to the successful execution of this great *Rajasuya* sacrifice on behalf of King Yudhisthira. Afterwards, He stayed with His intimate friends for several months as they desired. Then Lord Krishna, the Son of Devaki, took permission of King Yudhisthira and, with His entourage, returned to His capital.

I have previously described to you in detail the history of the two Vaikuntha residents, Jaya and Vijaya, who had to undergo three births in the material world due to being cursed by *brahmanas*. All were purified in the concluding *avabhrittha* ritual, which marked the successful end of the *Rajasuya* sacrifice. Emperor Yudhisthira's effulgence shone brilliantly among the assembled *brahmanas* and *kshatriyas*, as brilliantly as the King of the demigods himself. Everyone, including the demigods, residents of intermediate planets and humans, all were properly honored by the King and joyfully set out for their respective abodes, singing the praises of Lord Krishna and also of the great sacrifice. Everyone was fully satisfied except sinful Duryodhana, the embodiment of the Age of Kali and the disease of his dynasty. He could not tolerate seeing the amazing opulence of the sons of Pandu.

One who recites these activities of Lord Krishna, including the slaying of Sisupala, the deliverance of the imprisoned kings and the performance of the *Rajasuya* sacrifice, is freed from all sins.

Chapter Seventy-Five: Duryodhana Humiliated

Maharaja Pariksit said: O *Brahmana*, from what I have heard you say, great sage, all the assembled demigods, sages and kings were delighted to witness the wondrous festival of King Yudhisthira's *Rajasuya* sacrifice, save for Duryodhana. Please tell me the reason for this, my lord.

Sri Sukadeva Goswami answered: At the *Rajasuya* sacrifice performed by your godly grandfather, all his family members who were bound by respect and love for him, engaged themselves in various humble services for his sake. Bhima took charge of the kitchen, Duryodhana oversaw the treasury, while Sahadeva very respectfully welcomed the arriving guests. Nakula procured and managed needed supplies, Arjuna served the respectable Elders, Krishna Himself washed everyone's feet, and beautiful Draupadi

served the food. That most generous of persons, Karnna, dispersed the gifts of charity. Many others, such as Vikarna, Yuyudhana, Vidura, Hardikya, Bhurishrava, his brothers and Santardana also volunteered for different duties for the glorious sacrifice. They did so due to their eagerness to please Maharaja Yudhisthira, the best of kings.

When the priests, the great learned sages, the prominent delegates and the King's intimate supporters had all been duly honored with sweet words, auspicious gifts and various other remunerations, and after Sisupala, the King of Chedi, had attained the Lord's Lotus Feet, the *avabhritha* bath was performed in the holy river Yamuna. During the *avabhritha* merriment, various instruments resounded: *mridangas*, conchshells, *panavas*, *dhundhuris*, kettledrums and *gomukha* horns. Choruses and dancers performed joyously, while the vibrations of hand cymbals, *vinas*, and *utes* reached all the way to the heavenly planets with their musical sound.

For that auspicious occasion, the kings, adorned with opulent gold necklaces, marched forth in grand procession toward the Yamuna. They sported flags and banners of different colors and were surrounded by infantrymen and well-armed soldiers atop lordly elephants, regal chariots and *re* horses. The combined armed forces of the *Yadus*, *Srinjayas*, *Kambojas*, *Kurus*, *Kaikeyas* and *Koshalas* made the earth shake as they marched behind Maharaja Yudhisthira, the performer of the sacrifice. The assembly of dais and priests, as well as other *brahmanas* resoundingly chanted *Vedic mantras*, while divine sages, demigods, *Pitas* and *Gandharvas* joyously sang the King's praises and showered down *owers*.

Men and women, all beautifully adorned with sandalwood paste, *ower* garlands, jewelry and *re* clothing, sported by *s* meaning one another with various liquids such as oil, yogurt, perfumed water, turmeric and *kumkum* powder. Encircled by guards, King Yudhisthira's lovely Queens joined the procession on their chariots to observe the fun, just as the heavenly demigods' wives sometimes appear in the sky in their celestial airplanes for the same purpose. As cousins and close friends sprayed the Queens with colorful liquids, the ladies' faces blossomed with shy smiles, which increased the Queens' splendid beauty.

As the Queens sprayed water from their syringes on brothers-in-law and companions, the Queens' own garments became wet, revealing their beautiful breasts, thighs, arms and slender waists. In their exhilaration, the *owers* were falling from their loosened locks. By these enchanting pastimes they aroused those with impure consciousness.

The Emperor, seated upon his chariot pulled by excellent horses decorated with golden collars, looked awesome in the company of his Queens, just like the radiant *Rajasuya* sacrifice itself, surrounded by its various rituals. The priests guided King Yudhisthira through the performance of the *ral* rituals, the *patni-samyaja* and *avabhritha*. Then they had him and his Queen, Draupadi, sip water to purify themselves and then bathe in the Holy Ganges. Kettledrums in the heavens resounded together with the drums of humans on earth. Demigods, sages and forefathers poured down a continuous shower of *ower* petals. All the citizens present, from all the *varnas* and *ashramas*, then bathed in the river where even the worst sinner is freed from his sinful reactions.

Next the King dressed himself in fresh, new silken garments and ornamented

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himself with rich jewelry. To honor the priests, learned *brahmanas*, assembly of dials and other guests, he presented them with gifts of ornaments and clothing. In many ways King Yudhisthira, having totally dedicated himself to Lord Narayana, affectionately honored his immediate family, other relatives, the kings, his many friends and well-wishers, as well as others who were present there. All the men looked as effulgent as demigods adorned with jewel studded earrings, aromatic over garlands, silent turbans, waistcoats, as well as silk *dhotis* and lustrous pearl necklaces. The beautiful faces of the ladies were enhanced by their matched earrings and winking locks of hair. They were all girded with jewel-studded golden belts.

Then the great *Vedic* authorities, who had served as sacrificial checkers, the highly qualified priests, the especially invited royalty, the demigods, sages, forefathers, the exalted *brahmanas*, *kshatriyas*, *vaisyas*, *sudras* and all the planetary rulers and their retinues – all having been properly worshiped by King Yudhisthira and with his permission departed, O King, each for his separate abode. Although they all gloried the amazing *Rajasuya-yajna* executed by that great saintly monarch and servant of the Lord, they were still not satiated, even as an ordinary man is not satiated when drinking nectar.

At that ceremony Maharaja Yudhisthira convinced a number of his friends, immediate family members and other relatives to remain for some time at Indraprastha, among them Lord Krishna. Due to his intense love for them, Yudhisthira could not bear their leaving for he feared the pain of separation. O dear Pariksit, the Supreme Lord stayed there for several months to please the King, but He sent Samba and the other *Yadu* leaders back to Dwaraka right away. Thus Maharaja Yudhisthira, the scion of Dharma, at last had all his ambitions fulfilled by the grace of Lord Krishna.

Once Duryodhana, while observing the riches of King Yudhisthira's palace, became very disturbed by envy of the opulence of both the *Rajasuya* sacrifice and its performer, King Yudhisthira, who had made Lord Krishna his life and soul. In that palace where many opulent kings, men, demons and gods gathered, and which was gorgeously designed and manifested by the cosmic engineer, Maya Dhanava, Draupadi served her husbands with all those riches very magnificently. Duryodhana, the prince regent of the *Kurus*, was very envious to see it, for he was extremely attracted to her.

Lord Madhupati's [Krishna] numerous Queens were also living at the palace. On their delicate feet they strolled slowly through the gardens, burdened down by their heavy, shapely hips. As they walked the bells on their small feet tinkled enchantingly. The Queens' waists were all slender and the *kumkum* from their breasts reddened the pearl necklaces they were wearing. Their winking locks of hair and swaying earrings enhanced the consummate beauty of their faces.

Once when Dharma's son, Emperor Yudhisthira, was sitting on a golden throne in the assembly hall built by Maya Danava, he looked just like Indra on his heavenly throne. Attending him were his ministers and family members, as well as Lord Krishna, his special eye. Manifesting the opulences of Brahma himself, King Yudhisthira was being lauded by many court poets. Proud Duryodhana, displaying the tokens of his own regal position in a gaudy and obnoxious manner, drew his sword and angrily entered the palace together with his brothers, O King, insulting the doorman as he passed.

Confused by the illusions created by Maya Danava's optical illusions, Duryodhana mistook the solid polished marble floor for water and therefore lifted his dhoti and skirted about the illusion. A little further along, he fell into a pool of water, thinking it must also be solid floor, but it wasn't. Odorous Pariksit, Bhishma then laughed boisterously and so did some women and others, including some of the kings. Maharaja Yudhishthira tried his best to stop them, but Lord Krishna gave a smile of approval and encouragement. Burning with anger and humiliation, Duryodhana lowered his face and said not a word, but immediately went back to Hastinapura. Many saintly persons who were there cried: "Alas, alas!" making King Yudhishthira dismayed and foreboding. Nevertheless, the Supreme Lord, Whose desire was the cause of Duryodhana's bewilderment, remained silent, for this was part of His plan for removing the sinful burden of the Earth.

I have now answered your question, O King, concerning why Duryodhana was unhappy on the occasion of the great *Rajasuya* sacrifice.

Chapter Seventy-Six: The Battle Between Salva & the Vrishnis

Sri Sukadeva Goswami said: Now please listen, O King, to another wondrous Pastime performed by Lord Krishna, Who descended in a human-like body to exhibit and enjoy Transcendental Pastimes. Now hear how Krishna killed the lord of the Saubha airship. Demon Salva was a companion of Sisupala, who was defeated by the *Yadu* warriors at the wedding of Rukmini, along with his ally Jarasandha and other kings. At that time Salva swore in the presence of many kings: "I will rid the earth of all *Yadavas*. Just witness my prowess!"

Vowing thus, the foolish King proceeded to worship Lord Shiva by eating only a handful of dust each day and nothing else. Lord Shiva is known as Umapati, "He who is quickly pleased." But only after a whole year had passed did he at last benedict Salva by offering him his choice of boons. Salva at once asked for a vehicle that could not be destroyed by any demigod, demon or human, and that it could go anywhere he wished, and that would be very terrifying to the *Vrishnis*. Lord Shiva said: "Granted!"

On Lord Shiva's order, Maya Danava constructed a flying airship made of iron, named Saubha, and gave it to Salva. That invincible vehicle was full of darkness and could travel anywhere. Upon receiving it, Salva immediately set out to besiege Dwaraka, recalling the *Vrishnis'* hostility toward him. Accompanied by a large army, O best of Bharatas, Salva proceeded to lay waste the outlying gardens and parks, the opulent mansions with their observatories, towering gateways and surrounding walls, and public recreational areas. From his wonderful airship he launched a constant stream of weapons: tree trunks, stones, thunderbolts, hailstones and snakes. At the mere sight of that airship all directions were blanketed with dust and were hit with fierce whirlwinds.

Being thus tormented by the Saubha airship, Lord Krishna's city knew no peace,

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O King Pariksit, even as the Earth knew no peace when she was attacked by the demons' three aerial cities. Seeing His citizens so harassed, the heroic and glorious Lord Pradhyumna bade them, 'Fear not,' and immediately mounted His chariot. The chief members of the chariot cavalry – Satyaki, Samba, Charudeshna, Akrura and his younger brothers, Suka and Sarana – all marched out of Dwaraka leading many renowned bowmen. All were girded in shining armor and well-protected by divisions of soldiers mounted on elephants, chariots and horses. They were also accompanied by vast numbers of infantry.

A tumultuous, hair-raising engagement then began between the forces of Salva and those of the *Yadavas*, equal in scale and terror to the great battles of old fought between the demigods and demons. Pradhyumna with his divine weapons effortlessly destroyed the entire maze of Salva's illusions, even as the irrepressible rays of the sun dissipate the darkness of night. Pradhyumna's arrows each had a golden shaft, an iron head and perfectly smooth joints. Salva's commander-in-chief, Dyuman, he struck down with twenty seven arrows. Then he struck Salva himself with one hundred arrows. Salva's officers he pierced next with his sharp shafts, and then his chariot drivers, horses and other carriers. Witnessing the glorious Pradhyumna perform such an amazing and mighty feat, the soldiers from both sides of the conflict shouted His praises.

Sometimes the mystic airship constructed by Maya Danava appeared to have many identical forms, and the very next instant it was again only one. Sometimes it would fluctuate in and out of visibility. Thus Salva's foes could never know for certain where he was. From one instant to the next the mystic airship appeared in the sky, on the earth, on a mountain top or in the sea. Like a magic baton whirling, it was never in the same place. Despite these difficulties, wherever Salva and his Saubhaship and army would appear, the *Yadu* commanders were there ready to shoot their arrows.

Salva became confused and bewildered upon seeing his army and airship so harassed by the *Yadava's* arrows, which hit like fire and were as deadly as snake venom. Because the *Vrishni* heroes were very eager for victory, they did not move from their assigned battle positions, even under the torrential downpour of Salva's commanders' weapons. Dyuman, Salva's minister, had been previously injured by Pradhyumna, but now ran up to that *Yadu* Prince roaring boisterously and struck Him with a club made of black steel. Pradhyumna's driver was the son of Daruka, Lord Krishna's driver. Daruka thought that his master's chest had been smashed fatally by the club. Knowing well the religious duty of a chariot driver, he took Pradhyumna away from the battlefield.

When, after a short while, Pradyumna regained consciousness, that Son of Krishna admonished His chariot driver: "O driver, it is most abominable for Me to have left the battlefield! Except for Me, no *Yadu* has ever left the battlefield. My reputation is now ruined by a driver who must be a eunuch. What can I say to Balarama and Krishna, My fathers, when I return home after having left the war field? What will I tell Them to regain My honor? My sisters-in-law will tease Me and say, 'O great hero, tell us how it is that in battle Your enemies have turned You into a coward?'"

His driver answered: "O Hero, what I have done is in accord with my prescribed duty. When the master's life is threatened, O my lord, the chariot driver has the duty to protect him, even as the master has a duty to protect his driver. With this religious principle

in mind, I took You away from the battle field, for You had been made unconscious by Your opponent's club and I believed You were seriously injured.

Chapter Seventy-Seven: Lord Krishna Slays Salva

After taking some water and refreshing Himself, donning His armor and picking up His bow, Lord Pradhyumna ordered His driver, "Take Me to where heroic Dyuman is standing." While Pradhyumna had been away, Dyuman was massacring His army, but now that he was back, Pradhyumna again attacked, smiling, and shot Dyuman with eight *naraka* arrows. With four more arrows, He pierced Dyuman's four horses, with one arrow, his driver, and another two, his bow and chariot. With the final arrow, he severed Dyuman's head. Samba, Gada, Satyaki and other Yadu warriors then began slaughtering Salva's army. Thus all the airship's soldiers began to fall into the ocean with their heads severed. As Salva's followers and the *Yadus* went on fighting one another, a terrible battle raged continuously for twenty-seven days and nights.

Having urgently been called for by Maharaja Yudhisthira, Lord Krishna had gone to Indraprastha. With the *Rajasuya* sacrifice now completed and Sisupala killed, Lord Krishna began to notice inauspicious omens. He took leave of the *Kuru* elders and the great sages, and also of His aunt Pritha [Kunti] as well as her sons, and quickly departed for Dwaraka. The Lord thought to Himself: "Because I am here with Balarama, the kings who are partial to Sisupala may well be attacking Dwaraka, My capital city."

After He arrived at Dwaraka and seeing how His citizens were threatened, and also saw Salva and his mystic airship, Lord Keshava [Krishna] quickly made plans for His city's defense and then said to Daruka, "O driver, immediately take My chariot where Salva is. This master of Saubha may be an expert magician; but do not let him bewilder you." Thus ordered, Daruka assumed control of the Lord's chariot and set out. As the chariot approached the battlefield everyone, whether friend and foe, recognized the flag of Garuda.

When Salva, the leader of a now-decimated army, saw Lord Krishna approaching, he hurled a mighty spear at the Lord's charioteer. That spear roared frightfully as it flew over the battlefield. Salva's flying spear illuminated the sky like a streaking meteor, but Lord Sauri [Krishna] easily shattered the powerful weapon into tiny pieces with His arrows. Lord Krishna then hit Salva with sixteen sharp arrows and simultaneously struck the Saubha airship with a stream of arrows as it zipped through the sky. Shooting sharp arrows, Lord Krishna resembled the sun deluging the heavens with its rays.

Salva somehow managed to strike the Lord's left arm, the arm which held His famed Sarnga bow, and astoundingly, his Sarnga fell from His hand. All those who observed this cried in alarm. Then the lord of the Saubha roared exuberantly and addressed Lord Krishna: "Fool! Because in our presence You dared to kidnap the bride of our

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friend Sisupala, and after that murdered him in the sacred assembly when he was a little inattentive, today with my razor sharp arrows I'll send You to that land from which no one returns! You may think Yourself invincible, but I will soon kill You, if You have the guts to stand before me and fight."

The Supreme Lord replied calmly: "You dunce! You boast foolishly, for you do not see that death stands over you. Real heroes don't talk, but rather show their power in action." Having spoken this, Lord Krishna swung His mighty club with ferocious speed and power, and struck Salva on his collarbone, which made him tremble and vomit blood. Having done this to Salva, the mystic demon disappeared, but within a moment a stranger hurriedly approached Lord Krishna, bowed his head to Him and said: "Devaki sent me." Then sobbing, he wailed this message: "O Krishna, Krishna, O mighty-armed One! You are very affectionate to Your father and mother! Salva has taken Your father away, just like a butcher takes a goat to slaughter." When Lord Krishna heard this disconcerting news, He, playing the role of an ordinary man, showed grief and extreme anxiety, and out of deep affection for His beloved parents, spoke like an ordinary conditioned soul: "Lord Balarama is always vigilant, and not even a demigod, what to speak of a demon, can defeat Him. How then could insignificant Salva defeat Him and take away My father? Truly, fate is all powerful!"

As Lord Govinda spoke, the lord of the Saubha re-appeared, bringing what looked like Vasudeva with him. Mockingly, he said to Krishna, "Here is Your father, He begot You and for whose service You live in this world. Watch me as I now behead him before Your own eyes. Try to save him if You can, weakling!" After thus mocking the Lord, magician Salva cut off false Vasudeva's head with his sword. He then took the head and quickly returned to the Saubha vehicle, which was hovering just above Them.

Lord Krishna is innately full of knowledge, possessing infinite powers of perception. Yet for a time, out of his great affection for His dear loved ones, Krishna was absorbed in His *lila* in the mood of an ordinary man. Soon, however, He recalled that this was a demoniac illusion taught by Maya Danava to Salva. Now seeing everything clearly, Lord Achyuta could see neither the conjured messenger nor His father's body before Him on the battlefield. It was like awakening from a dream. But seeing His enemy in the Saubha airship flying above, the Lord resolved to destroy them both.

Srila Sukadeva Goswami said: Such is the narration given by some sages, O King, but those who say like this are illogical and contradict themselves, for it is against all previous statements. How can bewilderment, lamentation, fear or material affection - all born out of ignorance - characterize the infinite Supreme Lord whose knowledge, perception and powers are always in being? By Self-realization and by service rendered to His Lotus Feet, even the Lord's devotees are beyond the bodily concept of existence, which has bewildered the spirit soul since time immemorial. By such perfect realization, the devotees attain everlasting glory in the Lord's personal association. How, then, is it possible that the Supreme Absolute Truth, the Source and Goal of all bona fide saints, can be subjected to illusion?

While Salva constantly hurled his weapons at the Lord with great force, Lord Krishna, Whose powers never fail, shot His infallible arrows at Salva, which wounded him

and shattered his crest jewel, armor and bow. With His Kaumodaki club, the Lord then obliterated His enemy's airship. Shattered into thousands of fragments by Lord Krishna's club, Salva's airship fell into the water, but as it was falling, demon Salva abandoned it and jumped to the ground. There he picked up his club and ran toward Lord Achyuta. As Salva was running toward Him, the Lord shot a *bhalla* dart, which cut off the arm that was brandishing the club. Then Krishna let loose His *Sudarshana* disc weapon, which resembled the sun at the time of universal dissolution. The Lord's personal brilliance was like the morning sun rising over the easternmost mountain. Using His disc, Lord Hari removed that powerful magician's head with its crown and earrings in the same way as Purandara [Lord Indra] had used his thunderbolt to sever Vrita's head.

Upon seeing this, Salva's followers all cried: "Alas! Alas!" for sinful Salva was now dead and the Saubha airship was destroyed. The heavens loudly resounded with kettledrums played by joyful demigods. But now Dantavakra, wanting to avenge his friend's death, furiously attacked Lord Krishna.

Chapter Seventy-Eight: The Killing of Dantavakra, Viduratha, & Romaharshana

Because of his friendship for Sisupala, Salva and Paundraka, all of whom were killed by Krishna, wicked Dantavakra went to that battle with great rage. On foot, alone and brandishing a club in his hand, the valiant warrior shook the earth with each footstep he took. Observing Dantavakra coming, Krishna at once picked up His Kaumodaki club, jumped out of His chariot, halting His enemy's advance, just as a shore keeps back the sea. Raising his club, reckless Dantavakra, the King of Karusa, snarled at Lord Mukunda: "What good luck! What good luck! You have come to me today! Krishna, You are my maternal cousin but You killed my friends, and now You intend to kill me. Therefore, You fool, I intend to kill You first with my tremendous club! Then, O stupid one, I, who am indebted to my friends, will hereby repay my debt by killing You! You are an enemy in the guise of a relative! But actually You are the disease of our family!"

Trying to scare Lord Krishna with harsh language was like poking an elephant with a sharp goad. Dantavakra then struck Lord Krishna on the head with his huge club and roared like a lion. Although hit forcefully by Dantavakra's club, Krishna, the Savior of the *Yadus*, did not move even an inch. Rather, with His own massive Kaumodaki club, Lord Krishna bludgeoned Dantavakra squarely on his chest. Dantavakra's heart was shattered by that blow, and he vomited blood and fell to the ground lifeless, his arms and legs ailing and his hair all disheveled. While everyone watched, a wonderful spark of light rose up from the dead demon's body and merged into Lord Krishna, just as had happened when Sisupala was killed.

But at that time Viduratha, Dantavakra's brother, filled with sorrow and rage over his brother's death, went there breathing very heavily, his sword and shield drawn. He wanted to kill Krishna, but when Viduratha got near Him, Lord Krishna employed His *Sudarshana* disc to sever his head, his helmet and earrings still intact.

Having destroyed Salva and his mystic Saubha airship, as well as Dantavakra and his younger brother, Viduratha — who were all considered invincible by any and all opponents — the Lord accepted the praise of all, including demigods, humans, great sages, *Siddhas*, *Gandharvas*, *Charanas* and *Kinnaras*. As they singly and concertedly sang His glories and showered flowers upon Him, the Supreme Lord graciously entered His festively decorated capital city, Dwaraka, in the company of many eminent *Vrishnis*.

Thus did Lord Krishna, the Master of all mystic power, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and Lord of the universe, Who is always victorious, again defeat His enemy. Only one of beastly mentality thinks He is sometimes defeated.

When Lord Balarama heard a rumor that the *Kurus* were making preparations for war against the Pandavas and, wanting to maintain His own neutrality in the situation, He departed on the pretext of pilgrimage to bathe Himself in holy places. After reverently bathing at Prabhasa and duly honoring the sages, demigods, forefathers and foremost human beings, He journeyed to the part of the Saraswati River that flows westward to enter into the sea, in the company of many qualified *brahmanas*. Lord Balarama visited the very wide Bindu-saras Lake, Tritakupa, Vishala, Sudarshana, Brahma-tirtha and then the eastward flowing part of the Saraswati. He also visited many holy places on the banks of the Holy Yamuna and Ganges, arriving at last at Naimisha forest where illustrious sages were performing a great sacrifice.

Recognizing the Lord as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the sages received Him appropriately by standing up, and then bowing and worshiping Him with various paraphernalia. After thus being worshiped together with His entourage, the Lord was given a seat of honor. He then noticed that Vyasadeva's disciple - Romaharshana - had remained seated and not honored Him. Lord Balarama became very angry upon considering how this *sudra* had failed to stand up or bow down, or even join his palms in greeting, and also how he remained seated, placing himself above the learned and qualified *brahmanas* present.

Lord Balarama roared: "Because this fool took birth from an improperly united marriage and yet sits above the qualified *brahmanas*, even above Me - the Protector of Religion - he deserves to die! Despite being a disciple of the divine Vyasa, and although he has studied many scriptures under Him, all this education has failed to mature good qualities in him. Rather, his scriptural study is compared to that of an actor memorizing a part, for he has become neither humble nor self-controlled. He vainly imitates scholarly authority, although he has never learned to conquer his mind. The real purpose of My descent on this earth is to destroy such hypocrites and their pretentious religiosity. Truly, they are the most sinful of men!"

Although Lord Balarama had now desisted from killing the impious, Romaharshana's demise was imminent. Having spoken thus, Lord Balarama killed him by picking up a blade of kusa grass and touching Romaharshana with its tip. "Alas, alas!" cried the sages, in

great distress. They said to Lord Sankarsana: “O Dear Master, You have done an irreligious thing! O favorite *Yadu*, we invited him to sit on the seat of the Spiritual Master and furthermore promised him a long life and complete freedom from physical suffering until this sacrifice was completed. You have unwittingly killed a *brahmana*. To be sure, even the Vedic injunctions cannot bind You, the Lord of all creation. Still, if by Your choice You nonetheless carry out the atonement prescribed for killing a *brahmana*, O Purifier of the three worlds, people in general will benefit by Your example.”

The Personality of Godhead said: “I will surely perform the atonement prescribed for this killing, for I wish to manifest compassion upon the people in general. Please, therefore, tell Me what is to be done.”

The sages answered: “O Balarama, please allow that Your personal power and Your divine Kusa weapon, as well as our promise and Prabhu Romaharshana’s death, all remain true and intact.”

The Supreme Lord Balarama responded: “The *Vedas* say that one takes birth again as one’s son. Let Romaharshana’s son expound on the *Puranas* and let him be assured of long life, vibrant senses and strong stamina. O best of sages, please tell Me any other desire you have and I will surely fulfill it.”

The sages said: “A frightful demon named Balvala, who is Ilvala’s son, comes here on every new moon day and desecrates our sacrifice. O dear Lord Balarama, descendant of *Dasarha*, please slay this sinful demon, who rains down blood, pus, feces, urine, meat and wine upon us and our sacrifice. This is the greatest service You can do for us. After that, for one year, You should circumambulate the whole of *Bharatavarsha*, maintaining a mood of sincere, serious meditation, simultaneously executing austerities and taking bath at all the various holy pilgrimage places. In this way You will atone for Your offensive action.”

Chapter Seventy-Nine: Lord Balarama on Pilgrimage

Sri Sukadeva Goswami said: “On the day of the new moon, O King, a frightening, terrible wind began to blow, spreading the stench of pus and scattering dust clouds everywhere. Immediately the sacrificial area was struck by Balvala with a downpour of offensive, abominable things. Thereafter the demon himself became visible, flourishing his trident. The monstrous demon resembled a hill of black carbon. His hair and beard looked like molten copper, his jaws had horrible fangs and his face had furrowed brows. As soon as he saw him, Lord Balarama remembered His club, a club that tears His enemies’ armies to pieces, and also His plow, a weapon useful for punishing demons. Thus being summoned, His two transcendental weapons appeared there instantly.

With His plow’s tip Lord Balarama reached up and caught the demon Balvala, who was flying through the sky, and with the double-headed angrily hit that tormentor of *brahmanas* on his head. Balvala screamed in agony and fell down to the ground, whereupon his head

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cracked open and gushed blood. He looked like a red mountain smashed by a lightning bolt. The holy sages worshiped Lord Rama with heartfelt prayers and offered Him many infallible blessings. After that they executed His ritual bath, just as the demigods had done formerly for Lord Indra when he slew Vritra. They then put around Lord Balarama's neck a *Vaijayanti* garland, composed of lotuses that were ever fresh and in which the Goddess of Fortune resides. They also bestowed upon Lord Balarama divine garments and jewelry.

Then, having been given leave by all the sages, Balarama went with a party of *brahmanas* to the Kausiki River, where He took a holy bath. From that place He went to the lake which was the source of the River Sarayu. The Lord followed the course of the Sarayu up to Prayaga, where He again bathed and performed rituals to please the demigods and all other living beings. From there He went to Pulaha *Rishi's* ashrama. Lord Balarama then bathed in the rivers Gomati, Gandaki and Vipasa, as well as the Soma. Next He went to Gaya and there worshiped His forefathers, and then proceeded to the Ganges' mouth, where He executed more purifying ablutions. From there He went to Mount Mahendra and saw Lord Parasurama, offering Him prayers. He then bathed in the Godavari River's seven branches, and also in the Vena, Pampa and Bhimarathi rivers. Next Lord Balarama met Lord Skanda and then He visited Sri-saila, the home of Lord Girisha [Shiva]. In the provinces of the south called Dravida-desh, the Supreme Lord visited the sacred Venkata Hill, as well as the cities of Kanchi and Kamakosni, the glorious Kaveri River and the very holy Sri Ranga. This is where Lord Krishna manifested Himself. From that place He went to Rishabha Mountain, a place where Lord Krishna also resides, and then to the southern Mathura. At last He went to Setubandha, where even the most grievous sins can be absolved.

There at Setubandha [Rameshwaram] Lord Halayudha [Balarama] gave in charity to the *brahmanas* ten thousand cows. He next visited the Tamraparni and Kritamala rivers and the famous Malaya Mountains. In that mountain range Lord Balarama met Agastya *Rishi*, who was seated in meditation. After bowing to the sage, Lord Balarama offered him sweet prayers and then accepted blessings from him. After leaving Agastya, He proceeded to the southern ocean, where He saw Mother Durga in the form of Goddess Kanya-kumari.

Next the Lord went to Phalgunatirtha and took His bath in holy Lake Panchapsara, where Lord Vishnu had previously manifested Himself. Here He gave in charity another ten thousand cows.

The Supreme Lord Balarama then traveled through the kingdoms of Trigarta and Kerala, visiting Lord Shiva's holy city of Gokarna, where Lord Shiva in the form of Dhurjata directly manifests himself. He also visited with Goddess Parvati. Lord Balarama next went to the sanctified district of Surparaka and had a ritual bath in the Tapi, Nirvindhya and Payosni rivers. From there He entered the Dandaka forest and bathed in the river Reva, along whose bank the city of Mahismati is located. Then the Lord bathed at Manu-tirtha and then finally He came back to Prabhasa.

The Lord was told by some *brahmanas* about how all the kings engaged in the fight between the Pandavas and *Kurus*, and had all died in battle. From this He could

understand that the Earth had now been relieved of her sinful burden. But wanting to stop the club fight between Bhima and Duryodhana, then raging on that battle field, Lord Balarama hurried to Kurukshetra.

When Lord Krishna, Yudhisthira, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva saw Lord Balarama, they immediately offered Him their humble obeisances but did not say anything, thinking “For what purpose has He come?”

When Lord Balarama saw Bhima and Duryodhana, clubs in hand, each forcefully striving for victory over his opponent, as they skillfully circled about, He addressed them: “O King Duryodhana! O Vrikadara [Bhima]! Listen to Me! You warriors are both equal in fighting ability. One of you I know has great physical power, but the other is, I think, more expert in technique. As you are both equal in fighting ability, I don't see how either one of you can overcome the other. Please, therefore, stop this useless fight.”

But they would not accept Lord Balarama's petition, even though it was very logical and reasonable, for their enmity was irrevocable. Neither could forget the injuries and insults that had been inflicted on him by the other. Understanding that the battle had been arranged by Providence, Lord Balarama went back to Dwaraka. There He was welcomed by Ugrasena and His many other relatives, who all very delighted to see Him again. Later on Lord Balarama went to Naimisaranya, where the sages blissfully engaged Him, Who is the embodiment of all sacrifice, including various Vedic sacrifices. Lord Balarama had now completely renounced warfare.

Almighty Lord Balarama then bestowed transcendental spiritual knowledge upon all the sages gathered there. With that knowledge they could see the entire universe to be within Him and simultaneously see Him pervading the universe. After performing the *avabhrittha* ablutions with His wife, the beautifully dressed and opulently ornamented Lord Balarama, surrounded by His family, other relatives and friends, looked as gorgeous as the moon encircled by its luminous rays. Numberless other Pastimes were performed by Almighty Balarama, the immeasurable and unlimited Supreme Lord, Whose *yogamaya* mystic power made Him look like a human being. All the Pastimes of the insuperable Lord Balarama are awesome. Anyone who remembers them regularly at sunrise and sunset will be much loved by Sri Vishnu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Chapter Eighty: Sudama Visits Lord Krishna in Dwaraka

Maharaja Pariksit said: O My lord and master, I want to hear more about the valorous deeds enacted by Mukunda, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Whose valor

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is without limit. O *Brahmana*, how can one who knows the value of human life, and is therefore disgusted with living for sense gratification, forsake the marvelous transcendental topics of Lord Uttamasloka [Krishna], even after hearing them repeatedly? Real speech is that describing the transcendental Qualities of the Lord. Real hands are hands that serve Him. A useful mind is one that always perceives Him residing within everything, whether moving and nonmoving, and valuable ears are those which listen to edifying topics about Him. A good head is one that humbly bows down to Him in His diverse manifestations among both moving and nonmoving beings. Actual eyes are those that see only the Lord everywhere, and real arms and legs are those which regularly carry the water to bathe the Lord's Lotus Feet, or those of His pure devotees, and walk to the holy places of His earthly Pastimes.

Suta Goswami said: Thus questioned by King Pariksit, the powerful sage Sukadeva Goswami replied, his heart totally absorbed in meditation upon Vasudeva, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Lord Krishna had a *brahmana* friend named Sudama, who was very learned in *Vedic* knowledge and also detached from all sense gratification. Moreover, his mind was always peaceful and his senses fully controlled. Living as a *grhastha* or family man, he maintained himself and his family with whatever came his way. Sudama and his wife suffered from severe poverty and were very emaciated. This chaste wife once approached her husband, her face shriveled from distress and her body trembling with fear, and spoke as follows: "O great *Brahmana*, is it not true that the Goddess of Fortune's Husband was the classmate and personal Friend of your exalted self? Surely the Supreme Lord Krishna, that greatest of *Yadavas*, is very compassionate to *brahmanas*. Surely He is very willing to bestow on them His blessings and shelter. O most fortunate one, please go to Him, the ultimate Shelter of all saints, for He will, I am sure, bestow abundant means to an upstanding householder like you. Lord Krishna now resides in Dwaraka, the Ruler of the *Vrishnis*, *Bhojas* and *Andhakas*. Since He gives even His own Self to a person who merely remembers His Lotus Feet lovingly, what doubt can there be that He, the Spiritual Master of the universe, will grant sufficient material prosperity to one living in His sincere worshiper?"

Because his wife was constantly nagging him to go, Sudama thought: "To see my Friend Lord Krishna is certainly the greatest achievement in life." Thus deciding to go, he first requested his spouse, "My dear wife, please give me some nice gift to take to the Lord." Sudama's wife was abbergasted, since they had nothing themselves to eat. But by the Lord's grace she begged four handfuls of chipped rice from a stranger, tied it up in a torn piece of cloth and gave it to Sudama to take to the Lord. Taking the small bundle of chipped rice, saintly Sudama left for Dwaraka, but wondered all the way, "How will I be able to get in to see Krishna?"

Upon reaching Dwararka, however, the learned and qualified *brahmana* easily passed through three guard stations and gateways and passed the homes of many of Lord Krishna's faithful devotees. He very easily entered one of Lord Hari's opulent palaces, the home of Queen Rukmini, one of His sixteen thousand Queens. When he did so Sudama felt as if he were sitting on a cloud of pure bliss. It so happened that at that time

Lord Krishna was sitting on His dear consort's bed, but as soon as He spotted the *brahmana*, the Lord at once stood up and ran to meet him and in extreme joyfulness embraced him warmly.

Sri Krishna, the lotus-eyed Supreme Lord, experienced intense ecstasy upon embracing His long lost friend and thus shed profuse tears of love. Lord Krishna then seated Sudama on the bed, and He Who purifies the whole world, Personally offered his friend various items of respect, including affectionately washing his feet. O King Pariksit, after that the Lord sprinkled that water on His own head. He then smeared Sudama with wonderfully fragrant *aguru*, *kumkum* and sandalwood paste, and blissfully worshiped him with fragrant incense and ghee lamps. After giving him betel nut and a cow in charity, He talked to him very pleasantly. The divine Goddess of Fortune fanned him with Her chamara, personally serving that poor *brahmana*, whose clothes were torn and dirty, and who was so skinny that his bones were visible. The residents of the royal palace were astounded to see how Krishna, the Lord of unlimited glory, so affectionately honored this shabby and bedraggled *brahmana*. The residents of the palace questioned each other: "What pious acts could this impoverished *brahmana* have performed? He appears to be very lowly and contemptible, but Sri Krishna, the abode of Goddess Sri and the Spiritual Master of the three worlds, is reverently serving him. Leaving the Goddess of Fortune alone on her bed, Krishna embraced this scrawny *brahmana* as if he was His Older Brother!"

Holding each other's hands, Sudama and Krishna talked excitedly about the time when they lived together at the school of Sandipani *Muni*, their Guru "My dear *brahmana*," said the Supreme Lord, "you know well the paths of *dharma*. After you gave *daksine* to our Guru and then returned home, you must have married a compatible wife. But even though you became mostly engaged in household affairs, I think your mind never became affected by material desires. Nor, O learned *brahmana*, did you take much trouble for pursuing material wealth. This I know! By renouncing all material engagement, which springs from My illusory energy, many people execute their worldly duties with minds completely undisturbed by mundane desires. They act even as I do: only to instruct others. My dear *brahmana* friend do you remember how we lived altogether in the school of our Spiritual Master? When a twice-initiated student has fully learned from his Master all that he has to learn, he enjoys spiritual life, a life beyond all ignorance. My dear Sudama, the one who is responsible for one's physical birth is called the first Spiritual Master, and he who initiates him a second time to make him a qualified *brahmana* and engages him in devotional service, is more truly his Spiritual Master. But the great soul who can bestow transcendental knowledge upon all the spiritual orders of society is certainly one's ultimate Spiritual Master. Indeed, he is to be considered as good as My own Self.

"Surely, O *brahmana*, those who take advantage of My words, spoken in My Form as the Spiritual Master, easily traverse the ocean of material existence and truly understand their own real welfare. I, the Soul of all souls, am not as much satisfied by ritual worship, or by *brahminical* initiation, or by penances or austerities as I am by faithful devotional service rendered to one's Guru.

"O *brahmana*, do you recall what happened to Us while We were living at Our

Spiritual Master's *ashrama*? Once Our *Gurumata* sent Us to fetch rewood in the forest, O twice-born one, and while doing so, an unseasonable storm suddenly arose with fierce winds, torrential rain and terrifying thunder. When the sun went down, the forest became so dark and wooded that We could not tell high ground from low. Constantly harrassed by the pounding rain and powerful winds, We lost our way in that wooded forest. We held each other's hands, and in great anxiety, wandered blindly in that forest.

"Sri Sandipani Muni, our Guru, knowing Our predicament, set right after after sunrise to search for Us, and found Us there in great distress. Sandipani said: 'O my dear Boys, You have endured so much on my behalf! One's body is very dear, but You are so devoted to me that You disregarded Your own welfare and comfort. It is, of course, the duty of any true disciple to repay his debt to his Spiritual Master by offering him his wealth, and even his very life, with a pure heart. You Two are first-class *Brahmanas*! I am very satisfied with You and bless you that all Your desires may be fulfilled, and that the *Vedic mantras* I have given you may never lose their significance for You, either in this world or the one to come.' We had many such experiences while We were living in Our Blessed Guru's home. How true it is that by the grace of the Spiritual Master, one can fulfill life's purpose and attain everlasting peace."

The *brahmana* said: "What is there I could possibly fail to achieve, O Universal Teacher, O Lord of lords, having been able to personally live with You - the One Whose desires are always fulfilled - in the house of Our Preceptor? O Almighty Lord, Your body is Absolute Truth and nondifferent from the *Vedas*, for it is the Source of every auspicious goal of life. That You resided at the school of the Spiritual Master is merely one of Your Pastimes, playing the role of a human being, O Supreme Lord."

Chapter Eighty-One: The Lord Blesses Sudama Brahmana

Lord Hari [Krishna] is fully conscious of the heart of every living being, but He is particularly inclined to the *brahmanas*. While Krishna, the Supreme Lord and goal of all saintly persons, talked with Sudama, the best of qualified *brahmanas*, He laughed and reminisced with His dear friend, smiling and looking at him lovingly all the while.

The Supreme Lord said: "O *brahmana*, what present have you brought Me from your home? I regard as very great even a paltry gift, if it is offered by My devotee in pure love; but even a great offering made by a non-devotee does not satisfy Me.

But when offered to Me with love resolute,
even water, flower, a leaf or a fruit,
such offerings of love I accept with great pleasure,
and give in exchange what's beyond earthly measure. (*Gita* Ch. 9)

Even after being spoken to in this way, Sudama still felt too ashamed to offer the Husband of the Goddess of Fortune his several handfuls of chipped rice. Therefore

he kept his head bowed and did not answer the Lord. Being omniscient, Lord Krishna understood perfectly well why Sudama had come to see Him. Thus Krishna thought: "Until now My friend has never worshiped Me with the slightest desire for material opulence. Nevertheless, now he has come to Me to satisfy his very devoted wife. Let Me give him opulence such as even the great demigods cannot obtain."

Thinking like this, Krishna snatched the few grains of chipped rice warped in an old rag from under Sudama's arm and exclaimed: "What is this, My dear friend? Have You brought this gift for Me? It gives Me great pleasure. Truly, this handful of chipped rice will satisfy not only Me but the whole universe as well." Upon saying this, Krishna ate some of the chipped rice and was just about to eat some more, when Rukmini, the devoted Goddess of Fortune, grabbed His hand and said: "O Soul of the universe, You have already eaten more than enough to secure for him all kinds of opulences - both here in this world and in the next. In truth, one's welfare and prosperity depend solely on Your satisfaction!"

After Sudama had eaten and drunk to his full satisfaction, the *brahmana* spent the night in Lord Krishna's palace. He felt like he had reached the spiritual sky. In the morning Sudama took off for home, having been honored by the Lord, Who is the Self-satisfied creator and maintainer of the universe. Sudama felt great happiness as he walked on the road home, despite his apparently not receiving any wealth from Krishna. Sudama had been too shy to ask for any himself. Still, he went home feeling fully satisfied just to have been in the Supreme Lord's presence. Sudama thought: "Krishna is well-known to be very devoted to the *brahmanas* and I have now personally seen this devotion. In fact, He who bears on His chest the Goddess of Fortune, embraced me, the poorest of beggars. Who am I? A poor, sinful friend of a *brahmana*. And Who is Krishna? He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, complete in six opulences. Nevertheless, He warmly embraced me in His arms! Krishna treated me just like His Brother, asking me to sit on His beloved consort's bed. And due to my fatigue, His Queen personally fanned me with a yak tail *chamara*."

"Despite Krishna's being the Lord of the demigods and the supreme object of adoration for all *brahmanas*, He worshiped me, just as if I were an exalted demigod, massaging my feet and performing other humble services. Devotional service to Lord Krishna's Lotus Feet is the cause of all perfections, whether found in liberation, in heaven, in the subterranean planets or on earth. Krishna thought: 'If this poor beggar suddenly becomes wealthy, he might forget Me in his intoxicated happiness.' Therefore the all-compassionate Lord did not give me even a little opulence."

So thinking, Sudama arrived at the site where his home used to stand. But that place was now filled on every side with huge celestial palaces which rivaled the brilliance of the sun, moon and fire combined. There were many spacious courtyards and splendid gardens, each having beautiful ponds full of kumuda, ambhoja, kahlara and utpala lotuses and trees of coolig birch. Riddhaya tired me not, and I did not with closed eyes, all stood in attendance. Befuddled, Sudama wondered: "What's going on? Whose place is this? How has all this come about?"

As he continued to ponder in this way, the well-dressed men and maidens, who

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were as effulgent as demigods, came near to greet their lord and master, joyously singing and playing musical instruments. Upon hearing that her husband had come, Sudama's wife ran out of the mansion in great jubilation. She herself looked like the Goddess of Fortune, coming out of Her divine abode. When that chaste lady looked at her husband, her eyes welled with tears of eagerness and love. As she held her gaze down, she bowed down to him, embracing him in her heart.

Sudama was very astonished to see his wife like this, shining in the midst of many maidservants, all adorned with bejeweled lockets. She looked as bright and effulgent as a demigoddess riding in a celestial airplane. With extreme pleasure and anticipation he and his wife excitedly entered the palace, which was surrounded with hundreds of gem-studded pillars, exactly like the palace of Lord Indra. In Sudama's house there were beds as white and soft as milk foam, with bedsteads of ivory, decorated with gold inlays. There were also opulent couches with golden feet, as well as gorgeous golden thrones, *chamara* fans, gleaming canopies with strings of pearls and also soft cushions. Upon the walls, which were made of sparkling crystal and inlaid with costly emeralds, shone many bejeweled lamps. The women there in the mansion were also all adorned with rare gems. As he viewed this magnificent opulence, Sudama calmly thought to himself about the cause of his sudden prosperity: "I have always been poor. Certainly the only possible explanation for such an unfortunate person as myself becoming suddenly rich is Lord Krishna, the supremely opulent Chief of the *Yadu* dynasty, Who has favorably glanced upon me. After all, my friend Krishna, the most exalted of the *Dasarhas* and the enjoyer of unlimited wealth, must have understood that I secretly wanted to beg from Him. Thus even though neither of Us said anything about it when I stood before Him, He has lovingly bestowed upon me the most abundant riches. In this way He acted just like a merciful rain cloud!

"The Lord considers even His greatest benedictions to be insignificant, while He magnifies even a little devotional service rendered to Him by His well-wishing devotee. Thus with pleasure the Supreme Soul accepted a single handful of the chipped rice I brought Him. The Lord is the supremely compassionate Reservoir of all transcendental Qualities. Life after life may I serve Him with love, friendship and sympathy, and may I cultivate my attachment for Him through the precious association of His devotees. To a devotee who lacks spiritual insight, the Supreme Lord will not grant the opulences of this world, like kingly power or material assets. Indeed, in His infinitude the unborn Lord well knows how the intoxication of pride can cause the downfall of the opulent."

Thus firmly fixed in his determination by means of spiritual intelligence, Sudama remained completely devoted to Krishna, his Lord, Who is the Shelter of all living beings. Free from greed and material desire, Sudama enjoyed life with his wife, enjoying the sensual pleasures the Lord had bestowed upon him, but always detached and with the hope of eventually renouncing everything.

Lord Hari is the God of gods, the Master of every sacrifice, and the Supreme ruler over all that be. Still He accepts the qualified *brahmanas* as His lords, just as if there were no higher Deity. Thus understanding how the insuperable Supreme Lord is conquered

by His pure devotee, Krishna's dear *brahmana* friend Sudama experienced all remaining bonds of material attachment in his heart being dissolved by the force of his constant meditation upon the Lord. Within a short time Sudama attained Lord Krishna's supreme abode, the ultimate destination of all great saints. Krishna always shows special favor to *brahmanas*. Anyone who hears this narration of Krishna's compassion upon *brahmanas* will surely develop love for Krishna and thus become free from the bondage of material existence.

Chapter Eighty-Two: Krishna & Balarama Meet the Inhabitants of Vrindavana

Once, while Krishna and Balarama were living in Dwaraka, there was a complete eclipse of the sun, as if heralding the end of Lord Brahma's day. Knowing about this eclipse in advance, many people traveled to the holy place known as Samanta-panchaka. After ridding the earth of its kings, Lord Parasurama, the greatest of warriors, created the huge lakes at Samanta-panchaka from the blood of all the kings slaughtered. Although he can never be tainted by *karmic* reactions, still Lord Parasurama executed sacrifices there as an example for the general populace; thus he behaved like an ordinary man trying to rid himself of sinful reactions. From every part of Bharata-varsha, hordes of people came to Samanta-panchaka on pilgrimage. Among those arriving at the holy place were many *Vrishnis*, such as Samba, Gada and Pradhyumna, hoping they would be relieved of their sins; Vasudeva, Akrura, Ahuka and other maharajas also went there. Aniruddha, together with Suchandra, Suka and Sarana, remained in Dwaraka to guard the city, as did Kritavarma, the commander of Dwaraka's armed forces.

The mighty *Yadavas* travelled with great pomp along the road. They were accompanied by many soldiers who moved on chariots rivaling the heavenly airplanes, on horses walking with a rhythmic gait, and on huge, bellowing elephants resembling clouds. With them also were many footsoldiers, as brilliant as celestial *Vidyadharas*. The heavenly dressed *Yadavas*, wearing flower garlands, gold necklaces and gleaming armor, travelled with their wives along the road, looking like demigods going through the sky. At Samanta-panchaka, the pious *Yadavas* bathed and observed fasting with great care and attention. Afterward they gave the *brahmanas* cows bedecked with flower garlands, new garment and gold necklaces. In accordance with the injunctions of scripture, the descendants of *Vrishni* then bathed again in Lord Parasurama's lakes and generously fed sumptuous food to the qualified *brahmanas*. Simultaneously they prayed: "Please grant us devotion to Lord Krishna." Then, with Lord Krishna's permission, the *Vrishnis* sat down at their leisure beneath trees that gave cooling shade and broke their fast.

Many of the kings and others who had come to see the *Yadavas* were old friends and close relatives. They also saw many other dear friends, including Maharaja Nanda and other dear *Vrajabasis*. The joy of seeing one another caused the lotuses of their faces and hearts to bloom, and the men to enthusiastically embraced each other. With tears streaming from their eyes, their bodily hairs standing on end and their throats choked up with emotion, they all were overwhelmed with bliss. The women looked at each other with smiling, loving affection, and as they embraced, their eyes filled with tears of love.

They all then offered humble obeisances to elders, while at the same time received respect from their younger cousins. After inquiring from each other about their journey there and their well-being in general, they started to talk about Lord Krishna.

Queen Kunti conversed with her brother and sisters and also their children, but especially with Lord Mukunda. While visiting with Them, she gave up her sorrow. Queen Kunti said: “My most respectable brother, I think my desires have long been frustrated because even though all of you are very saintly, you forgot me at the time of my calamities. Family members and friends, even brothers, parents and children, forget even a dear one whom Providence no longer favors.”

Sri Vasudeva replied: “My dear sister, please try not be angry with me. I am only an ordinary man, a plaything of fate. Indeed, whether one acts on his own or acts under the duress of others, he is always under the control of the Supreme Lord only. Tormented by Kamsa, all our family members fled in different directions, and only now by the grace of Providence, have we been able to come back to our homes.”

Srila Sukadeva Goswami continued: Vasudeva, Ugrasena and other *Yadavas* honored the many different kings, who all became blissful and satisfied upon seeing Lord Achyuta [Krishna]. All the *ksatriyas* present, including Drona, Bhishma, Dhritarashtra, Gandhari and her sons, the Pandavas with their wives, Drupada, Salya and the many other kings under Maharaja Yudhishthira’s rule – they were all simply amazed at the wonderful, transcendental Form of Lord Krishna, Who is the abode of all beauty and opulence, now in front of them with His queens.”

After Lord Krishna and Lord Balarama had properly honored them, these kings started to praise all the members of the *Vrishni* clan, especially Lord Krishna’s personal associates, with great joy and enthusiasm: “O lord of the *Bhojas*, King Ugrasena, among men you alone have achieved a most exalted birth, for you are continually beholding Lord Krishna Who is only rarely visible, even to expert *yogis*. His fame, as declared in the *Vedas*, the water that has washed His Lotus Feet, and His words as contained in the revealed scriptures – these three completely purify the universe. Although the earth’s auspiciousness had been ravaged by time, the mere touch of His Lotus Feet has completely revitalized her, and therefore she is pouring down upon us the satisfaction of our every desire. That very Lord Vishnu, Who causes one to forget his aspiration for heaven and liberation, has now become a blood relative of yours, who would otherwise be absorbed in the hellish pursuits of material family life. Indeed, in these familial relationships, you see and associate with Him directly, walk next to Him, talk with Him and even lie down together with Him to rest, sit leisurely with Him and eat together.”

When Nanda Maharaja understood that the *Yadus* had arrived, with Krishna in their fore, he at once went to see Them and all the cowherds went with him. Seeing Nanda, all the *Vrishnis* became most delighted and rose up like dead men coming back to life. Having suffered much from not seeing him for a long time, they held him tightly in warm embrace. Vasudeva, in turn, embraced Maharaja Nanda with great joy. Overwhelmed with ecstatic love, Vasudeva then remembered all the troubles Kamsa had caused, forcing him to take his Sons in Gokula for Their own safety. Balarama and Krishna embraced Their foster parents and bowed down in obeisance to them, but Their throats were choked up with emotion and Their eyes overflowed with tears of love. The Two Lords were unable to speak. Putting their Two Sons upon their laps and holding Them tightly in their arms, Mother Yasoda and Maharaja Nanda at last forgot their woes.

Then Mother Rohini and Mother Devaki each embraced Mother Yasoda, the Queen of Vraja, remembering the long and faithful friendship she had displayed toward them.

Their throats choked up with intense emotion, but finally they addressed her: “What woman could possibly forget the unceasing friendship Nanda and you have shown us, O dear Vraja Queen? We have no way to repay you, even if we had the wealth of Lord Indra. Before these Two Transcendental Boys had even seen Their earthly parents, you behaved like Their real parents and gave Them the most affectionate care, nourishment, training and protection. They never knew any kind of fear, noble lady, due to your perfect protection of Them, just like eyelids protect eyes. But then, saintly persons like your good self never differentiate between outsiders and kin.”

Sukadeva Goswami said: While feasting their eyes on their beloved Krishna, the young *gopis* used to damn the creator of eyelids, which temporarily block the vision of Krishna. Now, seeing Him again after long separation, they brought Him into their hearts through their eyes, and there they lovingly embraced Him to their heart’s content. In this way they were totally absorbed in ecstatic contemplation of Krishna, contemplation the likes of which those who practice mystic *yoga* intensively find such contemplation most difficult to achieve.

The Supreme Lord approached the *gopis* in a secluded place where they stood in ecstatic trance. After embracing each and every one of them and asking about their welfare, Lord Krishna laughed and said to them: “My dear *gopis*, do you ever think of Me? It was for My dear relatives’ sake that I had to stay away this long, for I was intent on annihilating My enemies. Perhaps you think that I’m ungrateful and therefore hold a grudge against Me. The fact is, it is the Supreme Lord Who brings people together and then separates them. It is like the wind which brings together the clouds, blades of grass, bits of cotton and particles of dust, only to scatter them again. So the Creator does with His created beings. Rendering pure devotional service to Me qualifies anyone and everyone for eternal life with Me. But by special good fortune, you have already attained a unique loving attitude of surrender toward Me, and by this you have captured Me. Dear *gopis*, I am the beginning and end of everyone, and I exist both inside and outside of all, just as the elements earth, water, fire, air and ether are the beginning and end of all created objects, and exist both inside and outside of everything. Thus all created things exist within the basic elements, but the spirit souls are all-pervasive, yet and remain in their own identity. Know that both of these – the Self and the material creation – are manifest from Me and are within Me, the unfathomable Supreme Truth.”

Having thus been taught spiritual matters by Sri Krishna, the *gopis* became free of all false ego, due to their ceaseless contemplation of Him. And with ever deepening absorption in Him, the *gopis* were able to understand Him fully. They said: “Dear Lord, Your Lotus Feet are the only refuge for those fallen into *maya*’s deep well of material existence. Your Lotus Feet are meditated upon and worshiped by highly learned philosophers and great mystic *yogis*. We wish that Your Lotus Feet may similarly be awakened within our hearts, despite our being but ordinary householders engaged in material affairs.”

*Chapter Eighty-Three: Draupadi Meets the Queens of
Krishna*

.Sukadeva Goswami said: Lord Krishna, the Spiritual Master of the *gopis*, and the very purpose of their lives, thus showered His mercy upon them. He then met with Maharaja Yudhisthira and His other dear relatives and queried them about their welfare. Feeling very honored, Maharaja Yudhisthira and the others, now free of all sinful reactions, simply by seeing the Lotus Feet of Krishna, the Lord of the universe, happily answered His queries.”

Lord Krishna's relations said: “O dear Master, how can any misfortune come to

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