

VALUE-ORIENTED EDUCATION SERIES

# SRI KRISHNA

## IN BRINDAVAN



GENERAL EDITOR  
KIREET JOSHI



# Sri Krishna in Brīndavan

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(*Compilation of texts by Jyoti Madhok from*  
Srimad Bhagavata Purana  
Harivamsa Purana  
*and Vishnu Mahapurana*)

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*Illumination, Heroism and Harmony*

## Sri Krishna in Brindavan

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# Illumination, Heroism and Harmony

## *Preface .*

**T**he task of preparing teaching-learning material for value-oriented education is enormous.

There is, first, the idea that value-oriented education should be exploratory rather than prescriptive, and that the teaching-learning material should provide to the learners a growing experience of exploration.

Secondly, it is rightly contended that the proper inspiration to turn to value-orientation is provided by biographies, autobiographical accounts, personal anecdotes, epistles, short poems, stories of humour, stories of human interest, brief passages filled with pregnant meanings, reflective short essays written in well-chiselled language, plays, powerful accounts of historical events, statements of personal experiences of values in actual situations of life, and similar other statements of scientific, philosophical, artistic and literary expression.

Thirdly, we may take into account the contemporary fact that the entire world is moving rapidly towards the synthesis of the East and the West, and in that context, it seems obvious that our teaching-learning material should foster the gradual familiarisation of students with global themes of universal significance as also those that underline the importance of diversity in unity. This implies that the material should bring the students nearer to their cultural heritage, but also to the highest that is available in the cultural experiences of the world at large.

Fourthly, an attempt should be made to select from Indian and world history such examples that could illustrate the theme

of the upward progress of humankind. The selected research material could be multi-sided, and it should be presented in such a way that teachers can make use of it in the manner and in the context that they need in specific situations that might obtain or that can be created in respect of the students.

The research teams at the Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research (SAIER) have attempted the creation of the relevant teaching-learning material, and they have decided to present the same in the form of monographs.

It appears that there are three major powers that uplift life to higher and higher normative levels, and the value of these powers, if well illustrated, could be effectively conveyed to the learners for their upliftment. These powers are those of illumination, heroism and harmony.

It may be useful to explore the meanings of these terms – illumination, heroism and harmony – since the aim of these monographs is to provide material for a study of what is sought to be conveyed through these three terms. We offer here exploratory statements in regard to these three terms.

Illumination is that ignition of inner light in which meaning and value of substance and life-movement are seized, understood, comprehended, held, and possessed, stimulating and inspiring guided action and application and creativity culminating in joy, delight, even ecstasy. The width, depth and height of the light and vision determine the degrees of illumination, and when they reach the splendour and glory of synthesis and harmony, illumination ripens into wisdom. Wisdom, too, has varying degrees that can uncover powers of knowledge and action, which reveal unsuspected secrets and unimagined skills of art and craft of creativity and effectiveness.

Heroism is, essentially, inspired force and self-giving and sacrifice in the operations of will that is applied to the quest, realisation and triumph of meaning and value against the resistance of limitations and obstacles by means of courage, battle and adventure. There are degrees and heights of heroism determined



by the intensity, persistence and vastness of sacrifice. Heroism attains the highest states of greatness and refinement when it is guided by the highest wisdom and inspired by the sense of service to the ends of justice and harmony, as well as when tasks are executed with consummate skill.

Harmony is a progressive state and action of synthesis and equilibrium generated by the creative force of joy and beauty and delight that combines and unites knowledge and peace and stability with will and action and growth and development. Without harmony, there is no perfection, even though there could be maximisation of one or more elements of our nature. When illumination and heroism join and engender relations of mutuality and unity, each is perfected by the other and creativity is endless.

The principal theme of this monograph is centred on harmony; it presents the story of Sri Krishna and his manifestation in Brindavan as the sweetness and nectar of Divine Love that mysteriously binds the individual soul with the Supreme and with all the other souls and manifestations of the Supreme in the world. In the depth of the human soul there breathes the Reality to whom it is offered irresistibly and unreservedly. The story of the Gopis is the story of human souls when they happen to discover in their midst, their Lord, without whom there is no breath of life. The relationship between the Gopis and Sri Krishna is the relationship of total harmony of which all the conceptions of harmony that we find in ordinary human life even when they are exalted to their maximum expression are only faint imitations. Humanity needs today peace and understanding, but in the ultimate analysis it is only the love of the soul for the Supreme that can sustain the required peace and understanding. The acme of this love of the human soul for the Divine is illustrated in the symbolic dance of Sri Krishna with the Gopis, the Rasalila, symbol of the symphony and festivity of total harmony.



There are four very great events in history, the siege of Troy, the life and crucifixion of Christ, the exile of Krishna in Brindavan and the colloquy with Arjuna on the field of Kurukshetra. The siege of Troy created Hellas, the exile in Brindavan created devotional religion, (for before there was only meditation and worship), Christ from his cross humanised Europe, the colloquy at Kurukshetra will yet liberate humanity. Yet it is said that none of these four events ever happened.

— Sri Aurobindo

## Love, – Divine Love

Love is a passion and it seeks for two things, eternity and intensity, and in the relation of the Lover and Beloved the seeking for eternity and for intensity is instinctive and self-born. Love is a seeking for mutual possession, and it is here that the demand for mutual possession becomes absolute. Passing beyond desire of possession which means a difference, it is a seeking for oneness, and it is here that the idea of oneness, of two souls merging into each other and becoming one finds the acme of its longing and the utterness of its satisfaction. Love, too, is a yearning for beauty, and it is here that the yearning is eternally satisfied in the vision and the touch and the joy of the All-beautiful. Love is a child and a seeker of Delight, and it is here that it finds the highest possible ecstasy both of the heart-consciousness and of every fibre of the being. Moreover, this relation is that which as between human being and human being demands the most and, even while reaching the greatest intensities, is still the least satisfied, because only in the Divine can it find its real and its utter satisfaction. Therefore it is here most that the turning of human emotion Godwards finds its full meaning and discovers all the truth of which love is the human symbol, all its essential instincts divinised, raised, satisfied in the bliss from which our life was born and towards which by oneness it returns in the Ananda of the divine existence where love is absolute, eternal and unalloyed.

— Sri Aurobindo

All music is only the sound of His laughter,  
All beauty the smile of His passionate bliss;  
Our lives are His heart-beats, our rapture the bridal  
Of Radha and Krishna, our love is their kiss.

— Sri Aurobindo

Sri Krishna, the All-blissful and All-beautiful.

— Sri Aurobindo

The name of That is "That Delight"; as That Delight one should follow after It. He who so knows That, towards him verily all existences yearn.

— Kena Upanishad

## Editorial Note

**S**ri Krishna's life, as it is narrated in the Puranas and in several other writings, reads like a legend or even like a myth. It is sometimes argued that Sri Krishna and his life have only a symbolical value. It has also been doubted whether Sri Krishna ever lived in any historical or prehistorical time. Even the Mahabharata is viewed sometimes as fiction that could have been based on some historical facts. The great episode, which has been depicted in the Gita has come to be viewed by some interpreters as a parable or as an allegory of an inner battle of good and evil that constantly takes place within the human personality.

Despite all this, Sri Krishna has been experienced by a large number of mystics, saints, sages, poets and thousands of men and women as the incarnation of the Supreme Lord, and there are numerous accounts of these experiences the authenticity of which has been upheld by fresh experiences of leading mystics and yogins who belong to different ages in our history, and even in our own times. In any case Sri Krishna is a living reality for teeming millions in India and elsewhere, and it is that reality which is read by devotees in the accounts of Sri Krishna given in the Mahabharata and in the Puranas and in various other accounts.

Like millions in India, we simply love Sri Krishna, and we do not enter into debate about the object of our love. The stories that we have read and the stories that we have collected in this book give us celestial delight and inspire us to do all we can to arrive at that experience which many mystics have had. Who would not love to see the smiling face of Sri Krishna? Who would not love to hear the call of Sri Krishna and to listen to his flute? Who would not like to be uplifted by that splendid vision of the universe that Yashoda saw in the mouth of that mischievous





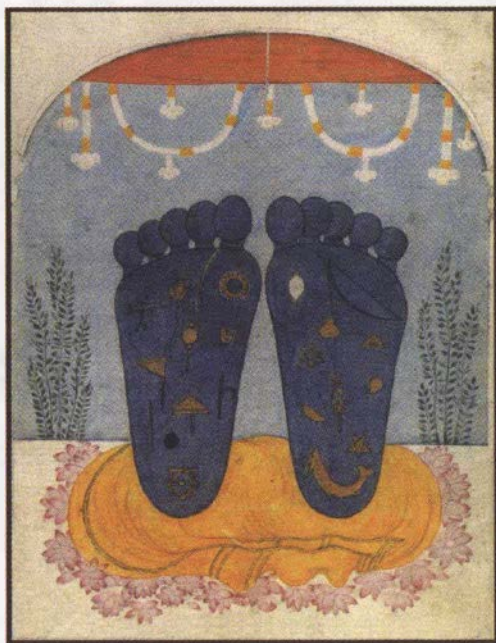
boy who is known as Sri Krishna? Who would not like to have that Time-Vision in which Arjuna saw Sri Krishna as the Supreme Lord in action in the battlefield of Kurukshetra? Like millions in India, we would like to be flooded by the oceanic wave of love that drowns us in the depths of the sweetness of Sri Krishna.

This book is a short anthology meant for readers who would like to have a glimpse of Sri Krishna and to learn of some of the accounts of Sri Krishna that are found in the Srimad Bhagavata Purana, Harivamsa Purana and Vishnu Mahapurana. At the same time, we feel that these accounts would be better understood if we presented a few extracts from the writings of Sri Aurobindo, the Supreme Master of Yoga of our times, who had had himself genuine experiences of Sri Krishna, and who has explained the profundities of the Gita in his famous "Essays on the Gita", and who has expounded the value of Puranic literature in his famous work, "The Foundations of Indian Culture". He has also explained in his writings the depth of that religion which has arisen in India from the episodes connected with Sri Krishna's exile in Brindavan. We have, therefore, thought it appropriate to present a few relevant extracts from Sri Aurobindo's "The Synthesis of Yoga" and "The Foundations of Indian Culture".

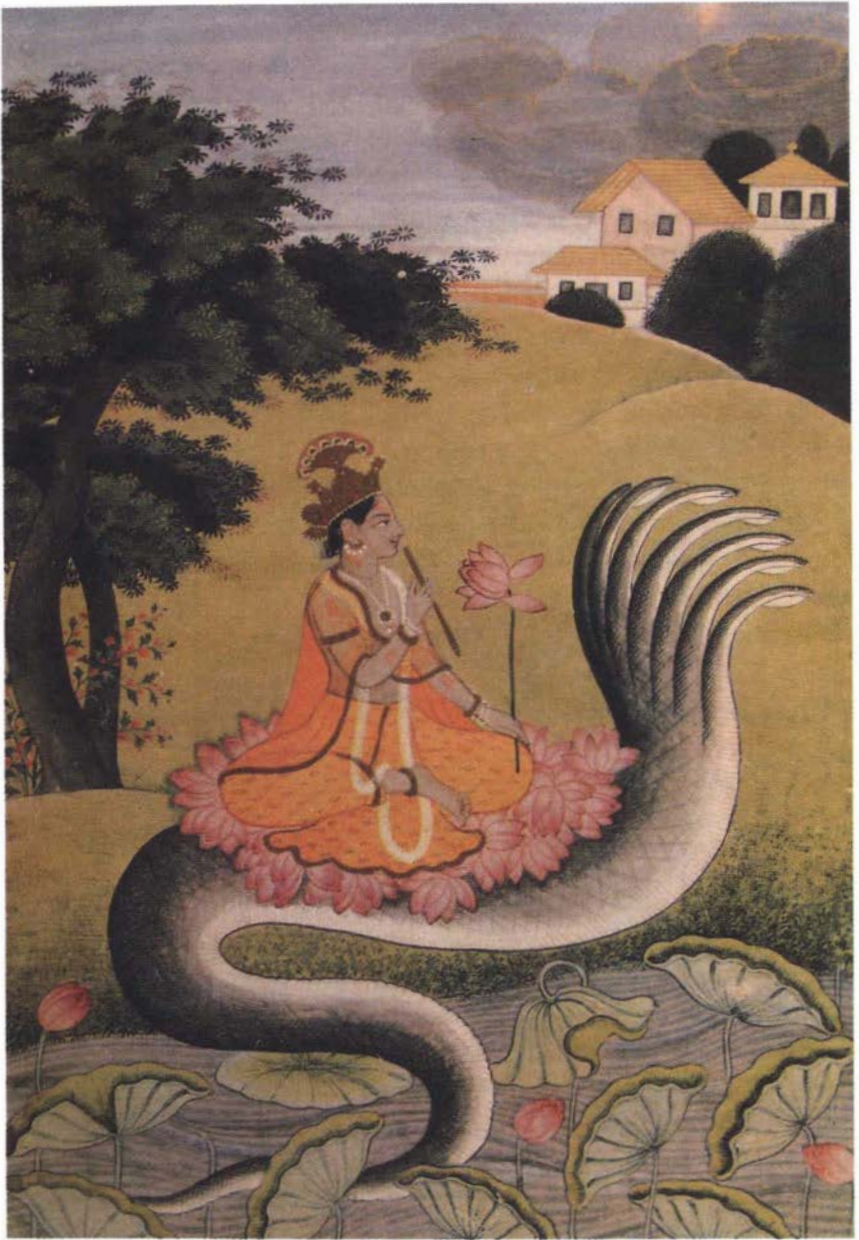
We have also felt it useful to bring together a few poems, which have been written on Sri Krishna by some of the famous saints and poets of India. The sweetness and intensity that these poems convey to us are indescribable, and we would like the readers to plunge into this sweetness and intensity by reading these poems. We have included here some extracts, which describe some of Sri Chaitanya's and Sri Ramakrishna's experiences of Sri Krishna and Radha, which bring to us the living and continuing reality of Sri Krishna's consciousness. The poems of Surdas have been taken from J.S. Hawley's translations, of Nandadas from the translations by R.S. McGregor, and Mirabai's songs from A.J. Alston. The rest of the poems are translations by

Sri Aurobindo, the magic of which will undoubtedly be felt by the hearts and souls of sensitive readers.

The texts concerning Sri Krishna in Brindavan, have been adapted from *Srimad Bhagavata* translated by Swami Tapasyananda and *Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana* translated by C.L. Goswami. The texts adapted from *Harivamsa Purana* are from the translation by Bhumipati Dasa. A short text adapted from *Vishnu Mahapuranam* is from the translation by M.N. Dutt.







Krishna as the incarnation of Vishnu, sitting on the great serpent Shesha

## Introduction

### I

#### The Avatara descends on the earth

*There are debates on the existence of God, and these debates will continue because God, the Invisible, does not oblige the debaters by making himself visible to them.*

*But even among those who have mysteriously seen Him in one form or another, there have been debates whether God, even if Omnipotent, has the capability of incarnation in this physical world.*

*Even those who have heard the stories of Rama and Krishna and Buddha and Christ with astonishment and adoration, and seen in their lives the marvel of their incarnation, debate if incarnations know that they are incarnations, and if so, whether right from their birth or at advanced stages of maturity and ripeness in their wisdom and in their deeds. We shall leave these debates for the debaters, and we shall not allow our story of the mystery of the Divine Love that Krishna manifested in Brindavan to be diluted but allow our soul to experience what those in Gokul and Brindavan felt and knew of that playful Child, of that captivating Youth, of that Flute Player and of that Divine Lover whose charm, whose speech, whose music and whose dance was a constant demonstration that, indeed, the whole life of the world can be seen, experienced and recreated as a perpetual scene of million forms of Divine intimacy, nudity, purity and ineffable bliss. Let us turn to that delightful story, which tells us that Krishna was conscious even in his childhood that he, indeed, was the master of Delight from whom have arisen all manifestations, and that he had incarnated himself in the human form for*



Krishna's birth, Nandalal Bose

*a work that he as the leader of the world manifestation had to accomplish.*

*The story of Sri Krishna begins with an event much before his birth.*

*More than five thousand years ago, in the kingdom of Mathura in Northern India, the king Ugrasena ruled his people and protected them with due care. His son Kamsa, however, was ambitious; he usurped the kingdom and imprisoned his father taking the reins of government in his heavy and oppressive hands. However, he had great*

*love for his sister, Devaki, and so drove the chariot himself for his sister and her husband, Vasudeva, soon after their wedding ceremony.*

*On the way, as he was driving the chariot, a voice was heard, thundering, as it were, from the high heavens: "The eighth child of Devaki will slay you." Enraged and threatened, he sent away Vasudeva and Devaki into a prison from where escape was impossible. Thereafter every child that was born to Devaki, he killed. When the eighth child was to be born, he had arranged a constant vigil so that immediately on its birth he could come to the prison and slaughter him and thus belie the prediction that that child was to be his slayer.*

*But the birth of the eighth child was to be the incarnation of the Supreme Lord. He was to be born where instantaneous death awaited him, and he had to defeat death through circumstances that can occur only rarely and miraculously. Rarely would jailors slacken their vigil, but on that occasion, they were fast asleep. Rarely could there be facility for escape where the*

doors of the prison were tightly closed and locked. But when Vasudeva put the child in a basket and reached the doors of the prison, they flung open. He could thus escape and rush towards Gokul even though there was torrential rain and even though there was no boat to carry the father and the child to the safety of Gokul, as the river was in spate.

Human life appears to be ruled by iron law, and we seem to be living in prisons, which are so tightly locked that we cannot escape. And yet, all those who have experienced profundities of life have witnessed the truth of fairy tales, where prison locks suddenly open up exactly at the moment when there is such an imperative need, when escape must be effected. Fairy tales are tales of the deepest cry of the soul and the miraculous answer of the Spirit that is ever free and has the potency to respond to that cry and to turn the prison into a garden of freedom and constant play, a constant Lila. That young child that was born was the Spirit, the ever-free Player, who had heard the inmost cry of humanity that was knocking the prison doors from where escape was impossible and indispensable. If, therefore, the tales of the life of that young infant appear to be anecdotes of a story of impossible miracles, we need to listen to it as a fairy tale of the play between the iron law and the law of the Spirit, which all true authors of fairy tales have experienced.

How is it that precisely at the time of the birth of the Spirit there was torrential rain that could prevent the escape of the infant? How is it that the father, carrying the infant, had escaped through the prison gates, which though locked, yet were miraculously opened? Circumstance upon circumstance in the story was a confrontation with impossibility and yet, the law of the circumstance broke at the touch of the Spirit. The river Yamuna was in spate, and that river had to be crossed, if the infant had to be led to safety. And lo and behold! the river parted and made way for the journey of the father, Vasudeva, who carried the infant in a basket on his head. However, the infant needed protection from the heavy rain if he was to survive, and





Vasudeva takes the infant Krishna across the Yamuna river, Pahari miniature

*according to the story, a serpent spread its hood on the top of the basket to serve as an umbrella. The river was crossed, and the father arrived at Gokul to the house of his friend and Gokul's chieftain, Vasudeva, to whose house he had safe entry. And why, at that very moment a daughter had been born to Yashoda, the wife of Vasudeva! A story of the truth of the internal play of the world was being woven with some kind of sureness even as uncertainty lay in all the four directions. We are told that Vasudeva was able to place his young infant in place of the newborn child of Yashoda who had fainted immediately after the birth of her child. He was able to take the newborn girl away and return to the prison house well in time where she could be placed in the hands of his wife. It was only on the cry of that little girl that the jailors were awakened, who without losing time could run to inform Kamsa.*

*Many incidents of Krishna's infancy have been described in the Bhagavata Purana, Harivamsa and Vishnu Purana. Puranic stories are symbolic, and although they narrate truthfully the*



*inner reality of spiritual events and experiences, their external descriptions need to be read with deeper sensitivity to symbolism. The sense of the miraculous that we feel in these stories should not be minimized, since the operation of the spiritual in the material is perennially miraculous. We can derive true delight of meaning and significance, when we study these stories and try to understand the miraculous events behind the veil of physical events.*

*The playfulness of Krishna that is depicted in all the stories that describe his childhood is not mere naughtiness but the bubbles and waves of the Ocean of Supreme Delight (Ananda) that was incarnated in this little boy of Gokul. That Delight is the very sap of the life of men and women and of all living creatures and even of the material universe. To see Krishna, therefore, was for all those surrounding him indescribable intoxication. To Yashoda, his foster mother, and to Nanda, his foster father, Krishna was as if a jar of sweet nectar, and to embrace the young child was for them an immortalizing experience; every embrace desired eternity. Krishna was utter fulfillment, every glance of that child gave a secret message to them that the whole world is a continuous sport and that every experience of life can be metamorphosed as spontaneously and as easily as one can shift one glance to another. How sweet was that Krishna! How soft was that Krishna! How beautiful and wonderful and so captivating! For Yashoda and Nanda, Krishna was the center and circumference of their life and all that was spread within the circle and outside it.*

*It is said that an evil demoness Putana was sent by King Kamsa to destroy that imperishable Ananda, to kill that wonderful child. Putana entered Krishna's bedroom and took Krishna on her lap and offered him her poison-smeared breast to suck. Krishna squeezed it and sucked away both the poison and her life. Putana cried out and her very life force flowed out from her body. It is said that Putana, dying, assumed her huge demoniac form. Her dead body has symbolically been described as a*

*twelve-mile-long corpse.*

*Once, Yashoda placed Krishna, who was still a baby, in the cradle under a household cart in the courtyard in front of her house. Actually the handcart was a form of a demon, Shakatasura, who had come there to kill the child. When nobody was around, Krishna struck the cart with his little legs as soft as tender leaves, and the cart turned over violently and collapsed. When Yashoda and Nanda heard the crashing sound, they rushed out of the house and wondered how the cart had collapsed by itself. Many cowherd men and women gathered at the scene, and the small children who were playing around the cart said that the cart had been kicked apart by baby Krishna. But who were aware of the potent force in that baby, and how could they believe that that baby could do what even a strong man would have found difficult to do?*

*The life of the Spirit is a constant threat to demons and monsters. But the life of the Incarnate Spirit is an even greater threat. If one demon could not succeed in destroying that small body of the Incarnate, the Lord of Bliss, there was another demon ready to kill that infant. Now was the turn of the demon called Trinavarta who appeared in the form of a whirlwind, just when Yashoda who had been fondling Krishna seated in her lap had put him down on the ground finding him strangely very heavy, too heavy to hold. Trinavarta lifted the seated baby and carried him high into the air. The fierce whirlwind engulfed the whole of Gokul in a cloud of dust making a frightful sound and plunging Gokul in darkness. The mother Yashoda was unable to find her child and lamented pitifully like a cow that has lost its calf.*

*The demon Trinavarta took Krishna very high in the sky with his tempestuous force. It is said that Krishna became heavier and heavier and the demon could no more carry the infant. The unique child held him fast by the neck and he collapsed, and fell down dead. The baby was lying on the chest of the dead demon, whose monstrous body lay shattered in smithereens. The gopis and gopas witnessed this with astonishment and restored the*

*baby to his mother Yashoda who had been lamenting piteously and now was overjoyed at the recovery of her son. It is said that all present were thrown into paroxysms of joy at getting back the blessed infant sound in body, and extricated from the jaws of death as it were.*

*One day Yashoda was seated in her house with the child in her lap suckling her breast. As the mother watched, the face of the child wreathed in smiles at the end of the feeding, he yawned, and lo! the mother saw in it the whole universe. The sky, the earth and the heaven, the celestial luminaries, the quarters, sun, moon, fire, air, oceans, continents, mountains — all these and many other things, moving and unmoving, the mother saw in the baby's mouth. Yashoda trembled with awe and wonder on seeing the whole universe in a trice and to shield herself, closed her eyes.*

*Let us hear further stories from the texts selected from the Bhagavata Purana, Harivamsa Purana and the Vishnu Mahapurana. Some of these stories are related not only to Sri Krishna but also to his elder brother Balarama (often called Rama), since both grew up together right from the early days.*



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## II

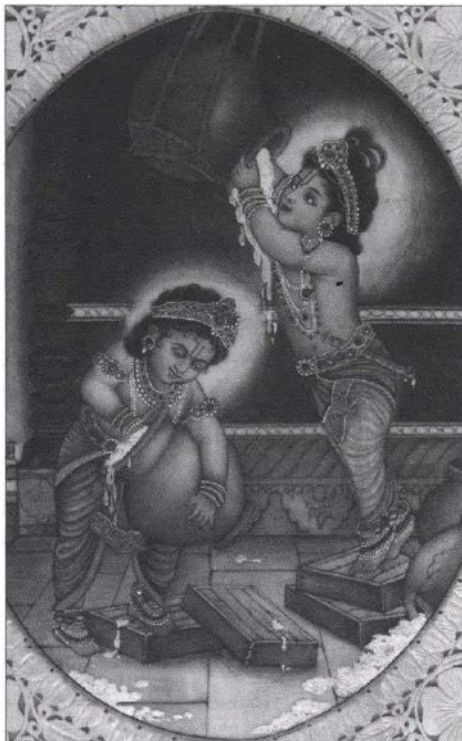
### Some incidents of Kṛṣṇa's early boyhood\*

#### Boyhood Pranks of Śrī Kṛṣṇa (21-28)

21. In course of time, Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa began to move about together playfully on their knees and hands. 22. They dragged themselves through slushy regions in Vraja to the accompaniment of the tinkling sound of their anklets and girdles. Delighted to hear the sounds themselves, they looked at people passing by for a while, but then withdrew themselves to their mothers, as if out of bashfulness or fear at the sight of strangers. 23. Their mothers, ecstatic with joy, took up the children, whose bodies looked lovely with mud doing duty for unguents. They then applied them to their breasts, and were thrilled to see their faces bright with winning smiles, revealing their newly sprouting teeth. 24. When the boys had grown up enough to entertain the Gopīs by their play, it became usual for the Gopīs to forget their household duties and merrily watch the tug of war between the boys tightly holding calves by their tails, and the calves dragging them hither and thither. 25. The mothers now fell into a dilemma and the worry there from — whether they should attend to their house-hold duties, or constantly watch and guard their boys. For so playful and vivacious were they that they had to be incessantly guarded from the danger of cows, fires, cats, knives, ponds, birds, and thorns. 26. Shortly, Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa passed the stage of moving on knees and began to run about on their feet. 27. Not long after, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, along with Rāma and other friends, began to engage himself in various sportive pranks to the great joy of the women of Vraja. 28. It is said that the Gopīs one day gathered together and began to speak of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's delightful pranks in the hearing of his mother Yaśodā as follows:

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\* Adapted from Srimad Bhagavata.



### Gopīs' Complaint to the Mother (29-31)

29. "O mother! He comes and releases the calves before milking time. If anyone scolds him for this, he laughs at him or her. Then he makes arrangements for thieving milk products and consumes all the milk and curds he gets that way, and distributes good quantities of it among the monkeys that follow him. When he does not consume their contents, he breaks the containers. If he gets nothing in any place, he goes away in anger, pinching the little children there and making them cry. 30. When he cannot reach the receptacles of milk products with his hands, he devises a stand with stools and mortars. Knowing as he does which pot contains milk and which curds or butter, he makes holes in the mud pots kept in slings, and drains off their contents. Where the slings are in darkness, the brilliance of his

bedecked body provides sufficient light for him. All this he does when the Gopīs are very busily attending to their household duties. 31. If questioned about his misconduct, he gives impudent replies, and answers calls of nature in the courtyards of the houses. Now look at him! He stands there, a picture of innocence after having done so much mischief!" The Gopīs represented all this to Yaśodā, looking now and then at the face of Śrī Kṛṣṇa that was all the more beautiful because of the signs of pretended fright at the charges brought against him. The only response of Yaśodā was to laugh away the whole thing. She could not bring herself to scold her darling by any means.

### Śrī Kṛṣṇa Eating Mud (32-45)

32. One day, while Śrī Kṛṣṇa was playing in the company of Rāma and other cowherd boys, some of them went to his mother and complained that Śrī Kṛṣṇa had eaten mud. 33. In the interest of his health, the mother caught hold of Śrī Kṛṣṇa by his hand and scolded him while he stood with his eyes tremulous with fright. She said to him: 34. "O mischievous fellow! Why did you eat mud stealthily? Your friends and even your brother testify to it." Child Kṛṣṇa protested: 35. "Mother! I have not done so. They are telling a lie. If you think they are telling the truth, please examine my mouth in their presence." 36. The mother said: "All right, open your mouth." And Śrī Hari, who had become a human child out of sport without any loss of his divine powers, now showed his mouth to her. 37. She saw within it the whole universe of moving and unmoving entities — the sky and the quarters; the earth with its mountains and oceans, including the spheres of wind called Pravaha and of lightning called fire; and the moon and the stars and all the other worlds. 38. Besides, she saw the whole heaven with its luminaries, the surrounding girdle of the categories of water, fire, air and sky; the deities presiding over the Indriyas and the Indriyas (sense powers) themselves; and the mind, the elements forming the objects of senses, and the Guṇas of Prakṛiti. 39. She saw within

her child the whole universe with all its diversities and distinctions caused by the *Jīva* (or individuality), Time (or the principle of change), *Swabhāva* (Nature), the impressions caused by Karma and the mind. What was more, she was filled with worry and doubts to see within his open mouth even that land of *Vraja* with herself in it. 40. She then thought: What can this be? Is it a dream or the Lord's *Māya* or the work of my deranged brain? Or can this be due to some extraordinary powers natural to my boy? 41. I salute that supremely mysterious Being by whom, out of whom, and on whose support, this world has its existence a world which stands as a puzzle to all the efforts of man to understand it through his intellect, mind, action and words. 42. My only support is He by whose *Māya* I have come to think perversely — I am *Yaśodā*; Nanda is my husband; this is my son; I am heir to all the wealth of this chief of cowherds; all these *Gopas* and *Gopīs* and cows are under my command!" 43. The Lord thereupon cast the spell of *Viṣṇu's Māya* of parental affection on his mother who had come to glimpse the truth. 44. At once *Yaśodā* lost even the memory of the experience she had, and she gathered up her son in her lap, overcome by intense affection for him as before.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Tied To A Mortar— Grace Showered On *Yaśodā*

Śrī Śuka said. 1. Once *Yaśodā* was herself engaged in churning the curds. 2. While churning, she kept on remembering and singing songs on the childhood sports of Śrī Kṛṣṇa that have been described heretofore. 3. A silken cloth round her heavy hips encircled by a girdle; her breasts tremulous and shedding milk out of her overflowing affection for her child; her bracelets and her ear ornaments moving with her exertion in churning; her face revealing drops of perspiration on it; her tresses shedding jasmine flowers — such was the picture of handsome *Yaśodā* as she sat churning. 4. Thirsty for milk, Śrī Hari approached the mother engaged in churning, and stopped her churning operation by arresting the churning rod, thereby



filling the mother's heart with great joy. 5. Seating him on her lap, she suckled him with the abundant flow of milk that her intense affection was generating, watching all the while the charming face of her boy with waves of smile playing upon it. Just then she noticed that the milk kept on the fire for boiling was overflowing. She ran towards it, keeping on the floor her child, who had still not had his full feed. 6. Angry with this, child Śrī Kṛṣṇa's eyes became red, and his lips trembled and he began to bite his lips. He then took a stoneroller, broke the churning pot and let go all its contents. With make-believe stage-tears in his eyes, he repaired to a solitary place in the interior of the house, where he sat eating a lump of butter that he took from the store. 7. After taking down the boiled milk from the oven, Yaśodā returned only to see the broken curd pot and the curd all spilt. She understood that this was her son's work, but only laughed at it. The boy, however, was not to be seen anywhere near. 8. Soon she caught sight of him, sitting on an upturned rice-husking mortar and throwing lumps of butter stolen from the sling to monkeys. Occasionally, with the fear of discovery of his theft writ large in his eyes, he was glancing hither and thither. Yaśodā approached him slowly from behind. 9. On seeing the mother approach stick in hand, he got up in great haste, and ran away as if in mighty fear. The mother also followed him — Him whom even a Yogi's mind, well prepared by practice and austerity, fails to reach without His grace. 10. Her pursuit of him was slowed by the heaviness of her hips, and in the course of the effort she put into the task, she was found to be followed by the numerous flowers that fell from her loosened tresses. 11. Weeping from a sense of guilt, rubbing his collyrium-painted eyes with the hand, and looking now and then at the mother's face with terror-stricken eyes, he was caught by Yaśodā by the hand and threatened and scolded. 12. As she saw her son frightened, she threw away the stick (giving up the idea of beating him), and without any inkling of his powers, decided to tie him up to the husking mortar. 13-14. He who has neither inside



nor outside, who has neither before nor after; who is yet the 'before' and the 'after', the 'inside' and the 'outside' of the whole universe, nay, who is the universe itself — Him, the Unmanifest and the Supreme sporting a human form, the master of the senses — Him, the Gopī, taking for her child, tried to fasten to the mortar. 15. In tying her guilty child to the mortar, she found that the string in her hand was short by about two inches, to complete the round. So she attached another string to it. 16. When she found that even that was short by two inches, she attached another with the same result. Whatever attachment she made, it was all found to be short by two inches. 17. Yaśodā thus exhausted all the strings in her house, but still there was the shortage of two inches to complete the round. The Gopīs, who were watching all this standing round her, began to laugh at Yaśodā's predicament; and she too burst into laughter in utter astonishment. 18. Finally, seeing his mother perspiring, with her hair disheveled and flowers falling from it, Śrī Kṛṣṇa felt pity for her exertions, and out of kindness to her allowed her to tie him up.



### III

#### The Vrajvasis leave Gokula\*

*One day, most handsome Śrī Kṛṣṇa said to his brother, Balarāma, "My dear brother, I think it is not good to play in this forest any more. We, the cowherd boys, have spoiled the beauty of this forest by using it recklessly. There is no more grass left for the cows, and no more dry wood for cooking. Each and every tree in this forest has been used to its fullest extent. The density of the forest now appears thin, like the sky. We no longer find any pleasure while looking at the forest. There were many beautiful trees in and around the cowshed, the gates of which have round locks. But those trees are no more, because the forest fire burned them. Formerly, there was an abundance of grass and wood at our doorsteps, but now, we have to look for them in distant places.*

*There is very little water left in this forest, and very little grass and wood. Therefore, it is not wise to stay here any longer. One has to search for a place here to rest. Only a few trees remain and so, the situation appears quite pathetic. These trees no longer produce flowers and fruit, like before. Even the birds that lived in these trees have all flown elsewhere. Besides, the inhabitants of this place have cut down many trees in this forest.*

*There is no happiness here anymore. We can hardly relish any fruit and even the air appears stale. This forest, devoid of birds, does not give us any delight, just as rice without any vegetable preparations does not give one the happiness of eating. The wood and green leafy vegetables of this forest are being sold for earning a livelihood. There is a scarcity of green grass here. This forest now looks like the residential area of the cowherd men. Pasturing fields are the ornaments of a moun-*

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\* Adapted from Harivaṁśa Purāṇa.

tain, forests are the ornaments of pasturing fields, and cows are the ornaments of a forest. Therefore, it is actually the cows that are our greatest assets. Therefore, we should go to a new forest where there is an abundance of green grass and fuel. Our cows are desperately looking for new pasturing grounds.

Those who actually desire happiness should leave this place and go to a forest where everything is available, where the area is secure, where there are good residential quarters, where there is enough land for farming and, where only good people reside. We should move about freely and reside at different places, like swans. When cow dung and cow urine are dropped in the field, they act as fertilizer and help produce more grass. However, the cows do not eat such grass with great satisfaction and as such, the milk produced by eating this grass is not very beneficial. Nowadays, all the solitary paths in this forest have become crowded. There is no trace of green grass here. Therefore, let us all go with the cows to new pasturing grounds and forests. We should immediately change our place of residence, settling somewhere else.

I have heard that there is a beautiful forest called Vṛndāvana. That place has abundant green grass. The trees there produce sweet, juicy fruit, and the water there is very tasty. There are no thorny bushes in that forest. Moreover, it has all the necessary things that a suitable forest should possess. There are plenty of kadamba trees in that forest, and it is situated on the bank of the river Yamunā. There is always a cool breeze blowing in that forest. Indeed, all the seasons are always present there simultaneously. For this reason, it is very beautiful and pleasant. The cowherd girls can roam freely there. Within that forest of Vṛndāvana, there are many small forests and gardens. There is a great mountain by the name of Govardhana, which is not very far from Vṛndāvana. It has many tall peaks. As the Mandarācala mountain looks enchanting by the side of Nandanavana, Govardhana mountain looks splendid by the side of Vṛndāvana. In the middle of that forest there is a huge bhāṇḍīra tree that is

*lovely to look at, with its many branches and sub-branches. The height of that tree is about eight miles. It is actually a banyan tree and it appears very beautiful, like an evening cloud. The best of rivers, Nalinī, flows in the midst of the Nandanavana forest, just as the beautiful river, Kālindī, flows in the middle of Vṛndāvana. If we go there, we will certainly enjoy the beauty of Govardhana Hill, Bhāṇḍīra-vaṭa, and the Kālindī river. Let us move to that place.” ...*

*When Nanda Mahārāja understood the intention of the Vrajavāsīs to go to Vṛndāvana and their firm determination to reside there, which would be beneficial for both the cowherd residents and cows of Vraja, he spoke these words of wisdom, just like Bṛhaspasti. “If we have decided to go; and are ready then we should leave this place today. Make this announcement all over Gokula, so that everyone can get ready to depart quickly, without any further delay.”*

*Immediately, an announcement was flashed all over Gokula: “Quickly prepare to leave. Get your cows and household items together. Place your belongings on the bullock carts. Gather all your calves, mount your carts, and proceed to Vṛndāvana. “As soon as the inhabitants of Gokula heard this announcement of Nanda Mahārāja, they became very excited and quickly began preparations to depart. When the Vrajavāsīs were preparing to leave, a commotion could be heard as people shouted: “O you, let us go. Get up we are all going now. Why are you sleeping? Go and mount the bullock cart.”*

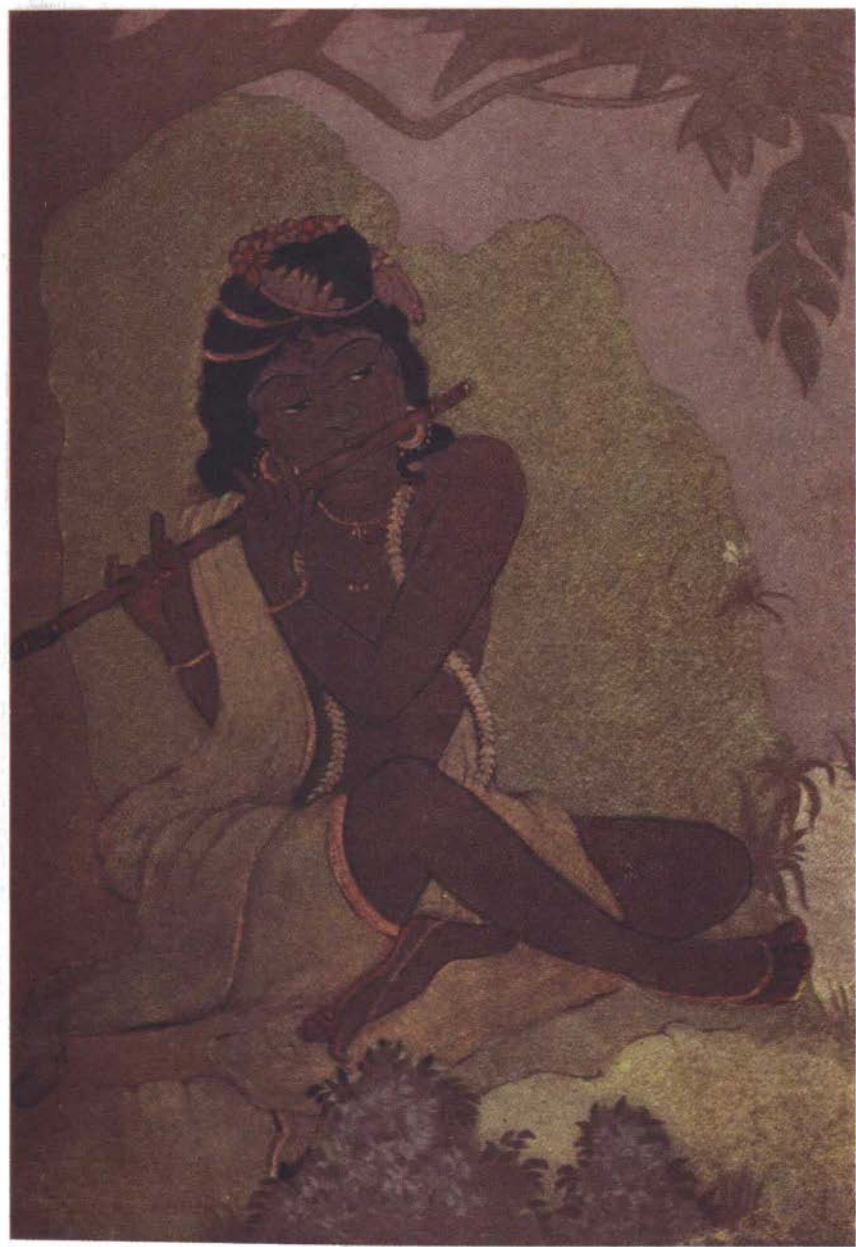
*When all bullock carts, other vehicles, and residents of Vraja began moving, a huge commotion was heard. The loud noise appeared just like the roaring of tigers, or the rumbling of the ocean. The gopīs of Vraja followed the carts in rows, with pitchers of butter milk or milk on their heads. It appeared as if a cluster of stars had come down to the earth. Their blue, yellow, and red garments nicely covered their raised breasts. When the gopīs, who were dressed in colorful garments, walked, they appeared just like a rainbow. Some of the cowherd men walked*



Nanda and his kinsmen camping on a river bank

*carrying luggage tied with ropes. These ropes were hung about their bodies. As a result, they looked just like banyan trees with fibrous roots. The beauty of this moving entourage consisting of bullock carts and other vehicles appeared just like a vast ocean containing innumerable ships, moving by the force of the wind. Within a very short time, Gokula became vacant, appearing like barren land. Soon, the whole area became filled with crows because there were particles of food grains scattered here and there.*

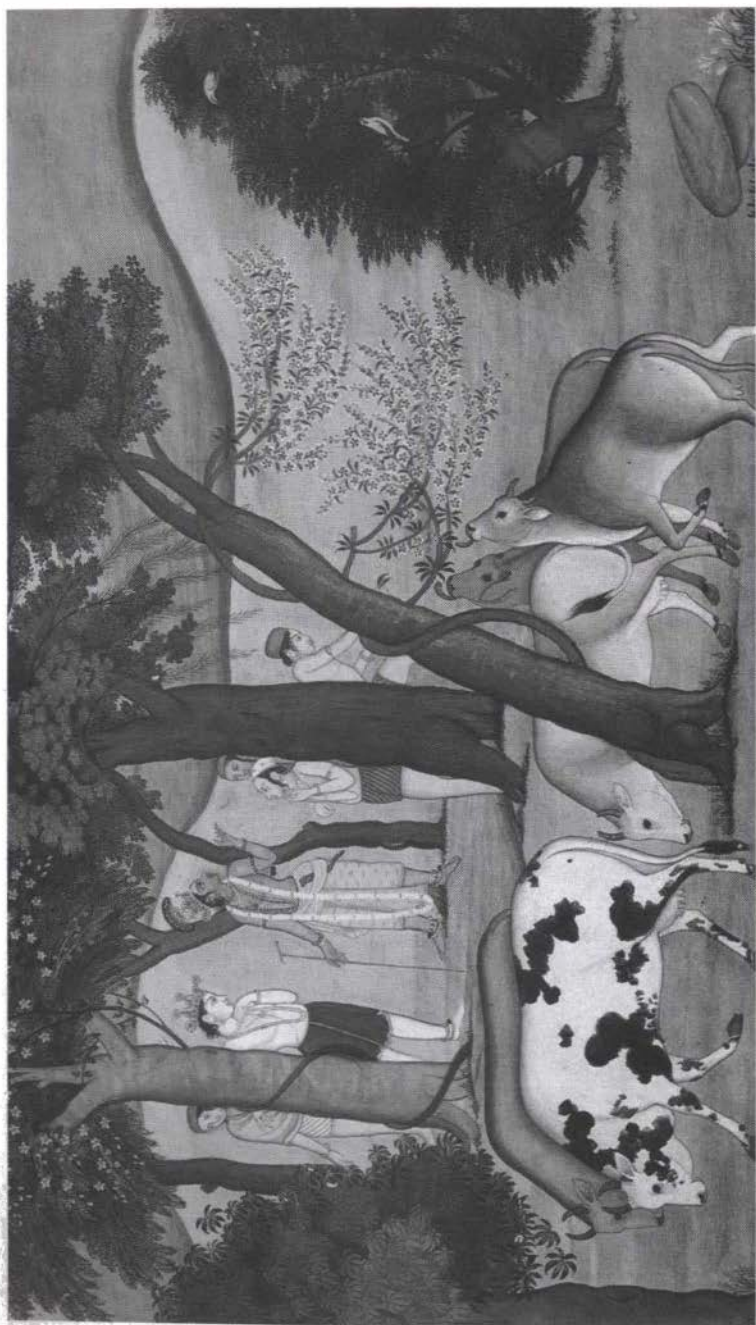
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## Part I

# Exile of Sri Krishna in Brindavan





Krishna and his companions ( Pahari miniature )



## The Vrajavāsīs arrive in Vṛndāvana\*

Gradually, the caravan of Vrajavāsīs arrived at the beautiful forest of Vṛndāvana. They built their residences over a vast area, for the benefit of the cows. The bullock carts were kept so as to make a boundary wall around the entire area, giving it the shape of a half moon. The length of that tract of land was about sixteen miles, and the breadth was eight miles. The newly established village of Vṛndāvana was well protected by thorny bushes, branches of trees, and other thorny plants and trees.

All the cowherd men and women began to engage themselves in various household chores. Some of them churned milk or yogurt into butter, some of them pulled ropes to move the churning rod, some of them washed pots and pitchers, making a rumbling noise, some drove pegs into the ground, some tied ropes on these pegs, some erected pillars, some of them were selling bullock carts, some were adjusting the churning rods and tying them with ropes, some were getting ready to build cottages with thatched roofs, some were gathering materials for building cottages, some were engaged in building nests or resting places for birds, some were clearing places for building cow sheds, some were keeping the grinding mortars in order, some were washing them while facing east, some were igniting a fire, some were unloading their belongings from their carts, some of the *gopīs* were taking the pitchers from their heads and setting them onto the floor, some of them simply enjoyed the beauty of the forest, and some of the *gopīs* walked around, pulling the branches of the trees. In this way, everyone, including the young and the old, were busy with different activities. Some of them were cutting wood with axes. Because the people were engaged in all these activities, Vṛndāvana looked exceedingly

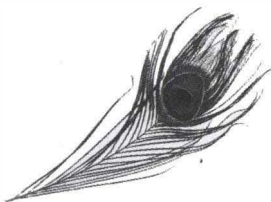
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\* Adapted from Harivaṁśa Purāṇa.

enchanting. The entire forest of Vṛndāvana was filled with fruit, roots, and fresh water.

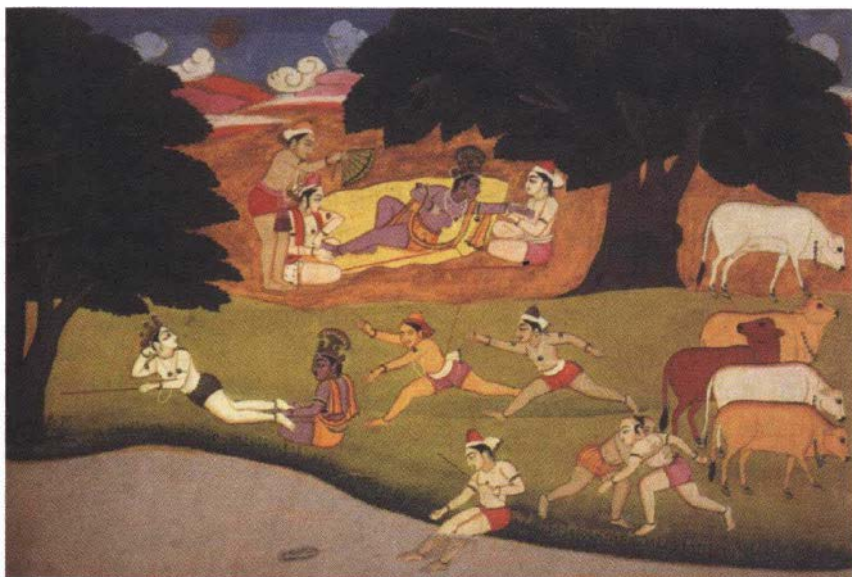
All the cows, which gave an abundance of milk, happily entered the forest of Vṛndāvana, which vibrated with the sweet sounds of birds, and which resembled the famous Nandana-kānana forest. An abundance of green grass was available. Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is very fond of the cows, always thinking about their welfare, carefully studied all the facilities that were available for the cows. It appeared as if the rain-god, Indra, had sent heavy showers to this place. Where Lord Madhusūdana, the benefactor of everyone, is present, the cows, calves, and human beings cannot face any difficulty. In this way, all the cows and inhabitants of Vraja, along with Balarāma, began to reside in the abode of Vṛndāvana with great delight...

\*37. By their boyish pranks and sweet speech, Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa delighted all. Gradually as they grew up they began to tend small calves. 38. In the company of other boys, they took the calves to pasture in places not far from the Vraja, carrying with them numerous playthings to engage themselves in sports. 39-40. Sometimes they played on their flutes; sometimes they flung stones with their catapults; sometimes they kicked balls sounding the mini-bells on their anklets; sometimes they put on the masks of bulls and engaged themselves in mock fight, bellowing like bulls; sometimes they mimicked the sounds of different types of animals. Thus they played about like ordinary boys.



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\* Adapted from Srimad Bhagavata.



Krishna and his brother Balarama are shown in two different poses, resting by a river as their companions run and play (Basohli miniature)

## The destruction of Vatsāsura and Bakāsura

### *Attack by Vatsāsura (41–44)*

One day, while Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa were grazing the calves with the other boys, an Asura came there with the idea of killing them. 42. Detecting him among the calves in the disguise of a calf, Śrī Hari pointed him out to Rāma, and then went near him as if innocently. 43. He caught hold of his hind legs and tail together, and whirling him round and round, hurled him dead to the top of a Kapittha tree. His huge carcass fell down from the tree, bringing large numbers of Kapittha fruits with it. 44. The boys, astounded to see his huge dead body loudly acclaimed the feat of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, while the Devas rained flowers in joy.

*Attack of Bakāsura (45 – 59)*

45. Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who were really the Guardians of the worlds, now went about as the guardians of small calves. Starting from home in the early morning with food packets in their kit, they moved about grazing the calves in pasture grounds. One day they went to a lake to water the calves. After doing so, they quenched their own thirst with that water. 47. The boys were now terribly frightened to see nearby a monstrous creature like one of those fabled mountains whose wings were cut off by Indra. 48. That creature was the powerful Asura Baka, come in the shape of a crane with sharp beaks. The monster now rushed towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa and swallowed him. 49. Rāma and other boys became completely paralyzed to see Śrī Kṛṣṇa being swallowed by the monstrous crane. Their condition was like that of the senses when the Prāṇa has escaped — more dead than alive. 50. But the crane immediately vomited that cowherd boy, the master even of Brahmā, as that creature felt him hot and burning like a ball of fire. Finding the child absolutely unhurt, the monster now ran at him to attack and kill him with his beak. 51. As the boys looked on and the celestials watched with excitement, Śrī Kṛṣṇa killed the attacking monster-crane, an ally of Kāṁsa, by tearing it asunder by its two beaks. For him it was as easy as splitting a blade of grass. 52. Thereupon the celestials began to rain jasmine flowers collected from the heavenly garden of Nandana, and also sang hymns in his praise to the accompaniment of musical instruments like conch and drums. The Gopa boys watched all this in utmost wonder. 53. Just as all the senses cling to the Prāṇa on its restoration, so did all the Gopa boys embrace Śrī Kṛṣṇa on his getting back to their midst. Then they returned home, herding all the calves, and reported the events of the day to the elders. 54. The Gopas and Gopīs were wonderstruck on hearing it. With their hearts melting in the intensity of their affection, and eyes unsatisfied by his sight, they gazed on him intently, considering him as one restored to life from the jaws of death.

55. They began to say: Alas! This boy has met death several times. But lo! death in the end overtook only those who came to destroy him. Perhaps these killers had done much evil in the past, and it is the cumulative effect that has destroyed them. 56. Though all these attackers are terrible in appearance, they have not been able to do any harm to the boy. Though they came to kill him, they perished as moths in fire...

## The deliverance of Aghāśura

### *The Scene in the Woods (I-II)*

*Śrī Śuka said:* 1. One day, Śrī Kṛṣṇa decided that he would have his lunch in the woodlands and not at home. So getting up very early in the morning, he woke up all his companions with the charming sound of his horn. In their company he started for the woods, with the calves herded in front. 2. With him started merrily a very large number of Gopa boys with their equipment consisting of slings, sticks, horns and flutes and pots of curd-rice, and they marched ahead. 3. Mixing their calves with the very large number of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's calves, they engaged themselves in various boyish games, as the calves grazed. 4. Though their mothers had decorated them with ornaments of *Kācha*, red beads, precious stones, gold etc., they regaled themselves with additional decorations of fruits, tender leaves, bunches of flower, flower buds, peacock feathers and mineral powders. 5. Some of them would in play thief the slings and equipment of others, and when found out, throw them away to some others at a distance, who in turn would throw them still further. When the owners felt teased, they laughed, and restored them to their owners. 6. If Śrī Kṛṣṇa happened to go to some distance drawn by the beauty of the forest scenery, the boys would run in competition to be near him and touch him. 7. Some of them sounded their flutes, some blew their horns; still

others hummed in tune with the bees; and some more cooed with the cuckoos (the Kokilas) — thus did they engage themselves in play. 8. Some ran pursuing the shadows of flying birds; some walked with swans imitating their elegant tread; some mimicked the pose of cranes; some danced with the peacocks—thus did they engage themselves in play. 9. Some of them pulled monkeys by the tail; some climbed trees after them; some imitated their grimaces and contortions; some jumped from one branch of a tree to another—thus did they engage themselves in play. 10. Some jumped into streams and chased the frogs right to the other bank; some conversed mockingly at their own images in water; some scolded the echoes of their own voices from caverns — thus did they engage themselves in play. 11. Possessed of a rich store of merit earned by them in the past, they sported thus with Śrī Kṛṣṇa — who combines in himself absolute existence, unmixed bliss and pure consciousness in the eyes of the wise — the supreme deity in the eyes of his devotees, and as a mere human child in the eyes of those in the grip of Māyā. 12. Ah! How can one describe the good fortune of the inhabitants of Vraja before whose physical sight stood He, the dust of whose feet the Yogis fail to attain even through austerities practiced in life after life, with their minds indrawn and concentrated on Him!

### *Appearance of the Demon Agha (13-24)*

13. At this time a mighty Asura named Agha, unable to bear the sight of the delightful sports of these children, made his appearance there with a view to destroy them. This Asura was a terror even to the Devas who, though they had drunk the elixir of immortality, still felt it necessary to safeguard their lives against him. 14. This Aghāsura, who had been sent by Kāṁsa, was the brother of Pūtana and Baka who had met with their death at Śrī Kṛṣṇa 's hands. Seeing Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the boys, he thought within himself: "This boy is the killer of my sister and brother. I shall kill him along with Bala to give satisfaction to my

two dead dear ones. 15. If I give these boys as funeral offerings to my dead brother and sister, then all the inhabitants of Vraja are as good as dead. For they are like their Prāṇa to people; if they perish, the whole community perishes in the next generation. So if the Prāṇa of the community, their children, are killed, there is nothing to fear from them afterwards, as one need not concern oneself with a body whose Prāṇa has left it." 16. Having thus resolved, that evil-minded demon assumed the form of a huge python, and with its mountain-like body a Yojana long and its mouth wide-open like a huge cave, lay in wait on the way to devour the children. 17. His lower lip touched the earth and the upper one the clouds in the sky. The corners of his mouth were like caverns while his molars resembled mountain peaks. In the cavity of his mouth, where pitch darkness reigned, his tongue lay like a broad road. His breath came out like a piercing wind, and his eyes shone like the flames of a forest fire. 18. The boys, all in a sportive mood, on seeing Aghāsura of the above description, took him to be another wonderful feature of the scenery of Vṛndāvana. They admired and praised its striking resemblance to a python.

*They said:* 19. Look here, friends! What is it that we see before us — is it a living creature or not? Can you say whether it is a real python lying there waiting to swallow us, or a mere feature of the mountainside? 20. See, the cloud slightly reddened by the sun's rays looks like the upper part of the jaw, and the ground below, which reflects a little of that redness, looks like the lower jaw. 21. The caves on the left and right of the mountain feature look like the corners of a python's lips. The series of lofty peaks look like its molars. 22. This broad and long path is very much like a tongue. The darkness in this gorge between these two peaks resembles the darkness within the mouth of the giant creature. 23. The hot wind caused by the forest fire is like its breath, and the smell of burnt flesh coming from that fire is the foul smell emitted by the rotten flesh in the python's stomach. 24. If we get into this mouth, would the creature swallow



us? If he does so, he will also follow the footsteps of Baka at the hands of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Saying so, they looked at the bewitching face of the destroyer of Baka, and laughed, clapping their hands.

*Agha swallowing the Party; and his Death (25-39)*

25-26. Hearing the conversation between these ignorant boys oblivious of the real state of affairs, the Lord, who is present in the hearts of all, understood that it was a real serpent and the boys had ignorantly taken fact for fancy. Anxious to save them, he wanted to stop them from proceeding further. Before he could do so, however, the boys and the calves entered into the monster's mouth. But instead of swallowing them immediately, the python kept his mouth open for the destroyer of Baka to enter, so that he could avenge the death of two of his most dear ones. 27-28. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the protector of the whole universe, was overcome with pity and wonder at the tragic fate of the boys and the calves, who had none except he as protector, but had slipped out of his hands even into the flaming fire of death. He thought within himself how he could save the good boys and destroy the wicked monster at one stroke. Having arrived at a plan, the all-seeing Śrī Hari entered into the python's mouth. 29. The Devas, standing behind the clouds, cried out, expressing their apprehension, while monstrous beings and the friends and allies of Kamsa felt jubilant.

30. Hearing the wailings of the Devas, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the deathless one, began to grow in size within the throat of that monster that wanted to pulverize all of them — Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the boys and the calves at one stroke. 31. That gigantic monster, having his air passage thus obstructed by the enlarging body of the Lord, began to roll hither and thither with his eyes protruding. As the breath could not come out through any passage, it burst his head and came out. 32. When the monster's life force had entirely left his body, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the supreme Self, revived all the calves and friends by his look, and came out with them all

through the mouth of the dead monster. 33. Now there came out from the body of the huge serpent a radiance that illuminated all the quarters. It lingered in the sky for a moment for Śrī Kṛṣṇa to come out of the serpent's body, and then entered into him, as all the Devas looked on with wonder...

### Description of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's beauty, the Yamunā and Kāliya lake\*

**V**aiśampāyana said: O Janamejaya, one day, most attractive Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who can assume any form he desires, went for a walk in the forest of Vṛndāvana without his brother, Balarāma. He tucked a bunch of peacock feathers in his curly hair. His eyes were broad, resembling lotus petals. His complexion was blackish and his beauty was extraordinary. His chest was decorated with the mark of Śrīvatsa. In this way, he appeared like a brightly shining moon. His arms were adorned with armlets and his palms looked like fully blossomed lotus flowers. His legs were very beautiful and tender.

When he walked, he looked most enchanting. He was dressed in two pieces of fine yellow cloth. His personality constantly increased the happiness of everyone who saw Him. When the blackish personality, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, would dress in this way, he would appear like a dark cloud beautified by the golden effulgence of twilight. His two arms were attractive, round, and worshiped by the demigods. He used these hands to take care of the cows, to tie bells around the necks of the calves, and to tie the calves with rope. With his beautiful arms, Śrī Kṛṣṇa looked very attractive.

As Śrī Kṛṣṇa gradually surpassed the stage of childhood and

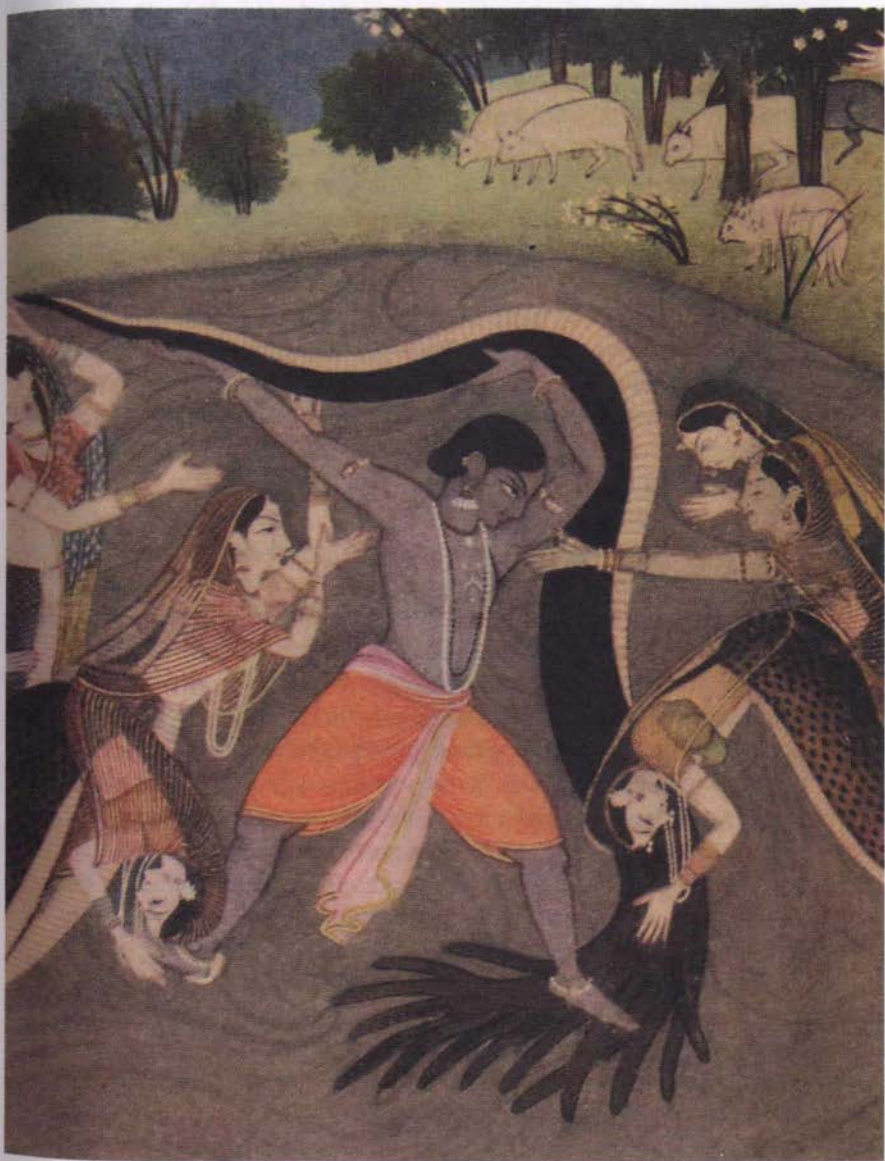
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\* Adapted from Harivaṁśa Purāṇa.

entered the age of youth, his face became as beautiful as a lotus flower and a sweet aroma, similar to that of a lotus flower, emanated from his body. His lotus-like face, which was adorned with dots of *tilaka*, looked very beautiful, like a lotus flower surrounded by a swarm of bees. His head was decorated with a garland of *arjuna* and *kadamba* flowers. This garland also had flowers from a *nīpa* tree and some fresh twigs. As Śrī Kṛṣṇa walked, his bodily effulgence brightened the entire forest, so that he appeared like a moon shining in the sky. He was adorned with another garland made of forest flowers. In this way, dark-complexioned Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the almighty Lord, looked like the personified month of Bhādra, when the sky is filled with dark clouds. He wore a chain around his neck that had a peacock feather hanging from it. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa walked, this peacock feather would swing, to and fro, enhancing his great beauty. Sometimes Śrī Kṛṣṇa would sing, sometimes he would play, sometimes he would wander about here and there, and sometimes he would play on a flute made of green leaves that gave pleasure to everyone. Sometimes Śrī Kṛṣṇa would go to the forest and, to give happiness to the cows, he would joyfully play his flute in an enchanting manner. The sound of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's flute was the most beloved experience for the cowherd boys and girls of Vṛndāvana.

This way, the brightly shining Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whose complexion was just like a dark cloud, wandered about in and around Gokula, as well as within the beautiful forests and gardens. The entire forest of Vṛndāvana was filled with the singing of peacocks. The pathways of the forest were covered by grass. In some places, there were tadpoles and mushrooms, appearing like the ornaments of the forest. There were many newly sprouting plants and twigs from which drops of moisture dripped.

Appearing to be intoxicated by the sweet aroma of flowers, the entire land of Vṛndāvana seemed to repeatedly take deep breaths, out of excitement, just like a young woman. Śrī Kṛṣṇa enjoyed the cool breezes emanating from the trees and plants of Vṛndāvana. He took great pleasure in wandering about within the beautiful forests.



One day, while tending the cows in the forest of Vṛndāvana, Śrī Kṛṣṇa suddenly saw a tree that was extremely tall. The tree had such big and thick leaves that it looked like a personified cloud on the earth. With its great height, the tree covered half of the entire sky. From a distance, it looked like a huge mountain. There were many peacocks having blue necks and colorful feathers in that tree. With its coral-like red fruit, the tree appeared like a rainbow within the clouds. The tree was so large that each of its branches looked like a big house. It was adorned with many creepers and flowers. Its roots spread out for a long distance. This tree was a source of air and rain. It appeared that this tree was the king of all the other trees in the area. It was very beneficial for everyone because it gave protection from rain and sunshine. The name of this tree was Bhāṇḍīra-vaṭa. As soon as Śrī Kṛṣṇa saw this beautiful tree, He decided to reside there.

O sinless Janamejaya, Śrī Kṛṣṇa enjoyed performing pastimes in the association of his cowherd boy friends under this tree. He would play under this tree the entire day, and feel the same happiness he felt when he was at home. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa resided at Bhāṇḍīra-vaṭa and enjoyed many childhood pastimes, his cowherd boy friends would satisfy him by offering him gifts obtained from the forest. Some of his friends would sing in a sweet voice to please him. Some would glorify Śrī Kṛṣṇa's wonderful pastimes, especially those that were very pleasing to him. When the cowherd boys would sing, powerful Śrī Kṛṣṇa would sometimes play his flute, made of green leaves. Sometimes he would play the tambura, and sometimes he would play a stringed instrument.

One day, Śrī Kṛṣṇa whose eyes were as broad as those of the cows and bulls, went to the bank of the Yamunā while tending the cows. There were many trees on the bank of the Yamunā that were decorated with creepers and flowers. Śrī Kṛṣṇa became very pleased to see the beautiful Yamunā, which released cooling and pleasing breezes, and which was decorated

with many fully blossomed lotus flowers and water lilies. There were beautiful bathing *ghats* and pathways leading to the Yamunā. The water of the Yamunā was most sanctified and tasty. There were many *kundas* within that river and its water flowed with great force. The air that arose from the currents of the water had bent the trees on the bank.

The atmosphere by the side of the Yamunā was always filled with the sounds of swans, *kāraṇḍavaś*, and cranes. Male and female *cakravākas* happily enjoyed intimate association in the water of the Yamuna. The Yamunā was the residence of many aquatics that increased the beauty of the river. The lotus flowers and other flowers enhanced the Yamunā's beauty. The water of the Yamunā appeared greenish.... She looked charming because of her enchanting effulgence. There were many hermitages on the banks of the Yamunā. While observing the beauty of the Yamunā, who is the queen of the ocean, Śrī Kṛṣṇa freely wandered about in the four directions. While wandering in this way on the bank of the Yamunā, the best of all rivers, Śrī Kṛṣṇa came upon a huge lake, eight miles long. It was difficult even for the demigods to cross it. It was very deep and without a ripple, being a vast body of water.

Even aquatics, such as crocodiles, avoided that lake. There were no water birds present in or around it. It looked unfathomable, like the sky covered by clouds. There were many holes on the banks of that lake wherein lived many poisonous snakes. For this reason, it was difficult for the residents of Vṛndāvana to approach it. Indeed, the entire lake was filled with the fire and smoke that emanated from the snakes' poison. Because of this, the water of the lake within the Yamunā was unfit for drinking, both for animals and human beings. Even the demigods, who bathe three times daily, gave up using that water because it was polluted. Even the birds were unable to fly over that lake. If a blade of dry straw fell into the water, it was immediately burnt to ashes. Even the demigods found it hard to walk within eight miles of either side of the lake. At that place, there were no



trees on both banks of the Yamunā because they had been burnt to ashes by the formidable poison.

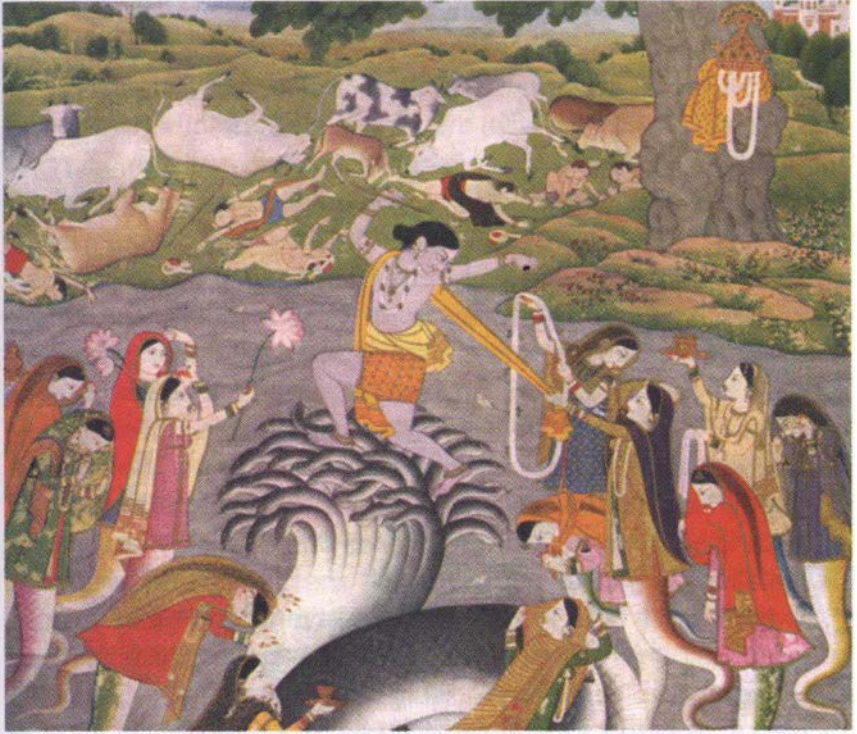
There was a two-mile stretch of land on the northern side of the Yamunā that was unaffected by the poison, however. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa saw that unfathomable lake, which was very attractive, He thought, "Whom does this lake belong to? Actually, this lake is the residence of the poisonous serpent, Kāliya, the king of the snakes, whose body is black, like black ointment, and who is very fierce. I had heard that, long ago, Kaliyā had left his residence in the ocean out of fear of Garuḍa, the king of birds, and took shelter of this lake. It is Kaliyā who has poisoned the water of the river Yamunā, which flows to the sea. Out of fear of him, no one dares live nearby. That is why this otherwise beautiful forest has become a dangerous place. Actually, Kaliyā and his sinful ministers rule this part of the forest, which is thick with trees, plants, creepers, and bushes. For this reason, the forest here has become empty, like the sky. The water of this lake has become deadly, like food mixed with poison. This entire area is well protected by Kāliya's guards.

The river is full of moss and its banks are crowded with bushes, creepers and lotus flowers. I will have to find a way to reach the heart of this lake. I must destroy this king of serpents, Kāliya, somehow or other, so that this lake, which supplies water to the residents of Vṛndāvana, can again become their shelter. If I chastise this serpent then the water of the Yamunā will again be useful for the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana. People will be able to wander about freely within this area once again and this river will again be accepted as sacred and the abode of happiness."

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## Śrī Kṛṣṇa chastises Kāliya

**V**aiśampāyana said: O Janamejaya, realizing the necessity of driving away the serpent, Kaliyā, from the Yamunā, vivacious Śrī Kṛṣṇa slowly approached the bank of river. He tightened his cloth and climbed onto a branch of the *kadarnba* tree. Śrī Kṛṣṇa., whose complexion was like the color of a dark cloud, and whose eyes were like lotus petals, made a loud noise before jumping into the lake within the Yamunā where Kāliya had taken up residence. As soon as Śrī Kṛṣṇa jumped into the water, the lake became disturbed. The waves spilled over onto the banks, inundating the nearby land. It appeared as if the clouds had fallen onto the earth. The loud sound disturbed the king of the serpents. To find out the cause, Kāliya slowly emerged from the water and

came to the surface. His eyes were red with anger.

Kāliya, the king of the serpents, was as black as a dark cloud. He was furious so that the corners of his eyes were blood red. Kāliya had five hoods and he breathed fire. His tongue was restless and his mouth was filled with fire. His five heads were enormous and terrifying. In fact, he almost covered the entire lake with his powerful and fiery body. He was trembling with anger and his body was burning with rage. Because of the fiery poison emanating from Kāliya's mouth, the whole lake was disturbed and the course of the river Yamunā was altered. It appeared as if the river ran in retreat, out of fear.

When Kāliya saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa playing with his cowherd boy friends within the lake, he became ablaze with anger. He exhaled fiery balls accompanied by smoke from his mouth. With his fire of anger, the serpent, Kāliya, who was as dangerous as the time of devastation, began to burn to ashes the trees and plants that grew around the lake. His wives, son, servants and other poisonous snakes, which were all very powerful, supported him. They also began to release fiery poison from their mouths. Being led by Kāliya, all of them forcefully attacked Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Kāliya and the other snakes captured Śrī Kṛṣṇa within their coils. Within a short while, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's hands, legs, and other limbs were rendered motionless. He appeared just like an immovable mountain. The poison released by those snakes already contaminated the water of the Yamunā. Then, they began to bite Śrī Kṛṣṇa with their sharp teeth. However, Śrī Kṛṣṇa was so powerful that they could not harm him. Meanwhile, all the cowherd boys became mortified to see Śrī Kṛṣṇa captured by Kāliya. They went home crying and informed everyone of the situation with choked voices.

The cowherd boys said: "Listen everyone, our Śrī Kṛṣṇa has become unconscious due to being submerged in the Kāliya lake. The king of snakes, Kāliya, is about to swallow him. Therefore, come quickly do not delay. Somebody should immediately go to the house of Nanda Mahārāja and tell him that his Śrī Kṛṣṇa is being dragged by the serpent, Kāliya, within his

lake." In no time, this news reached Nanda Mahārāja, who became overwhelmed with fear and grief. Indeed, this harsh news struck him like a thunderbolt. With great difficulty, he somehow managed to approach the Kāliya lake. Many cowherd men, women, and young boys followed Nanda Mahārāja. Balarāma, the son of Rohiṇī, also arrived on the shore of the Kāliya lake.

Everyone gathered to view the situation. Nanda and the other cowherd inhabitants of Vṛndāvana cried profusely. Tears incessantly fell from their eyes as they approached the Kāliya lake and stood before it. They felt impotent and ashamed because they were unable to help Śrī Kṛṣṇa. They were amazed to see Śrī Kṛṣṇa's heroic posture but they were overwhelmed by fear for Śrī Kṛṣṇa's well being. They said, "Alas! O my son! Shame on our lives!" Some of the cowherds became very distressed and lamented, "Alas! We are finished." In this way, they cried out loudly. The women of Vraja looked at Yaśodā and agonized, "Alas! O, Yaśodā your life is finished although you are still alive because today, you are seeing your beloved child within the grip of Kāliya. Alas! Your child, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is completely in the clutches of the serpent, awaiting death."

"O Yaśodā, it appears that your heart is made of hardened steel. Even after finding your beloved son in such a condition, why has your heart not broken into pieces? Alas! We can see Nanda Mahārāja standing on the shore of the Kāliya lake in an extremely painful condition, looking at Śrī Kṛṣṇa's face without blinking his eyes. We will enter Kāliya lake, which is the residence of the king of serpents, keeping Yaśodā in front. It is our resolve that we will not return to Vṛndāvana without Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Where is the question of day if there is no sun? How can there be night without the moon? How can there be cows without bulls? How can there be Vṛndāvana without Śrī Kṛṣṇa? We will not return home without Śrī Kṛṣṇa, just as cows do not return home without their calves. "

When Balarāma, who knew the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and who was undifferentiated from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, heard these lamentations

of the cowherd men and women, headed by Nanda Mahārāja and mother Yaśodā, He became very angry at Kāliya and gave the following advice to his younger brother, Śrī Kṛṣṇa: "O Kṛṣṇa! O mighty-armed Kṛṣṇa! You always enhance the pleasure of the cowherd residents of Vraja. Quickly destroy this king of serpents, Kāliya, whose only weapon is his poison. O most dear one! O master of all, our relatives and friends consider You to be an ordinary human being and so they are lamenting and crying most pathetically."

When Śrī Kṛṣṇa heard these words of Śaṅkarṣaṇa, the son of Rohiṇī, He immediately freed himself from the clutches of Kāliya and, displaying his supreme prowess, began to challenge him. Thereafter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa repeatedly pushed Kāliya's heads down, kicking them with his lotus feet. Then, with his lotus-like hands, Śrī Kṛṣṇa grabbed one of Kāliya's heads. Suddenly, Śrī Kṛṣṇa jumped onto the broad heads of Kāliya and began to dance. At that time, Śrī Kṛṣṇa looked very beautiful, his arms being adorned with armlets.

After Śrī Kṛṣṇa had kicked and chastised Kāliya sufficiently by his dancing, the serpent's pride having been smashed, he spoke as blood issued forth from his mouth. "O beautiful Śrī Kṛṣṇa, with a most charming face, out of foolishness I displayed my anger before You. You have rightly chastised me. Now, my pride and poison have been vanquished and so, I surrender unto You. Kindly give me permission so that, along with my sons, relatives, and friends, I can always serve You. Please spare my life because I am taking shelter of You."

When the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whose flag is decorated with the image of Garuḍa, saw Kāliya offering him obeisance with his five hoods, he spoke to him. "O serpent, Kāliya, I cannot allow you to remain here in this lake of the Yamunā. Along with your wives, brothers, and friends, you must immediately leave and go reside in the ocean. If I ever find a snake within the water of the Yamunā, even if he is your servant or son, I will kill him without a doubt. I desire that the water become purified so that it

will be beneficial for all the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana. Therefore, you must go away and take up residence in the ocean. If you disobey my order, your life will not be spared. O serpent, as you continue to reside in the ocean, the marks of my lotus feet will be clearly visible on your five hoods. Because of this, Garuḍa, who is your natural enemy, will never harm you."

Thereafter, the great serpent, Kāliya, offered his respectful obeisance unto the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa. Before the eyes of all the residents of Vraja, Kāliya departed from that lake. When Kāliya thus accepted defeat and left the Yamunā, and when Śrī Kṛṣṇa came out of the water onto the shore, all the cowherd men and women were certainly astonished. While glorifying Śrī Kṛṣṇa, they happily circumambulated Him.

All the cowherd men, who are residents of the forest, were extremely joyful. They said to Nanda Mahārāja, "O king of the cowherds, your life is glorious because you have been greatly favored by the Supreme Lord, who has given you such a wonderful son. O sinless Nanda, from today onwards, all of us men and women of Vraja will take shelter of the Supreme Lord, the lotus-eyed Śrī Kṛṣṇa, for our protection. It is our great fortune that the water of the Yamunā, which is worshiped by all the sages, had become pure and auspicious for everyone. Now, our cows and calves can drink the water to their full satisfaction. We are village people who live in the forest and yet, the exalted Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is present among us, just as fire may remain within ashes. Still, we cannot properly understand his supremacy and greatness." In this way, being struck with wonder, all the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana offered prayers to the indestructible Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, and then returned home, just as the demigods return home after visiting the Caitraratha forest.



## Balarāma kills Dhenukāsura

Vaiśampāyana said: O Janamejaya, after He had subdued the king of the serpents, Kāliya, who lived within a lake of the Yamunā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma often wandered about that area together.

One day, the two sons of Vasudeva took the cows and entered a beautiful forest situated at the foot of Govardhana Hill. There, the two great heroes saw that to the north of Govardhana Hill, by the side of the Yamunā, there was a vast and beautiful forest of palm trees. That forest was most enchanting and full of various kinds of trees, especially palm trees. The two brothers joyfully played in that forest, just like two calves.

The entire forest was cool and the paths were always moist and slippery because there was no clay or small stones on them. The whole tract of land was covered with *kuśa* and *durbā* grass. The color of the soil in that forest was black. The palm trees of that forest were tall and broad, and they were black and full of ripe fruit. By looking at these tall palm trees, it appeared as if many elephants were standing while raising their trunks upwards.

Upon seeing this wonderful Tālavana forest, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the crest jewel among eloquent speakers, said to his brother, Balarāma, "My dear brother, this forest is intoxicating, due to the sweet fragrance of the ripe palm fruit. I am sure that these black aromatic palm fruit are tasty and juicy. We should quickly go and relish them. Just imagine — if the fragrance of the fruit is satisfying our sense of smell then I am sure that they will be as palatable as nectar."

Upon hearing these words of Dāmodara, Balarāma, the son of Rohiṇī, began to smile. Thereafter, they went to the Tālavana forest and Balarāma began to shake the palm trees vigorously. The inhabitants of Vṛndāvana had been unable to relish these palm fruits. It was difficult for them to even enter the forest.

Even though it was extremely pleasant, it was devoid of human habitation, like the residences of the demons. A terrible demon named Dhenukāsura, whose form was like that of an ass, and who had a gigantic body, lived in that forest. This demon, was always surrounded by many female asses.

This demon, Dhenukāsura, always guarded the forest from all sides. He was a very foolish creature because he would not allow anyone, not even birds or animals, to pass through this forest. When Balarāma shook the palm trees, it made a tumultuous sound. The demon could not tolerate this, just as an elephant cannot tolerate the sound of a challenge, and so he became extremely angry. Dhenukāsura went in the direction from where the noise was coming. In an angry mood, and filled with pride, the demon hurried along the path while raising his tail and moving his head. His eyes were red with rage. In an angry mood, he tore apart the surface of the earth with his hooves. His bodily hair stood on end and his appearance was terrible. As soon as he came near the palm trees, he saw Balarāma, the son of Rohiṇī, standing there.

On seeing the son of Rohiṇī, Balarāma, who is the indestructible Lord, standing under the palm trees, the wicked demon, using his teeth as a weapon, tried to bite Balarāma. Dhenukāsura, the king of the demons, then turned his back on the son of Rohiṇī and violently kicked His chest with his hind legs. At this, Balarāma deftly caught hold of the demon's hind legs, wheeled him around and around, and then threw him into the treetops. As a result, the demon's thighs, waist, back, and neck were all broken. With his body thus deformed, the demon fell from the treetop, along with many palm fruits. When Dhenukāsura was thus lying dead on the ground, the demon's associates attacked Balarāma. He also grabbed their hind legs and threw them into the treetops.

The entire forest thus became covered with dead asses and ripe palm fruits. It appeared like the sky covered with dark clouds. When the ass-demon, Dhenukāsura, was thus killed,



# Vrajamandala

to Delhi

YAMUNA



Nandagrama

Cira-ghata

Bhandiravana

Unchagaon

Vrindavana

Mahasarovara

Kedarnatha

Bahulavana

Mathura

Radha-kunda

Govardhana

Madhuvana

Talavana

Gokula

Bharatpura

to Agra

N

0 5 10km



Sri Krishna lifting the Govardhana mountain ( Kishangarh painting, detail )

along with his servants, the Tālavana forest resumed its naturally enchanting and pleasant appearance. All fear of going to Tālavana was thus dispelled. Thereafter, the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana were free to wander there and the cows of Vraja could enjoy the green grass. Following this incident, being freed from all fear, the cowherd boys cheerfully entered the Tālavana forest. As the cows and calves began to joyfully graze in that forest, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, who appeared like two kings of elephants, blissfully sat down there on asanas made of beautiful green leaves...

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### Balarama slays Pralamba\*

*Śrī Śuka began again:* ...2. Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa were thus sporting in the assumed form of Gopas, during the summer season. 3. But while Keśava, the Supreme Lord, stayed in Vṛndāvana with Rāma, the delightful features of the place made the summer resemble the spring. 4. There, in the summer, the sound of waterfalls drowned even the shrill and piercing sound of crickets, while sprays of water splashed from them, always moistening the leaves of the trees and adding beauty to the place. 5. Owing to the luxuriant growth of grass and the breeze blowing through the rippling surfaces of rivers and lakes and waterfalls conveying the pollen of sweet-smelling water-born flowers like Kahlāra, lotus and Utpala, the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana knew not the sufferings from the intense heat of the sun and the forest fire characteristic of summer. 6. The constant waves of the waters of the rivers there, overflowing the sandy banks, spread the alluvium all over extensively, so much so the poison-like burning rays of the summer sun were not able to make the land dry or prevent the vigorous growth of grass

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\*Adapted from Srimad Bhagavata.

there. 7. The trees of the forest were full of flowers and looked bright and lustrous. A variety of animals and birds inhabited the place. The peacock and the honeybees were everywhere and the songs of Kokilas and Sārasas filled the air.

### *Śrī Kṛṣṇa 's Sport in the Forest (8-16)*

8. One day Śrī Kṛṣṇa with Balarāma went to the forest for the pastime of cow keeping, surrounded by the cows and the Gopas blowing their flutes very loudly. 9. Bedecked with leaf sprouts, peacock feathers, flower buds, garlands and metallic paints of different hues, the Gopas including Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa danced, fought and sang. 10. As Śrī Kṛṣṇa danced, some sang for him, some provided accompaniments and kept time with flutes, horns and hands. Some others extolled the dance. 11. O King! Just as the actors in a drama praise their protagonist, so the celestials, born in the cowherd community and now in the form of Gopas, praised Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa for their performance. 12. Sometimes with their uncut locks hanging down, they played at contests like whirling, leaping, hurling, pulling, clapping arms, etc. 13. Sometimes, while others danced, Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa would provide the instrumental accompaniments and music and also shout appreciative and encouraging remarks. 14. They sometimes played throwing Vilva fruits at one another, sometimes fruits of Kumbha or of Āmalaka, and sometimes they fisted one another. Sometimes they played at blind man's buff, sometimes at mimicking the cries of birds and beasts. 15. Sometimes they played at leapfrog, sometimes at holding king's durbar and sometimes at swinging on the boughs of trees. At other times they also cracked jokes among themselves. 16. In this way the pair moved amidst rivers, hills, valleys and bowery groves, playing at various kinds of boyish sports in vogue.

### *Pralamba's Attack and Destruction (17-32)*

17. While Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa were thus tending cattle in that forest, an Asura named Pralamba, disguised as a Gopa,

came there with a view to abduct them. 18. Śrī Kṛṣṇa from whose observation nothing could escape noticed the Asura in the group of cowherd boys. Devising a strategy to kill him, he approached the Asura and cultivated his friendship. 19. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who knew many games, called the cowherd boys all together and asked them to prepare themselves for a game, dividing themselves into two opposing teams equal in age and strength. 20. They made Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa the two team leaders and the rest joined the side of the one or the other. 21. They arranged for various games in which a defeated person would have to carry on his shoulders his victorious counterpart. 22. Sometimes Śrī Kṛṣṇa's party carrying the others, and at other times vice versa, they progressed, tending the cattle side by side, until they came to the foot of the banyan tree known as Bhāṇḍīraka. 23. There the party of Rāma, with the boys Śridāmā and Vṛṣhabha as its members, was successful and, according to the original agreement, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the others took them on their shoulders and walked. 24. Being defeated, Śrī Kṛṣṇa carried Śridāmā on his shoulder. Bhadrasena carried Vṛṣhabha, and Pralamba (the demon in disguise) carried Balarāma. 25. Knowing that Śrī Kṛṣṇa was irresistible, the Asura Pralamba wanted to be away from his sight and therefore ran with Balarāma on his shoulder beyond the spot where he was to drop him. 26. Carrying Balarāma, who was weighty like a mountain, the Asura's speed slackened and he resumed his hidden Asura form. With the numerous golden ornaments on his body and the fair-complexioned Rāma on his shoulder, the Asura looked like a cloud adorned with streaks of lightning and carrying the moon. 27. Balarāma also felt a little nervous when he found the Asura travelling fast in the air, his eyes burning, his fierce fangs projecting from the brows, his hair flaming, and his body decorated with ornaments like bracelets, ear-rings and a diadem. 28. Then, as the memory of his own divinity was restored, Balarāma again became fearless, and like Indra hurling the thunderbolt on a mountain, delivered punches with his fist

on the head of the Asura who was lifting him far away from his group. 29. The Asura's brain being thus blown out, he fell down dead like the mountain struck by Indra, giving out a horrible yell and bleeding profusely from the head.

30. Seeing the dead body of Pralamba slain by the powerful Balarāma, the Gopas were all astonished and exclaimed: "Well done, Bravo!" 31. They blessed him and praised him, who was praiseworthy. Like one who had come back from the hands of death, they clasped him in their loving embrace. 32. When the sinful Pralamba was killed the Devas were filled with joy and they rained flower garlands on Balarāma exclaiming, "Well done, well done!"....

### Autumn in Vṛndāvan (32-45)

32. While Balarāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa thus dwelt in Vraja, the autumn season characterized by a clear sky, crystal waters and gentle breezes set in. 33. Announced by the appearance of lotus flowers, the advent of Śarat restored water everywhere from turbidity to its original state of purity, just as the minds of fallen Yogis are purified by resorting to Yogic practice once again. 34. Śarat cleared the sky of clouds, the vegetation of its congestion, the land of mud and mire, and water of turbidity, just as devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa eradicates sins of persons in all the four Āśramas. 35. Rid of all their wealth of waters, the clouds now shone in their white radiance, like holy men who have abandoned the three *Eshanas* or longings (for wealth, son and heavenly felicities), and free from sins, are established in peace. 36. The mountains released pure streams of water in some places and not in others, just as men of illumination give out their nectar-like wisdom at certain times while at others they do not.... 42. The moon alleviated the sufferings of people from the heat of the autumn sun, just as spiritual awakening puts an end to



the miseries of identification with the body, or as Śrī Kṛṣṇa relieved the sorrows of the Gopīs. 43. The cloudless sky looked charming at night revealing the autumnal stars in all their clarity, just as the pure Sattvika mind reveals the meaning of the Vedas. 44. The full moon shone in the sky surrounded by the stars, just as Śrī Kṛṣṇa would shine as the Lord of the Yadus amidst his Yadava clansmen. 45. Embracing the gentle temperate breeze coming from the woods in full blossom, loaded with fragrant pollen, people got relief from their anguish caused by heat, but not the Gopīs whose hearts had been stolen away by Śrī Kṛṣṇa.



### The magic of Śrī Kṛṣṇa 's flute

1. At the advent of Śarat as described before, Śrī Kṛṣṇa with his cowherd boys and cows entered the forest of Vṛndāvana, which was fanned by the gentle breeze blowing over the surface of its clear lotus lakes. 2. The woods of Vṛndāvana were full of rows



of flowering trees, and the lakes, streams and hills there were resonant with the humming of bees maddened with flower-nectar and with the sweet warbling of many kinds of birds. Pasturing the cows, the Lord entered this forest accompanied by Balarāma and the cowherd boys and sounded his flute. 3. Some women of Vraja, hearing the entrancing notes of the Lord's flute from a distance, proceeded to celebrate it in song before their other companions, all out of his sight. 4. But, O King, recalling the Lord's gestures, as they began to describe the music, love welled up overpoweringly in their hearts, making it impossible for them to speak.

5. Beholding in their mind's eye, an exquisite form with the appearance of a dancer on the stage, adorned with a crest of peacock feathers and ear ornaments of Karṇikāra flowers, wearing a yellow cloth of golden radiance, wearing a garland of Vaijayanti flowers, filling the holes of the flute with the nectar of his lips, extolled by the Gopas in various songs, the Lord (they felt) entered Vṛndāvana, which he had rendered charming, with his footprints found everywhere. 6. Hearing, O king, the music of his flute, captivating to the mind of all living beings, and celebrating it in the following strain, all the women of Vraja mentally embraced the Lord.

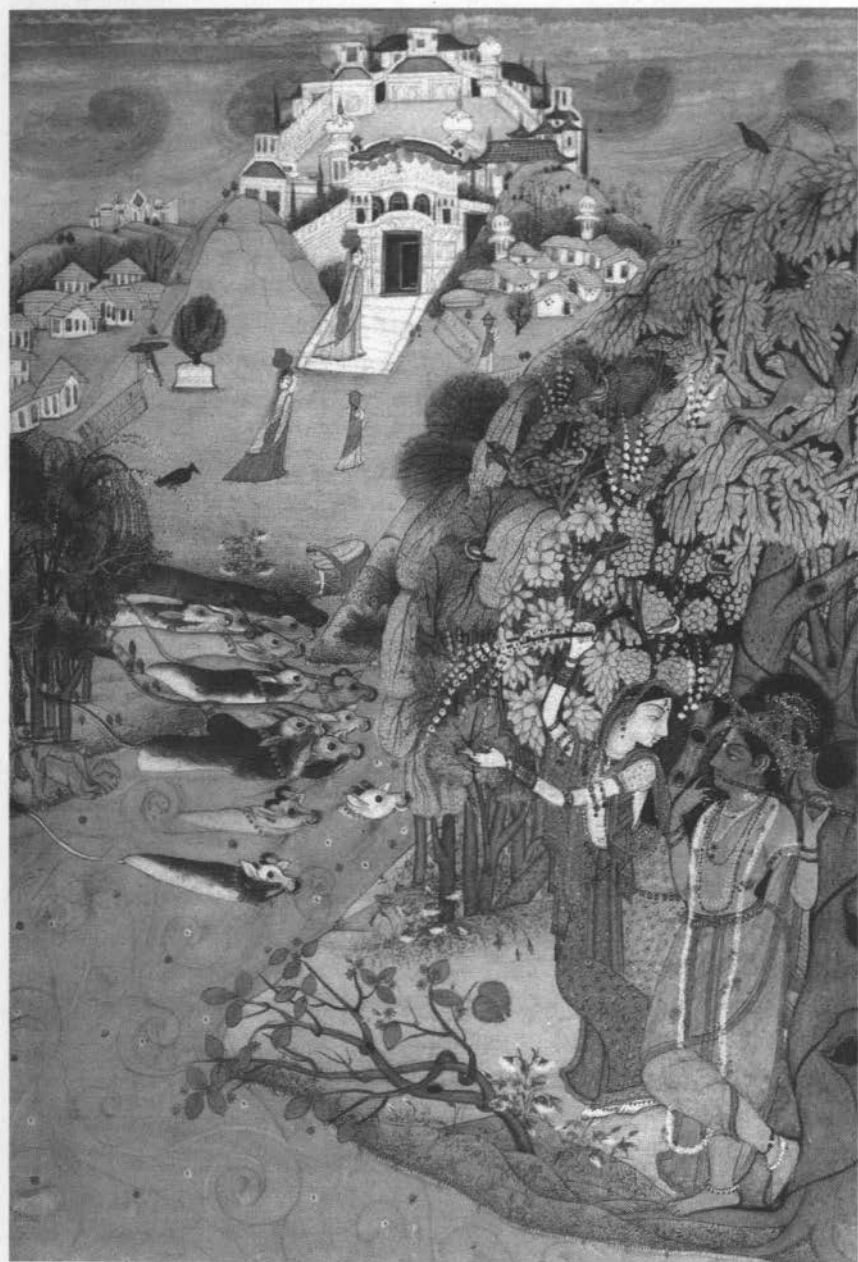
*The Gopīs' Song Inspired by Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Flute (7-20)*

*The Gopīs said:* 7. The supreme fulfillment of having eyes is this and nothing else — to drink with one's eyes the face of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Rāma as they, at the start of their trek with the cows and their friends the cowherds, cast loving glances around while sounding the flute. 8. Singing at times amidst a circle of Gopas, like two great actors on a stage, adorned with blue and yellow clothes and decorated with tender mango leaves, peacock feathers and bunches of flowers tucked in their curly locks. Lilies fastened to their ears, a garland of blue lotuses on the neck, and play-lotuses in the hand. 9. O Gopīs! What meritorious act has this flute performed, to have the privilege of imbibing the

pure essence of the nectar flowing from Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lips without any restriction — a boon denied even to Lakṣmī who has to be content with drinking what is left over by the flute! The lakes that nourish the trees are expressing their rapture with blooming lotuses on their surface, while these bamboo trees, participating in the good fortune of the flute, as worthy relatives, are shedding tears of joy in the shape of nectar from their flowers even as the elders of a family are delighted to find their child enjoying the grace of the Lord. 10. O sister! This Vṛndāvana augments the reputation of the earth because of the grace that the tread of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's auspicious feet have conferred on it. It has become a region where the mountain valleys are filled with creatures, all standing still, absorbed at the sight of the dances of peacocks enraptured with the music of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's flute. 11. Fortunate indeed are these does, though unintelligent by nature. For, on hearing the music of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's flute they, along with their mates, receive the gloriously bedecked Śrī Kṛṣṇa, offering him their love-soaked glances in worship. 12. Seeing Śrī Kṛṣṇa possessing a form and demeanour that delight the minds of women, and hearing the unique melodies that he brings forth from his flute, the celestial damsels traveling in the skies in their aerial cars, are bewitched, so much so that they stand dazed with their garments loosened and flowers fallen from their disarrayed tresses, 13. Look at these cows! With uplifted ears like drinking cups, they are imbibing the nectar of the flute-music flowing from Śrī Kṛṣṇa's mouth. And lo! these calves, still retaining the milk unswallowed and grass in their mouths, stand pinned to the spot shedding tears of joy and looking steadfastly at the Lord, as if they are drinking him through the eyes and embracing him in their hearts. 14. O mother! Most of these birds in this forest must be sages in disguise! For, see how they have perched themselves on the branches of these trees with sprouting leaves to get a full view of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and how, with eyes unblinking and voices still, they are listening to the enthralling strains of his flute, all other sounds having altogether ceased for

them. 15. It looks that the flow of the river is slackening by the formation of whirlpools of amorous sentiment formed in her by the strains of Śrī Kṛṣṇa 's flute. With the offerings of lotus flowers brought in her wavy hands, she seems to cover the Lord's feet and hold them to her breast in embrace. 16. Seeing Śrī Kṛṣṇa with Rāma grazing cattle in the hot sun and playing on their flutes, a cloud recognizing him as a friend because of their common mission of relieving the sufferings of the world appears above them as an umbrella and sends down a shower of flowers in the form of a mild drizzle out of its abounding love for him. 17. Fortunate indeed are these tribal women of the forest who, on seeing Śrī Kṛṣṇa's saffron-colored foot marks on the grass, have love kindled in their hearts, and who satisfy the same by rubbing on their faces and breasts that saffron powder that has fallen from his feet, on which it had stuck in the course of his amorous sports with his dear ones. 18. Surely, my friends, this Govardhana mountain is the greatest of the Lord's servants! For it has the privilege of enjoying the supreme bliss of the contact of the feet of Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and of honouring them, along with their cows and cowherd boys, with all the requisites like the fresh and pure water of its cascades, excellent pasture, caves providing shelter, tubers, roots and fruits. 19. O friends! How wonderful is this! Accompanied by cow-herd boys and equipped with ropes of various sizes used by cow-herds, Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa are leading the cows from one forest to another, releasing ravishing strains from their flutes, hearing which mobile creatures become motionless through absorption, and immobile ones like trees show signs of motion, thrilling with joy. 20. Describing thus the sports of the Lord who moved about in Vṛndāvana, the Gopīs had their minds absorbed in him.





## The stealing of the Gopīs' clothes

### *Gopīs' Worship of Goddess Kātyāyāni (1-4)*

Śrī Śuka said: 1. At the beginning of the Hemanta (winter) season the maidens of Vraja observed the vows connected with the worship of Kātyāyāni subsisting only on sacrificial food. 2-3. O King! Bathing in the river at sunrise, they installed a sand image of the Devi on the bank of the Kālindī and worshipped Her with sandal paste, fragrant flowers, incense, lighted lamps, tender leaves, fruits, cereals, and food offerings of various kinds. 4. "O Devi Kātyāyāni! Thou mighty cosmic power and mistress of all! Deign to make Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the darling of Nanda, my husband. My salutations to Thee!" Repeating this Mantra, these maidens of Vraja worshipped the Devi.

### *Śrī Kṛṣṇa whisking away their Clothes: The Gopīs put to the Test (5-12)*

5. For a month they worshipped the Devi in this way with their minds and hearts set on Śrī Kṛṣṇa, praying that they might get him as their husband. 6. Every day they would wake up at dawn, group themselves, and march to the Kālindī hand in hand, singing aloud songs on Śrī Kṛṣṇa. 7. One day as usual they deposited their clothes on the riverbank and began to sport joyously in the water singing songs glorifying Śrī Kṛṣṇa. 8. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the worshipful Lord and the Master of all Yoga, on knowing about the worship that these maidens were performing, went to the spot that day surrounded by his comrades in order to bestow on the girls the fruits of their rites. 9. Collecting all their clothes, he quickly went up a Kadamba tree nearby, and laughing with the boys, said to the maidens mockingly: 10. "Girls! You may come here and each, take her own raiment. I am not joking. I want to help you, who have been weakened so much by your fasts and other observances. 11. I have never spoken an

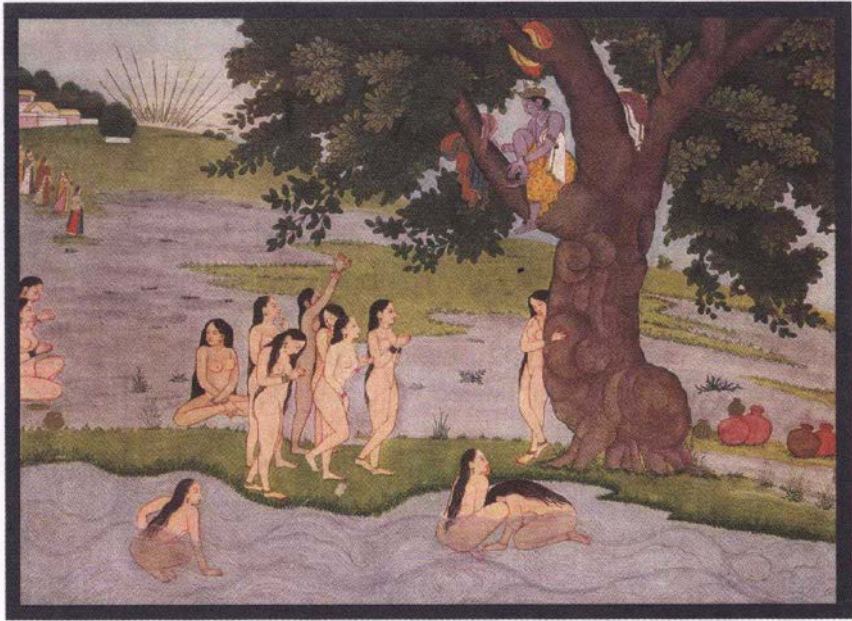
untruth; these my friends will bear witness. Come singly or in groups and receive the clothes." 12. Hearing these jesting words of the Lord, the Gopīs, were overwhelmed with love, looked smiling bashfully at one another but did not come out of the water.

*Restoration of the Clothes (13-28)*

13. Taken aback by these shockingly jocular words of Govinda, the Gopīs who were shivering in neck-deep water pleaded: 14. "O respected one! Pray do no wrong by us. Such behaviour does not befit one who is a son of Nanda, our chief, one who is so deeply loved and held in such high esteem in Vraja. We are shivering with cold. Please give back the clothes. 15. O dark-complexioned one! O paragon of beauty! We are your handmaids, ready to do your bidding. But give us our clothes, O, knower of Dharma. Or else we shall complain to our chieftain, your father!"

*The Lord said:* 16. "If you are my handmaids and if you will do my bidding, then do as I say. Come up here smiling, and each receive her garment." 17. Then all these girls, weakened by fast and shivering with cold, came out of the water covering their private parts with their palms. 18. The worshipful Lord pleased with the pure heart of these young maidens, put the clothes on his shoulder and said smiling: 19. "You are observing a vow and yet you are bathing in the river without any garment. This is a transgression against the deities. To atone for this you have to place both your hands in salutation on the crown of your head and then make full prostration on the ground. After that you will receive your clothes." 20. Learning from the Lord's words that it is a violation of the vow to bathe nude in the holy river, they, in order to correct their mistake and complete the vow, made prostrations before him who is the bestower of the fruits of all vows, observances and rites. For, he is the antidote to all sins and imperfections. 21. Seeing them thus prostrating, the all-merciful Lord, the son of Devakī, was highly





The stealing of the garments of the Gopīs ( Pahari School )

gracious to them for their act of absolute self-surrender and gave them their clothes. 22. Their clothes were stolen; they were deceived by being told that it was against the rules of the vow to bathe nude in the river; they were stripped of all shame when they were asked to receive their clothes; they were mocked at when they were asked to accept a joke as truth; they were treated like toys in being asked to hold their hands in salutation and to prostrate. In spite of all this they did not feel the least resentment because it gave them the bliss of communion with their Lord. 23. Having put on their clothes they did not move on from the place. They only stood there stealing bashful glances at the Lord, their minds being enthralled and captivated by his proximity. 24. Knowing that the object of these girls in observing the vows and worship was to be blessed with a place at his feet, the worshipful Lord, (who had once allowed himself



to be tied with a cord by his mother and thus demonstrated his love for his devotees), said to them as follows: 25. "O virtuous girls! I have understood that the object you have in mind is to serve me. It has my approval and it will therefore materialise soon. 26. Desire for sensual enjoyment directed towards me with complete absorption in me will not end in sensual enjoyment. Just as grain boiled or fried loses its capacity for germination, association with me destroys the sensuous nature of passion. 27. O you paragons of virtue! You go back to Vraja now. The object with which you observed this worship of the Goddess will before long be fulfilled. You will soon sport with me on moonlit autumnal nights."

*Śrī Śuka said:* 28. Having attained their object, these young girls, as directed by the Lord, returned to Vraja with great difficulty, having their minds absorbed in the contemplation of the Lord.

29. One day Śrī Kṛṣṇa accompanied by other Gopas and along with Balarāma happened to go a considerable distance away from Vṛndāvana while pasturing the cows. 30. Perceiving the trees holding an umbrella as it were with their tops to protect him from the scorching sun, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said to the Gopas: 31-32. "O StokaKṛṣṇa! O Amśu! O Śrīdāmā! O Subala, Arjuna! O powerful Viśāla, Rṣabha! O Tejasvī, O Devaprastha! O Varūthapa! Look at these noble beings the trees that live solely for the sake of others, bearing wind, rain, heat, snow, etc. themselves, but protecting us from them. 33. Lo! How enviable is a birth like that of these trees providing sustenance to all creatures in every way. No one seeking sustenance from them has to go away disappointed, just like the needy seeking help from good men. 34. They fulfill the wants of men and other creatures with their leaves, flowers, fruits, shadow, roots, bark, timber, sweet-smelling sap, ashes, wood and tender shoots. 35. Man's life in this world is meaningful and fruitful to the extent that his energies, wealth, intelligence and speech are utilised for the good of others." 36. Speaking thus, Śrī Kṛṣṇa with the cowherds

walked to the Yamunā through groves of trees whose branches were bending with their load of clusters of young leaves, blossoms and fruits. 37. O King! They then led the cows to drink of the pure, cool and healthy waters of the Yamunā and themselves drank to their heart's content. 38. Pasturing the cows at will in the grove on the bank of the Yamunā, until they themselves became quite weary and hungry. The Gopas then spoke to Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa as follows. •

## The redemption of some Brāhmaṇa women

### *The Ritualistic Brāhmaṇas (1-12)*

*The Gopās said:* 1. O Rāma the powerful! O Śrī Kṛṣṇa the exterminator of the wicked! We are overpowered by hunger. Do something to relieve it.

*Śrī Śuka said:* 2. Thus requested by the gopas, Śrī Kṛṣṇa who sought to shower his Grace on certain Brāhmaṇa women devoted to him, replied as follows: 3. "Here there are some Brāhmaṇas devoted to the Vedas, who are engaged in a long-drawn sacrifice called Āṅgīrasa with a view to attain heaven. 4. O Gopas! As despatched by us, arrive there and beg food of them, in the names of my venerable brother and myself."

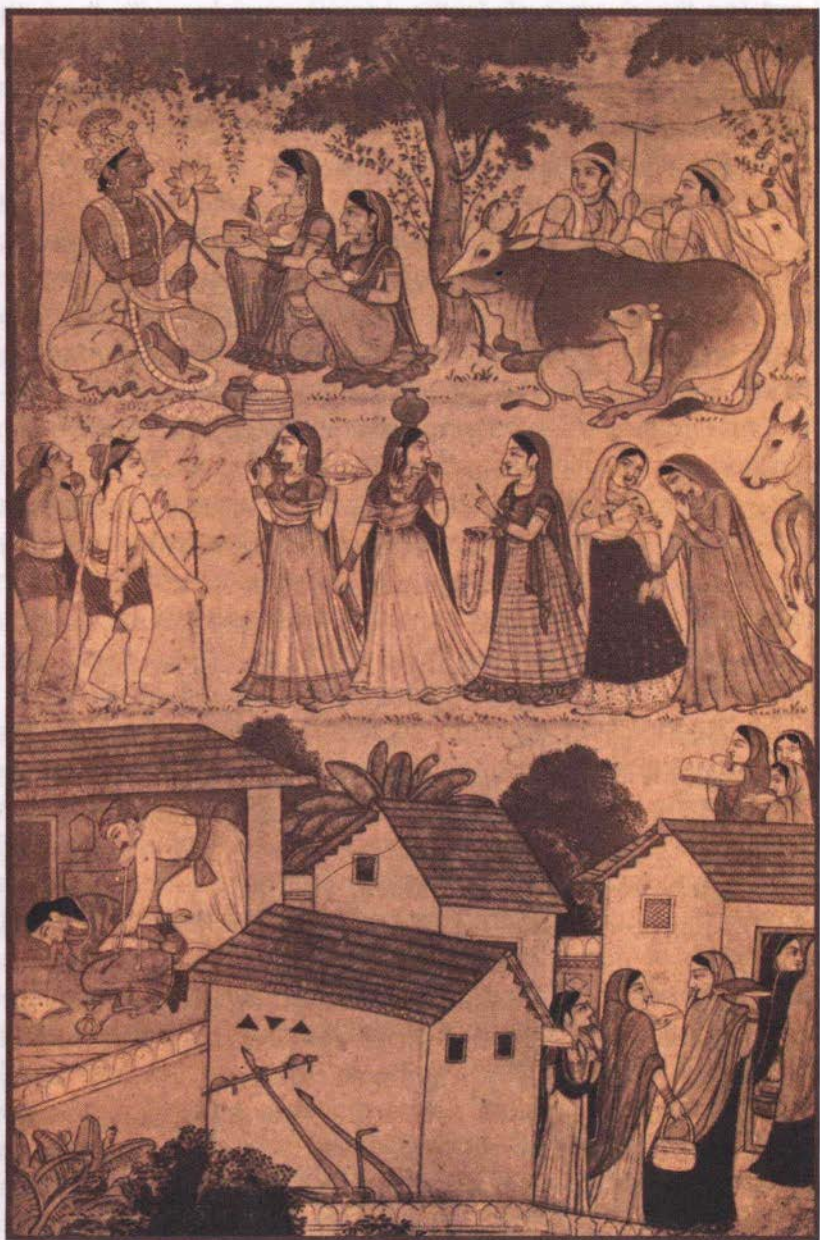
5. As directed by the Lord, they fell in prostration before the Brāhmaṇas joining their hands in salutation, and begged of them as follows: 6. "O holy Brāhmaṇas! We wish you all prosperity and happiness. Know us to be Gopas, come to you as directed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Rāma. 7-9. Those two are standing there, not far away from this place, grazing cows. As they are very hungry, they require some food from you. You are knowers of Dharma. If you have respect and regard for them and also sufficient quantity of food, please be good enough to give some...." Though those Brāhmaṇas heard this request of the Lord conveyed to them, they preferred to pretend that they did not hear it; for they were confirmed ritualists aspiring

for short-lived heavenly enjoyments 10-11. These foolish Brāhmaṇas, could see nothing but an ordinary man in Śrī Kṛṣṇa who in reality was the Supreme Brahman, and the worshipful Lord Mahāviṣṇu incarnated. He alone has manifested as sacrifice with all its parts — the time, place, sacrificial offerings, Mantras, practices, sacrificing priests, sacrificial fire, deities, master of sacrifice and fruits of the sacrifice. 12. As they neither assented nor refused but only kept quiet, as If they had not heard, the Gopas returned disappointed informed Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa accordingly.

*The Joyful Response of the Wives of the Brāhmaṇas (13-23)*

13. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of the universe, laughed at this, and in order to demonstrate the worldly wisdom of persistence even when their prayer had been turned down once, said to them: 14. “Go and inform the wives of those Brāhmaṇas that I and my brother have arrived near their place. They have got great love for me and they really live in me though physically they are in their homes. They will give you whatever rice you need.” 15. So the Gopas went again to the women's quarter in the sacrificial campus where they saw the wives of the sacrificing Brāhmaṇas sitting well dressed and well adorned. Saluting them with humility they said to them as follows: 16. “Salutations to you, the wives of the Brāhmaṇas! Please listen to us. Śrī Kṛṣṇa who is pasturing cattle nearby has sent us here. 17. While pasturing along with Rāma and the Gopas, he has come far away from home. He and his party are very hungry. He requests you to give them some food.”

18. Hearing of Śrī Kṛṣṇa having come so near, the Brāhmaṇa women — who had been ever anxious to have a look at him, their mind having been lured by his stories — were seized with a flurry. 19-20. Their minds being firmly fixed on the Lord through hearing from early days about his deeds and excellences, these women, though obstructed by their husbands, brothers, sons and other relatives, rushed to meet their beloved



Women offering food to Śrī Kṛṣṇa

Lord (as the rivers rush to the ocean), carrying with them the four types of food well-cooked and flavoured. 21. The women saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa with his brother surrounded by Gopa boys, sauntering in a grove on the bank of the Yamunā abounding in Aśoka trees with tender leaves. 22. They saw him — dark in complexion; wearing golden-coloured silk around his loins; adorned in the fashion of a dancer with a garland of wild flowers, peacock feathers, tender leaves and mineral paints; resting one hand on the shoulder of a friend by the side, with the other twirling a play lotus; with blue lilies on his ears, and frontal locks dangling about his smiling cheeks. 23. Now seeing him in front of them — for long had they been hearing about the excellences of the Lord and deriving the highest satisfaction and absorption of mind in him — they drew him through their eyes into the chambers of their hearts and shook off the pain of separation by a spiritual embrace of him, even as men with an egoistic turn of mind are rid of their anguish on embracing an enlightened soul, O king!

*Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Advice to the Women (24-36)*

24. Recognising them as spiritual aspirants of the highest order come to see him renouncing every other desire, Śrī Kṛṣṇa the Supreme Witness of all individual witnessing centres of consciousness (i.e. the Jīvas), said to them with a smiling face: 25. "O fortunate ladies! You are welcome. Please take your seats. What shall we do for you? That you have come to see us befits your state of mind. 26. People of sound understanding, who perceive what constitutes their real good, cultivate unmotivated and unflagging devotion to me who am the dearest Self of all. 27. Who is there dearer than he by whose association one's Prāṇa, mind, relatives, body, wife, children, wealth etc., become dear? 28. Being already endowed with devotion, you may now go back to the sacrificial campus, so that your husbands, the house-bound Brāhmaṇas engaged in sacrifice, may complete their rites, for which your presence is needed."

*The women said:* 29. "O All-pervading One! Do not be so



merciless to us who, overcoming all the obstructions placed before us by relatives, have rushed to you in order that we may wait at thy feet to bear on our heads all the Tulasi garlands that are set aside by thy feet, as they fall at them in heaps. Deign to fulfill thy own promise of accepting all devotees who make absolute surrender at thy feet. 30. There is no chance of any of our relatives — husbands, parents, sons, brothers and others — taking us back under their care, aś we have mortally offended them in coming over here. It behoves thee therefore to deal with us, who have offered ourselves body, mind and soul at thy feet, in such a manner that we shall not have any other way of life than thy service in future."

*The Lord said:* 31. "You will not be blamed by your husbands, parents, brothers, sons or the world at large for coming to me, and even the Devas will praise you. 32. Physical contact is not needed for the growth and fulfillment of spiritual love. You keep your mind fixed on me always, and you will attain to me before long." *Śrī Śuka said:* 33. Being thus instructed, the wives of those Brāhmaṇas returned to the sacrificial campus. Their husbands showed them no ill will, but helped by them, completed the sacrifice. 34. There was, however, one woman who had been sternly debarred by her husband from going to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. She, through meditation on him, clasped the Lord in her heart in the form she had pictured him therein from what she had heard of him and, in the process, abandoned her body, which is but a product of Karma.

35. The worshipful Lord then distributed that cooked rice of four kinds brought by the wives of the Brāhmaṇas among his cowherd friends and he too partook of it. 36. Thus, the Lord who had taken a human body for his divine play delighted the cows, Gopas and Gopīs by His personal charm, speech and deeds.

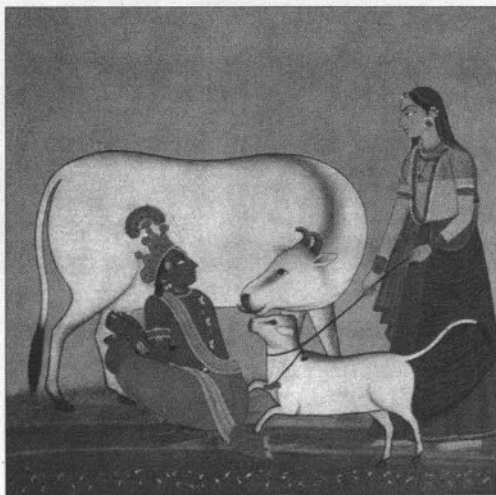
### *The Conversion of the Brāhmaṇas (37-52)*

37. Those sacrificing Brāhmaṇas too, on reflection, realised

that they did a great mistake in rejecting the request of these great ones who were none but the Lord taken human forms, and they fell into a mood of repentance. 38. Seeing their wives so full of the highest form of unworldly devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and themselves without the least of it, they began to condemn themselves thus: 39. "Vain is our high birth with eligibility for the threefold sacrament; vain, our learning, austerities, vast knowledge of the Śāstras and our skill in rituals. For, with all these, we have no devotion to the Lord! 40. The Lord's Māyā infatuates even the Yogis. See how we, Brāhmaṇas, who are expected to teach others, have no awareness of what is good for ourselves. 41. Look at the boundless devotion of our womenfolk to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the world teacher, by virtue of which they have been able to cut asunder Death's stranglehold called attachment to home! 42. These, our women-folk, are unlike us, without any of those purificatory rites and ceremonies of the twice-born ones such as *Upanayana*. They have not stayed at the Guru's house for education. They have no observance of ceremonial purity. They have performed none of the auspicious Vedic rites. 43. Still they are possessed of unswerving devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the destroyer of Avidya and the master of all Yogis, whereas we, with all our education and sacramental qualifications, are without it. 44. Oh, how wonderful to contemplate that the Lord, the goal and support of the holy, should have sent a reminder and warning to us through the Gopas to us who, without knowing our real interest, are immersed in domestic life! 45. Otherwise, what reason can there be for Him — the self-fulfilled, the bestower of Moksha, the Lord of all — to come to us, insignificant creatures, with this request for food? 46. He, for serving whom Śrī Devi, the goddess of fortune and beauty and auspiciousness, gave up all other Divinities and abandoned also her own habit of fickleness — that He had to beg for a little food will surprise everyone, unless one understands that He did all that to bless us. 47-48. He constitutes all the parts of Yajna — its location, time, materials for offering,



Mantra, Tantra, sacrificial priests, sacrificial fires, deities, master of sacrifice, the whole sacrifice and the fruits of sacrifice. He is verily Viṣṇu Himself, the master of all Yogis, born in the clan of the Yadus. We have heard all this, but the dull-witted creatures that we are, we could not recognise Him. 49. But in another sense, we too are indeed fortunate in having as wives women of this calibre; because on account of their devotion, we too have developed firm devotion to Śrī Hari. 50. He by whose Māyā we are caught up in, and overpowered by, adherence to ritualistic disciplines — to that Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the unfading light of Consciousness and the centre of all divine excellences, our salutations! 51. It behoves the Lord, the cause of all causes and the controller of Māyā, to pardon the improper acts of persons like us who are under the infatuation of His Māyā and could not therefore know His prowess." 52. But these Brāhmaṇas, though repentant of their disrespectful conduct towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa and though eager to behold Him, did not stir out, afraid as they were of Kāṁsa.





Sri Krishna holding Mount Govardhan, by the artist Nihal Chand  
(Kishangarh, about 1755 )

## The worship and lifting of mount Govardhana\*

... At this season, when the heavens were clear and bright with stars, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, once repairing to Vraja, saw the inhabitants engaged in the celebration of a sacrifice in honour of Śakra.

Beholding all the cowherds busily and anxiously engaged in making preparation, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, gifted with high intellect, as if out of curiosity, asked the elders, saying, "What festival of Śakra is this, in which you are taking so much delight?" To him thus asking, the cowherd thus lovingly said — "Śatakratu, the king of the celestials, is the lord of the clouds and waters; ordered by him clouds pour down water on earth, by which the grain is produced, on which we and other embodied beings live and by which we please the gods. By this too these cows bear calves and give milk and are happy and well nourished. Wherever the clouds pour waters, the earth is neither barren of corn, nor bare of verdure, nor is man stricken with hunger. Having drunk the milk of the earth by means of the rays of the sun, Indra, the giver of water, pours it again on earth for the sustenance of all the worlds. For this reason all sovereign princes offer, with delight, sacrifices to Indra at the end of the rainy season, and so also do we, and so do the other people.

*Parāśara said:* — Having heard the words of the cow-herd Nanda regarding the worship of Śakra, Dāmodara...said, "We, father, are neither cultivators of the soil, nor merchants — we are sojourners in the forests and cows are our gods. There are four divisions of knowledge logical, spiritual, practical, and political. Hear from me, what is the practical science. Agriculture, commerce and tending of cattle — the knowledge of these three professions, O noble Sire, is the practical science. Agriculture is

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\*Adapted from Viṣṇu Mahāpurāṇam.

the means of subsistence to the cultivators, buying and selling to the traders, and tending of cattle is our subsistence. The practical science has thus been divided into three branches. The object that is cultivated by anyone should be to him, his chief deity — he must worship that, for that is his benefactor. O father, the man who worships another's deity, receiving the fruit from his own, does not obtain a prosperous situation either in this world or in the next.

Where the land is no longer cultivated there are limits assigned, beyond which begins the forest; the forests are bounded by the hills and so far do our limits extend. We are not confined within doors or walls, we have neither fields nor homes; we wander about happily wherever we like in our wagons. ...We are thus bound to worship the mountains and offer sacrifices to cattle. Cattle and mountains are our gods, Brāhmaṇas offer worship with prayer; cultivators of the earth worship their land-marks; but we, who tend our cattle in the forests and mountains, should worship them and our kine.

Let prayer and offerings be then made to the mountain Govardhana... Let milk be collected from all stations and let us feed Brāhmaṇas and all others who wish to partake of it — without discriminating. When the oblations have been presented and the Brāhmaṇas have been fed let the cowherds circumambulate the cows decorated with garlands of autumnal flowers. If the cow-herds pay attention to these suggestions, they will secure the favour of the mountain, of the cattle and also mine."

When Nanda and other cowherds heard the speech of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, their faces were brilliant with joy and they said that he had spoken well. "You have judged alright, child," exclaimed they "we will do exactly as you have said and offer worship to the mountain."

Accordingly the inhabitants of Vraja worshiped the mountain presenting to it curds and milk and other things; and they fed hundreds and thousands of Brāhmaṇas and many other guests who came to the ceremony even as Śrī Kṛṣṇa had directed; and

when they had made their offerings they circumambulated the cows and the bulls that cried as loud as roaring clouds.

Upon the summit of Govardhana, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in a new gigantic form, stood and said, "I am the mountain" and partook of the food presented by the cow-herds; whilst in his own form as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he ascended the hill with other cow-herds and worshipped his other self. Having promised them many blessings the mountain-person of Śrī Kṛṣṇa disappeared, and the ceremony being finished the cowherds returned to their homes...

*Soon, however, — in the words of Śrī Śuka\* — ...clouds started tormenting Nanda's Vraja with great violence, by their sharp driving showers. (8) Shining brightly with flashes of lightning and roaring with rolling thunder and driven by tempestuous winds, they showered hailstones. (9) While the clouds were incessantly pouring forth torrents thick as columns, the earth flooded by volumes of flowing water could not be seen with its distinction of high and low lands. (10) Seized with a shiver through excessive driving showers and tempestuous gales and afflicted with cold, the cow-herds and the cowherdresses sought Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Protector of cows as their refuge. (11) Oppressed with the torrential downpour and fully covering their heads and their children with their trunks, they sought shivering, the soles of the feet of the Lord and prayed as follows: (12) "O Śrī Kṛṣṇa, O Enchanter of souls, O highly blessed Lord, be pleased to protect the bovine race — which has its protector in You alone — as well as ourselves, O Lover of Your devotees!" (13) Perceiving the animals being beaten by severe hailstorm and getting benumbed, Śrī Hari said to Himself, "...this most terrible hailstorm accompanied by a tempestuous gale is out of season and will cause our destruction. (15) I shall employ an effective remedy against this...and shall accordingly by my own divine power protect Vraja, which has sought shelter in me, looks upon me as its Protector, nay, which constitutes my own family! This is my firm resolve." (18)*

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\* Adapted from Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa.

Having observed thus, and uprooting with one hand Mount Govardhana even as a child would pull out a mushroom, Śrī Kṛṣṇa sport fully lifted it up. (19) Then the Lord said to the cowherds, "O mother, father, the people of Vraja, comfortably take shelter in the cavity beneath the mountain along with your cattle-wealth. (20) Do not fear that the mountain will fall from my hand on this spot. Away with the fear of storm and rain, since your protection against them has already been ensured." (21) Their mind having been reassured in that way by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, they entered the cavity and made themselves comfortable there, according to the space available along with their cattle-wealth, ring of bullock-carts and dependants (viz., servants, priests and so on). (22) Under the astonished and delighted gaze of the aforesaid inhabitants of Vraja, who stood disregarding the pangs of hunger and thirst as well as the need for personal comfort, Śrī Kṛṣṇa held up the mountain for seven days and did not stir from his position. (23) Soon the clouds stopped pouring down their incessant showers. (24) Seeing the sky clear of clouds, the sun risen and the violent downpour and tempest stopped, Śrī Kṛṣṇa the Bearer of Govardhana, spoke to the Gopās as follows: (25) "Dismiss all fear and go out, O cowherds, along with your womenfolk, wealth and children. The storm and rain have ceased and the rivers are almost emptied of their water." (26) Each taking his cattle-wealth, the aforesaid cowherds as well as the womenfolk, children and the aged thereupon gradually issued forth, their goods loaded on their carts. (27) The almighty Lord too sport fully set down the mountain as before in its own place, all the creatures looking on with wonder. (28)

Overflowing with an up rush of love, the people of Vraja approached Him with embraces and other loving gestures and the Gopīs joyously exhibited their loving regard for Him by sprinkling Him with curds and unbroken rice and showered their choice blessings on Him. (29) Overpowered with affection, Yaśodā, Rohiṇī, Nanda and Balarāma, the foremost of the powerful,

hugged Śrī Kṛṣṇa and pronounced their blessings on Him, (30) Highly gratified, hosts of gods, the Sādhyaś as well as the Siddhas, Gandharvas and Cāraṇas in heaven glorified Him and showered volleys of flowers on Him, O ruler of the earth! (31) Prompted by the gods conchs and kettledrums sounded in the heavens; while Gandharva chiefs — the foremost of whom was Tumburu—sang, O protector of men! (32) Surrounded by loving cowherds and accompanied by Balarāma, O king, the said Śrī Hari went back from that place to Vraja. Full of delight the cowherd women too, returned to their respective homes, celebrating such exploits as the uplifting of Govardhana of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who had captivated their heart. (33)

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### Nanda speaks to the cowherds about Śrī Kṛṣṇa's divinity.

*Śrī Śuka began again:* Much astonished to witness such superhuman feats of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the aforesaid Gopās, who were ignorant of his power, gathered together and talked as follows: (1) Since these exploits are most wonderful indeed on the part of a mere boy, how could he deserve a birth among rustics, which is so unworthy of himself? (2) A boy of seven, how could he keep on holding for a week with one hand a big mountain as sport fully as a lordly elephant would hold a lotus? (3) By him as a mere babe with its eyes half closed was sucked the breast of the mighty Pūtana along with her life, even as the lifespan of a living organism is gradually swallowed up by Time! (4) Struck by the fore part of his feet even as he — only three months old — lay underneath a cart kicking up his feet and crying, the cart fell topsy-turvy! (5) Being carried away through the sky by a demon while squatting on the floor as an infant of one year, he

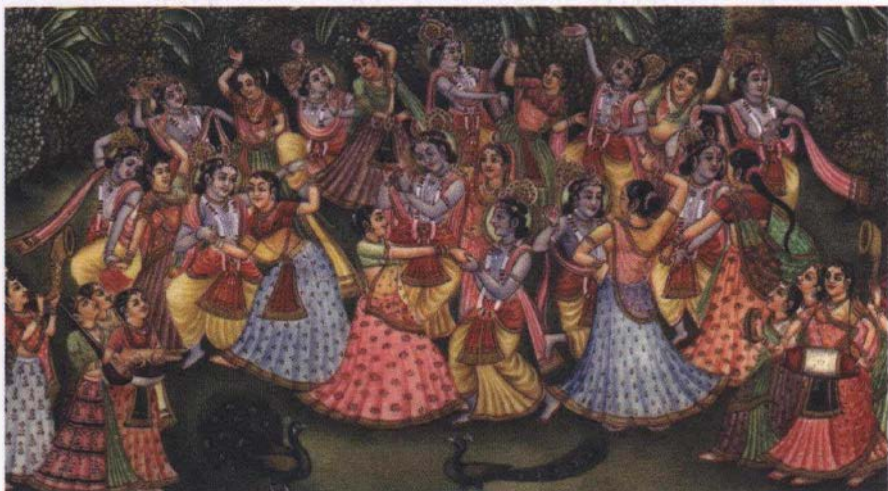


killed the demon, Trṇāvarta, who was feeling oppressed on account of his being caught by the neck! (6) Tied by the mother to a mortar on the grounds of theft of butter on one occasion, and crawling on all fours between the two Arjuna trees he caused them to fall down! (7) Duly pasturing calves in the forest, accompanied by Balarāma and surrounded by other boys, he tore asunder by the bill, with his arms, his enemy in the form of a heron that sought to kill him. (8) Having killed another demon, who, in the guise of a calf had found his way into his herd of calves with intent to kill him, he sportfully caused with the carcass a number of Kapittha trees to fall by dashing it against the Kapittha trees! (9) Slaying the demon Dhenuka, disguised as a donkey, and his kinsfolk while accompanied by Balarāma, he rendered safe the forest of palm trees (the home of Dhenuka); which was rich with ripe fruits. (10) Getting the terrible demon Pralamba slain by the powerful Balarāma, he rescued the cattle of Vraja as well as the cowherds from a forest fire. (11) Having subdued the most venomous Kāliya, a ruler of serpents, and rid it of haughtiness, he forcibly expelled it from the pool inhabited by it and made the waters of the Yamunā free from poison! (12) The love of us all, which have our abode in Vraja, for this boy of yours, O Nanda, is such as cannot be easily given up and his love for us too is quite natural. How is it? (13) A boy of seven years lifting up a big mountain — how inconceivable is this! It is for this reason that our suspicion is aroused, O ruler of Vraja, with regard to your son being God Himself. (14)

*Nanda replied:* Pray hear my statement, O Gopas, which is what the sage Garga told me concerning this boy; and let your suspicion about the child melt away. (15) Garga said: Taking diverse forms indeed in each Yuga, this boy has manifested in his body three different colours, viz., white, red and yellow; this time he has assumed a dark complexion. (16) Some time in the past this son of yours was born in the house of Vasudeva; hence the wise who know this truth will duly designate him as the glorious Vāsudeva (son of Vasudeva). (17) There are nu-

merous names and forms of your son, conforming to his excellences and actions. I alone know them. (18) The delight of the cowherds, nay, of the entire Gokula, this boy will bring you happiness. By his help you will easily surmount all difficulties. (19) Being protected and strengthened by him during a period of anarchy in former times, O lord of Vraja, pious souls, tormented by robbers, eventually conquered them. (20) Enemies cannot overpower those highly blessed men who offer love to this boy, any more than demons can prevail over those whose cause has been espoused by Lord Viṣṇu. (21) Therefore, this son of yours, O Nanda, is a compeer of Lord Nārāyaṇa in point of excellences, splendour, fame and glory, so that there is nothing to be wondered at his exploits. (22) Ever since, having directly exhorted me thus, Garga returned to his abode, I have recognized Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who has ever rid us of affliction, to be no other than a part manifestation of Lord Nārāyaṇa. (23) Having heard the aforesaid statement of Nanda recapitulating the words of Garga, the inhabitants of Vraja, who had already witnessed and heard of the glory of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, possessed as he was of infinite energy, felt rejoiced and worshipped Nanda as well as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, now that their astonishment was gone. (24) May Śrī Kṛṣṇa the Ruler of cows be gracious to us — Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who, when Indra, sent down heavy showers accompanied by strokes of lightning, hailstorms and tempestuous winds, was moved with pity to see the whole of Vraja with its cowherds, cattle and womenfolk in distress and depending solely on Himself and, smilingly uprooting with one hand mount Govardhana, even as a child would pull up a mushroom, held it up and thus protected Vraja....





Rāsālīlā

## The Rāsa-līlā: the Gopīs meeting the Lord\*

### *The Call of the Flute (1-11)*

*Śrī Śuka said:* 1. Noting the advent of the Śarat season whose nights are fragrant with the Mallikā flowers in bloom, Śrī Kṛṣṇa too, assuming his Yogāmayā, decided to enact his long-promised play with the Gopīs. 2. The moon rose giving relief to people from heat and gently painting the face of the eastern horizon crimson with his rays, as a lover long-separated from his beloved would sprinkle her face with Kumkum (vermilion) dust. 3. Seeing the crimson disc of the moon, full like the fresh Kumkum-dusted face of Rāmā herself, and the wood of Vṛndāvana beautified by the pleasant rays of that moon, Śrī Kṛṣṇa sounded his flute, ravishing the hearts of all women. 4. Hearing those love-inspiring notes, the minds of the women of Vraja flew to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. With their earrings dangling in their agitation, they hurried to the tryst with their lover, but no single one among them knew the movements of the others because of their total absorption in Śrī Kṛṣṇa. 5. (In their haste and in the forgetfulness of absorption, the Gopīs left the duties on hand and hurried towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa.) Some engaged in milking put down the milking pail and ran; some kept the milk on the hearth for warming, but forgot to take it down; and others did not remember to remove the pot of porridge on the stove. 6. Those engaged in serving food, those feeding infants at their breast, those attending to the personal needs of their husbands, those taking their food — all gave up their chores and hurried to Kṛṣṇa's presence. 7. Some were anointing themselves, some bathing, some applying collyrium to the eyes, some dressing up and decorating themselves in a wrong order — all stopped their engagements on hand and hurried to Kṛṣṇa's presence. 8. Though obstructed by husbands, parents, brothers and other relatives, they could not be stopped

\* Adapted from Srimad Bhagavata.

as their minds had been snatched away by Govinda and were completely absorbed in him: 9. Those who were shut up in their homes and could not come out closed their eyes, with their minds absorbed in Śrī Kṛṣṇa through meditation. 10-11. With all their sins burnt up by the unbearable heat of separation from the Beloved, and with the mind pacified and purified by embracing the Beloved in meditation, they attained to the Paramātmā, though they looked upon Him as a lover. Their Karmas being exhausted, they gave up their physical bodies then and there.

*The king Parīkṣit said:* 12. O holy one! They knew Śrī Kṛṣṇa only as their lover, not as Brahman. How was the cessation of the cycle of embodied existences possible in the case of the Gopīs, whose mind was swayed by the three Guṇas?

*Śrī Śuka said:* 13. I have answered this question of yours earlier (in the 7th Skandha) how Śiśupāla, the king of the Che-dis, attained liberation though he opposed Śrī Kṛṣṇa. If an enemy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa can be thus blessed, why not his lovers? 14. The Supreme Being changeless, immeasurable, unseen, transcending matter but regulating its course, adopts an individuality only to bestow salvation on Jivas. 15. All those who constantly cherish Śrī Hari through any sentiment — sexual passion, anger, fear, affection, sense of unity, or devotion (Bhakti) — they all attain oneness with Him. 16. Do not think that this is impossible to the Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa, the Unborn, the Supreme Being and the master of all powers. For, it is He that gives salvation to all beings.

### *The Lord dissuading the Gopīs (17-30)*

17. Seeing all those women of Vraja assembled near him, the Lord, the master of speech that he was, bewitched them by His elegant expressions. *The Bhagavān said:* 18. "Welcome to you, good ladies! In what way can I oblige you? I hope everything is well in Vraja. What is it that brings you all together here? 19. O fair ones! Night is naturally awe-inspiring. It is a time when dangerous animals move about. So return to your homes in Vraja soon. It is

not befitting that women linger in a place like this. 20. Not finding you at home, your parents, sons, brothers and husbands, will be searching for you everywhere. It is not proper for you to give trouble to your relatives. 21. You have now seen this blossoming forest, illumined with the rays of the full moon and adorned with the tender leaves of trees waving before the sport of breezes from the Yamunā. 22. So now, you please hurry back to Vraja. You are devoted wives having husbands at home to attend to. Besides, your babies and the calves may be crying out of hunger. They have to be fed. 23. If, however, you have come here out of attraction inspired by love of me, it is not much to be wondered at. For all creatures find delight in me. 24. You good ladies! Don't you know that the highest duty of women consists in attending to their husbands or their parents and in looking after the children? 25. A husband should not be abandoned by women aspiring for higher regions be he depraved, unlucky, decrepit, dull-witted, ailing or poverty-stricken, unless of course he is a reprobate. 26. "O devoted wives! To have relation with a paramour is a bar to heaven and a stain on one's reputation. It is worthless, dangerous, and fearful. 27. The devotional discipline of hearing about me, singing about me, etc., will generate genuine spiritual love in you better than by being by my side. So please go home."

*Śrī Śuka said:* 28. Hearing these words of Govinda, contrary to their desire, the Gopīs became sorrow-stricken and extremely despondent. 29. In dead silence they stood heavy with sorrow, their faces bent down, their red berry-like lips dried by long hot breaths, their toes listlessly drawing lines on the ground, and their eyes shedding collyrium-tinged tears which were washing away the saffron dust on their breasts. 30. When these Gopīs, who had abandoned all else for the sake of the Lord, heard from their him their most beloved One, words of indifference unsympathetic to their attitude of love, they, moved by passionate love of him, spoke in reply words choked with sobs generated by despair and anger, after rubbing off the tears that welled up in their eyes.





Rāsamandala

*The Gopīs' Plea (31-41)*

*The Gopīs said:* 31. "O Lord! It behoves thee not to speak so mercilessly. We have abandoned our all to serve thy feet. Accept us as the Supreme Being accepts all who go to Him seeking liberation. Abandon us not, O thou of mysterious ways! 32. Thou, O worshipful one, who art the source of all codes of right conduct, hast reminded us that the natural duty of women consists in the service of their husbands, children and relatives. Let such service be done to you, the almighty Lord, the central theme of all teachings, for thou art the most beloved friend, the dearest object of love, the very Self of all embodied souls. 33. They who are really wise surely find delight in you alone, their own eternally beloved Self; what purpose could be gained through a husband, children and others, who are sources of agony? Therefore be gracious to us, O Supreme Lord; pray do not



frustrate our hopes centred in you for long, O lotus-eyed One. 34. Thy blissful self has stolen away our minds that used to find delight in home life, and has put restraints on our hands and feet that occupied themselves with household work. When our feet refuse to move even an inch from thee, how can we return to Vraja? 35. O dear one! Quench with the flood of nectar flowing from your lips the fire of passion kindled in our breast by your bewitching smiles, loving glances and melodious music. If not, the fire of separation will consume our bodies, and we shall attain to thy feet through force of meditation. 36. The moment from which thou, the beloved of us forest dwellers, permitted us to touch thy feet — the feet which even Ramā could serve only occasionally — from that time it has become impossible for us to stand before any other man. 37. Śrī, the goddess of prosperity and good fortune, whose favour even Devas like Brahmā long for and who has been given by thee an exalted place on thy chest, none the less seeks, along with Tulasi, the contact of the dust at thy feet — even in that dust do we take refuge. 38. O redeemer of all from the life of sin! Be gracious unto us who have come to thee abandoning our hearth and home, and who are intent on thy service, we whose mind is tormented with intense longing awakened by thy charming smile and piercing glances. Make us thy servitors, O jewel among men! 39. Seeing thy face surrounded by thy frontal locks, thy cheeks reflecting the brilliance of thy ear-rings, thy lips dripping honey, thy glances accompanied by thy sweet smile, thy powerful arms that give relief from fear to all suppliants, and thy chest that provides the sole sporting ground for Śrī attracted by all these have we become thy handmaids. 40. Seeing this form that bewitches all the three worlds and creates a thrill of joy even in birds, cows and other animals, and hearing this enthralling melody of thy flute with its ascending and descending notes, who is the woman in all the three worlds that would not be charmed and drawn away from the path of virtue? 41. It is clear that thou hast taken birth in Vraja to give protection to its inhabitants from fear

and sorrow, even as Viṣṇu protects the celestials. Therefore, O friend of the afflicted, stroke with thy cool lotus-like palm the burning breasts and heads of these servitors of thine.

### *Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Disappearance (42-48)*

*Śrī Śuka said:* 42. Hearing this pitiful prayer of the Gopīs, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Master Yogi, smiled, and out of compassion for them proceeded to delight them, in spite of his being absorbed in His own Self all the while. 43. Amidst this assembly of women — all with faces like flowers before the loving glances of the beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa, with his charming movements and still more charming smile revealing the beauty of his jasmine-like teeth, shone in the manner of the moon amidst the stars. 44. He moved about in that woodland as the leader and protector of that concourse of more than a hundred women, praised by them in songs, himself sounding the flute at a high pitch, wearing the Vaijayanti garland made of wild flowers, sauntered about gracing the forest with his bewitching presence. 45. With the Gopīs he went to the snow-like sands of the river and sported with them enjoying the breeze coming across the river carrying the cool water particles and the fragrance of water lilies. 46. By love sports like pulling them near to him and embracing, handling the frontal locks, breasts, thighs and wearing cloth, by impressing nail marks on their bodies, and by his looks and laughter, he inflamed the amorous sentiments of these beauties of Vraja and delighted them thereby. 47. When they found themselves entertained in this way by no less an individual than Śrī Kṛṣṇa, a great personage and possessor of all divine powers, pride entered into the minds of these women and they thought themselves to be the most superior of their kind. 48. Seeing that pride of beauty and a sense of self-importance were developing in them, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who was till then in their midst, suddenly disappeared, with a view to purify them through suffering and make them worthy of his grace.



“ Kṛṣṇa has vanished! ” : Gopīs in distress (Pahari )

## The Gopīs’ quest for Śrī Kṛṣṇa during Rāsa-līlā

### *The Gopīs’ Search in the Forest (1-13)*

*Śrī Śuka said:* 1. The Gopīs, on noticing that Śrī Kṛṣṇa had suddenly vanished from their midst, became distressed as the cow-elephants in a herd would be when their leading tusker is gone. 2. These women, their minds being captivated by and fully absorbed in, the varied features and activities of the Lord — his gait, his love, his smile, his movements, his looks, his attractive conversation, and his various sportive activities — felt a sense of identification with him and imitated His various pastimes. 3. Those beloved ladies of Śrī Kṛṣṇa felt so attracted by his gait, laughter, looks and conversations that they felt themselves to be one with him and imitated his sportive ways and declared they were Śrī Kṛṣṇa. 4. Singing loudly, they moved

from forest to forest in a body in search of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, like demented persons. They enquired of forest trees the whereabouts of that All-pervading Being, who is within and without all entities like the Ākāśa: 5-6. 'O Aśwattha! O Plakṣa! O Nyagrodha! O Kurabaka! O Aśoka! O Nāga! O Punnāga! O Campaka! Did you see the son of Nanda going this way, having stolen our hearts by his smiles and glances of love? Did Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the brother of Rāma, whose smile can steal away the self-possession of even the proudest of women, pass this way? 7. O Auspicious Tulasī! Did you see Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the one dearest to you — the one who carries you in his floral garland along with the honeybees who settle on you by the attraction of your fragrance? 8. O Mālatī! O Mallikā! O Jasmine! Have you seen Mādhava going by, enrapturing you with a casual stroke of his hand? 9. O Cūta! O Priyāla! O Panasa! O Asana! O Kovidāra! O Jambu! O Arka! O Vilva! O Bakula! O Āmra! O Kadamba! O Nīpa! O all ye other trees standing on the banks of the Yamunā for the good of others! Can you tell us about the whereabouts of Śrī Kṛṣṇa — to us who are half-dead, on account of him? 10. O Mother Earth! What great austerity had you performed to deserve this great good fortune? For this horripilation all over your body in the shape of a heavy growth of grass must surely be due to the contact of his feet. Did this contact take place just now as he passed this way? Or is it because of the impress of his feet made in his incarnation as Vāmana when he measured the whole universe with three strides, or is it because of his embracing you in his incarnation as the Cosmic Boar when he lifted you (the earth) up from the nether worlds? 11. O my friend doe, wife of the deer! Did Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the company of his lady-love come here giving the blissful experience of the sight of his face to you? For here we get the sweet smell of the garland of Kunda flowers that our Lord wears, mixed with the fragrance of the saffron powder from its contact with his lady's breasts. 12. O tree! Did Śrī Kṛṣṇa pass this way with one of his hands resting on the shoulder of his ladylove and the other holding a lotus,

followed by a host of honey-bees maddened with the fragrance of his Tulasi garland? Did he care to return your greetings by your low-bending boughs with a loving look at least? Or did he fail in this even, due to his engrossment with his lady? 13. These creepers though they are embracing their husbands, the trees, must surely have been pressed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa with his fingernails as he passed by them; for, as is evident from the fact that they exhibit a thrill of joy in the shape of this abundance of tender leaf-sprouts. Ah! Look at their good fortune! Let us ask them about the whereabouts of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

*The Gopīs in frenzy imitate Śrī Kṛṣṇa. (14-23)*

4. Speaking thus in the fashion of demented persons and engaged in an exhausting search for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Gopīs got so much identified in consciousness with him that they began to enact the various sportive performances of his infancy. 15. One woman acted as Pūtana, while another taking the role of Śrī Kṛṣṇa sucked at her breasts. Another impersonating the crying infant Śrī Kṛṣṇa kicked at one who played the part of the cart. 16. Identifying her self with the wind demon, one Gopī carried away another standing for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Still another began to move about like baby Kṛṣṇa on knees and hands, filling the place with the murmur of mini-bells on girdles and anklets. 17. Two of them impersonated Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and some others, the cowherd boys and calves. Enacting the sports of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, one got 'killed' as Vatsāsura and another as Bakāsura. 18. One impersonating Śrī Kṛṣṇa called back from a distance another impersonating the cattle that had strayed away to a distance. One played on the flute and frolicked, while others watched the play and cried out in appreciation. 19. In complete identification with Śrī Kṛṣṇa one put her hand on the shoulder of another and walked about saying: "I am Kṛṣṇa. See my charming gait!" 20. "Do not have any fear of wind and rain. I give you protection from it!" — so saying, one woman lifted up her upper garment with great effort, as if she were holding aloft the





The Gopīs re-enact the divine sports of the Lord (Pahari )

Govardhana mountain. 21. O King! Another, in identification with the Kāliya episode, got on the head of another and said: “O evil one! Go away from here. I am born to punish the wicked.” 22. Another declared: “O Gopās! See this terrible forest fire. Close your eyes. I shall give you relief immediately.” 23. One woman tied another to an imaginary mortar with a garland, while the latter pretending fear hid her face.

*Śrī Kṛṣṇa with a particular Lady (24 -34)*

24. As they wandered in this way, making enquiries regarding Śrī Kṛṣṇa of the trees and creepers of Vṛndāvana, they came across the clear imprints of the feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Being, at a place. 25. “These foot-prints are surely of that great one, the son of Nanda. For, in the foot impressions can be seen the distinctive marks of flag, lotus, thunderbolt, hook, grain etc.”, they said. 26. As the Gopis were tracing the

track of Śrī Kṛṣṇa step by step, they found them interspersed with those of a woman. Very much concerned at this, they began to say: 27. "Who is the woman that, like a cow-elephant led by the leader of the herd, had the good fortune to be led by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, with his hands on her shoulder? 28. Surely she worshipped the Lord very devoutly. [*Anayā ārādhitaḥ* is the expression in the original. It is supposed to refer to Rādhā, who has no place in the text otherwise.] For, deserting us all, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the most distinguished one of Gokula, has gone with her into solitude as a special mark of favour to her. 29. O Friends! The dust of Śrī Kṛṣṇa 's feet that you find here is very holy, indeed. For Brahmā, Śiva and Ramā apply it to their heads for the effacement of all sins! 30. But these footprints of the woman cause great agitation in our minds. For she has stolen away what is the common property of all of us Gopīs — the nectar of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lips and is enjoying it alone in solitude. 31. But mark, here at this place the woman's footprints are not to be seen. Surely the lover must at this place have lifted up the beloved on his shoulders, as the sprouts of grass must have injured her





tender feet. 32. O Gopīs! Look here at these deep impressions made by Śrī Kṛṣṇa's feet. It is surely due to the weight of the woman carried on his shoulder by the love-stricken Śrī Kṛṣṇa. 33. Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the great one, must have lowered his handsome ladylove from his shoulder in order to pluck flowers for her. In proof of it you see how the mark of the toes and of the forepart of the feet have gone deep into the sand while there is no mark of the heel. To reach the flower high on the branch, he must have reached up standing on the toes. 34. Surely the lover must have dressed the hair of the beloved here. This must be the place where he sat, decorating her locks with the flowers he had gathered."

*Śrī Kṛṣṇa abandoning that Gopī (35-45)*

Śrī Śuka said: 35. Ever established in the Self, ever revelling in the bliss within him, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's poise in the Spirit was not in the least broken in the course of this involvement with women. Then, why did he do it? It was perhaps to show the misery of enslavement that sexuality brings to lovers and the limits to which the perversity of women can descend in their love-sports. 36-37. While the Gopīs thus moved about wailing like demented people, the particular woman, taking whom Śrī Kṛṣṇa had deserted the others, also became subject to inordinate pride. She thought: "I am the pick among women. For among all these women who have ascended Cupid's chariot, our dear one has selected me for his special favour." 38. After walking a little distance in the forest with him, that woman moved by self-conceit said to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, "I cannot walk any longer. You may carry me to whichever place you want to go." 39. Śrī Kṛṣṇa then asked his beloved to climb his shoulder. Simultaneously he disappeared, whereupon the woman became repentant. 40. She began to cry aloud: "O my lord! O my dear one! O one with powerful arms! O the most beloved one! Where have you gone! Reveal your whereabouts, O friend, to me your handmaid, disconsolate and heart-broken as I am!"

41. Now the other Gopīs, searching for Śrī Kṛṣṇa nearby, came across this woman distracted by the disappearance of the beloved. 42. Hearing all that had happened — how Kṛṣṇa had honoured her, and how out of her perversity she behaved insultingly to him — they were all lost in astonishment. 43. They extended their search to the limits up to which moonlight penetrated the woods but finding it all dark beyond in that thickly wooded forest, they retreated from their quest. 44. With mind merged in him, ever engaged in talks about him, often imitating his acts and movements, merging themselves in spirit with him, and always singing about his praises, they forgot all about their home and its affairs. 45. Coming back to the sandy banks of the Yamunā, thinking of that Enchanter of souls alone, and seized with a longing for His return, began to sing in chorus the excellences of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, eagerly expecting his re-appearance.

## The song of the Gopīs during the Rāsa play

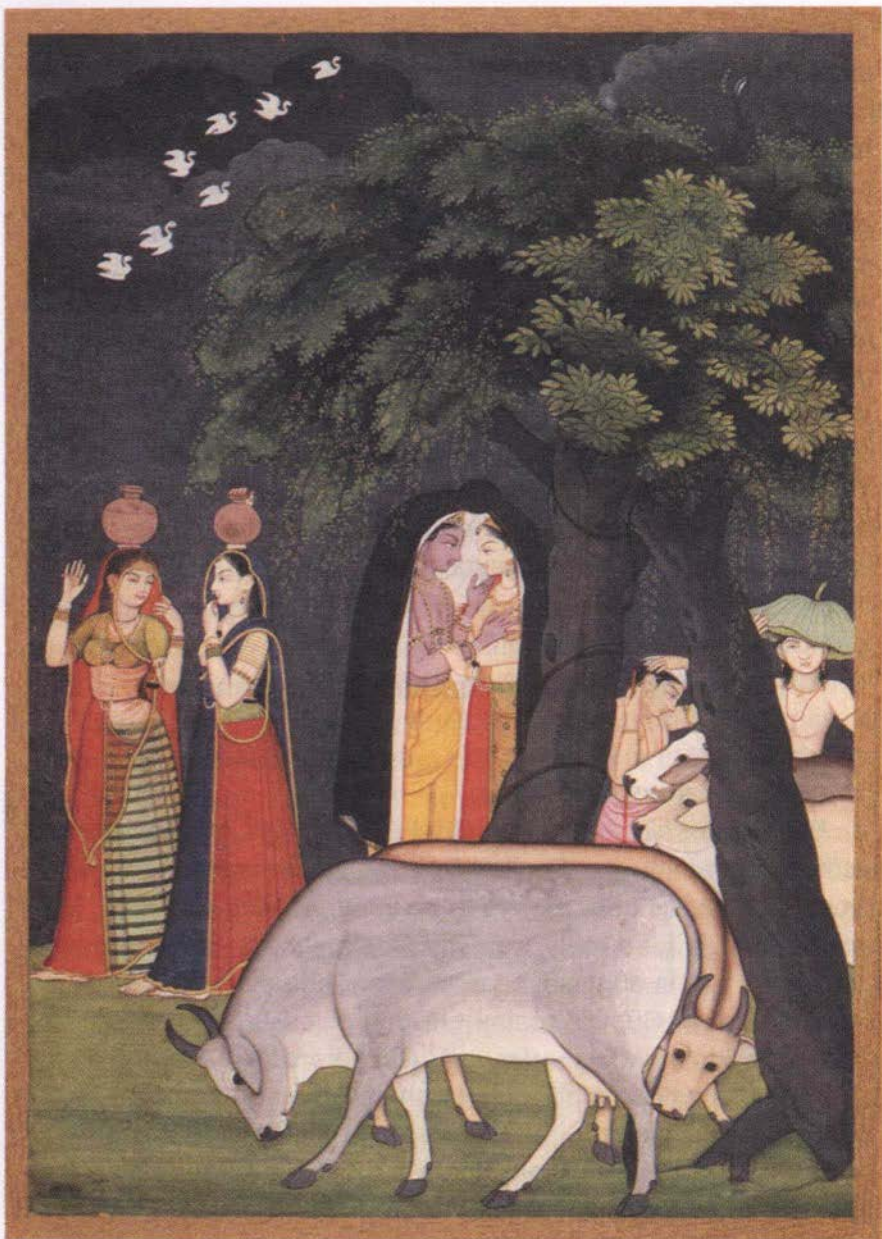
### *The Gopīs in Anguish (1-19)*

*The Gopīs said:* 1. "O Dear One! By Thy birth, all-round prosperity reigns in Vraja. For Lakṣmi, the goddess of plenty and prosperity, dwells here always to be in attendance on Thee. The entire world is glad; only we, Thy Gopīs, whose life is a pawn unto Thee, are in anguish, searching for Thee everywhere.

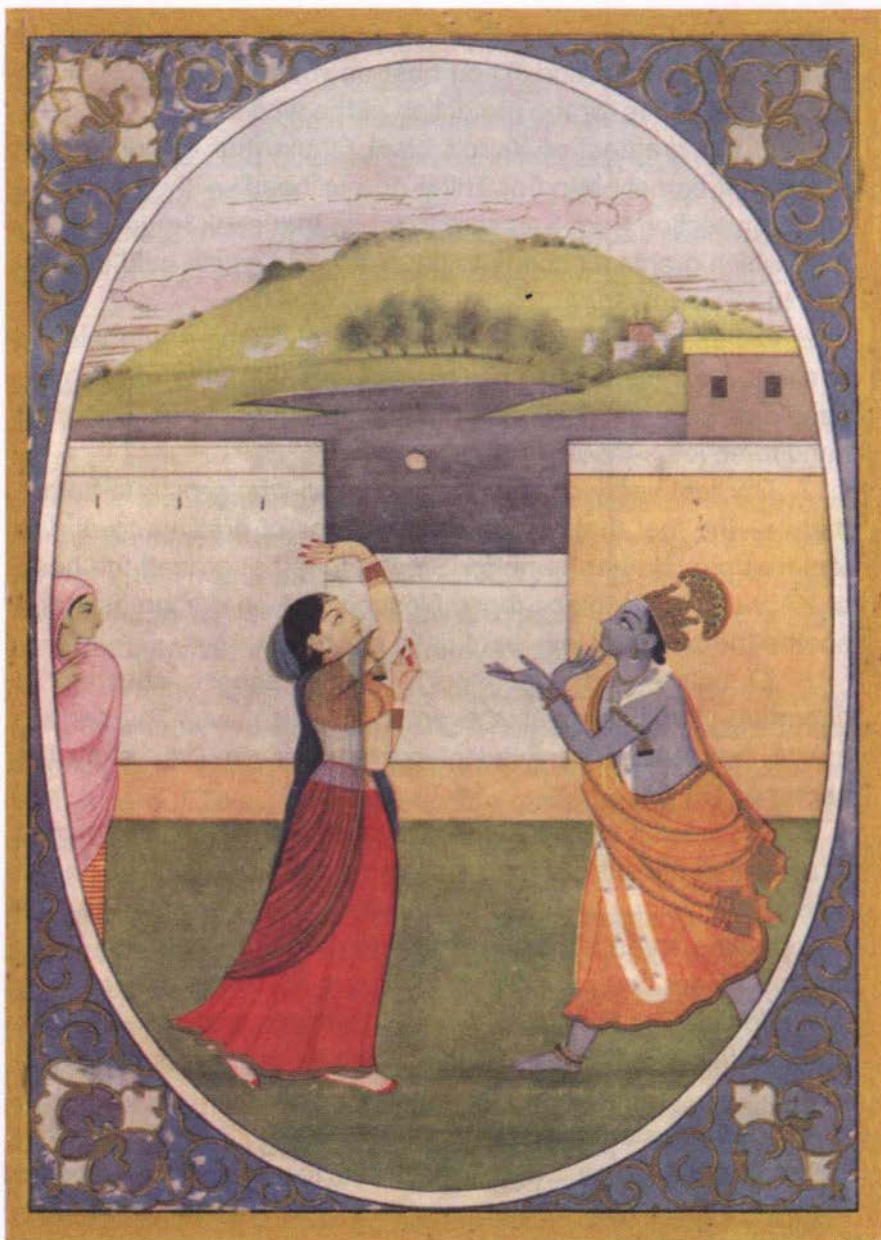
2. O Lord of Cupid's realm! O Boon giver! Is it not slaughter on Thy part to strike us — Thy gratuitous servitors — by the shaft of Thy looks whose glory puts to shame the soft comeliness of Autumn's lotus bloom?

3. O Great Leader! From death by Kāliya's poison, from the grip of the python-shaped demon, from the destruction wrought by torrential rain, wind and lightning, from dangerous demons like Agha and Vyoma — from all such fears Thou didst protect us.

4. O Friend! Thou art not merely the Gopika's son, but the



" Meeting stealthily in the rains " ( Pahari School )



"Tossing a flower" (Kangra paintings of the Bihari Sat Sai)

witness of the inner essence of all embodied beings. Prayed to by Brahmā, O comrade, Thou hast dawned like the sun in the clan of the Yadus for the protection of the worlds.

5. O the greatest of Yadu's clan! O charmer of our hearts! Place that comely hand of Thine on our head — the hand that offers protection from Saṁsāra to those that seek refuge at Thy feet, which grants all boons to devotees and which held in wedlock the hand of Śrī.

6. O Destroyer of Vraja's woes! O hero! Thou art the beloved one who by a mere smile of Thine effaces the pride of Thy own people. Accept us, Thy hand maids, and reveal to us Thy most handsome lotus-face.

7. Thy feet verily destroy the sins of all who prostrate before them — the feet that pursue the footsteps of grazing cows, the feet that provide her home for Śrī, the feet that graced the head of Kāliya. O Lord, place those blessed feet on our breasts and soothe the pangs of love pent up in our heart.

8. O Lotus-eyed one! By Thy sweet speech couched in charming words, enjoyable even to the wise, we, Thy serving maids, have been deprived of our senses. Revive us by the nectar of Thy lips.

9. The nectar of Thy excellences revives the scorched spirit of man. It purifies the sinner, while holy men live on it. To hear it is itself auspicious and peace generating. They are the real gift-makers who spread Thy name far and wide.

10. O Dear One! O Deceptive Lover! Thy sweet smiles, Thy loving looks, Thy meditation-worthy pastimes, and Thy enchanting love-talk in privacy — all these agitate our minds in the extreme.

11. Will not stones and sharp thorns injure Thy lotus-like feet when Thou dost go away from Vraja to pasture cattle? Our minds are extremely worried over this, O sweet Lover and Master of our hearts!

12. O Thou our heroic lover! You kindle love in our hearts again and again at even tide, as we see Thee return, Thy lotus-



like face smeared with dust raised by the cows, and surrounded by Thy dark locks.

13. O Healer of woes! Place on our breasts those lotus-feet of Thine which are bounteous to worshippers, which the lotus-born Brahmā adores, which are an ornament to the world, which form the one object to be meditated upon in times of danger, and which offer instant peace to those who contact them.

14. O Hero of the realm of love! Give the draught of Thy honeyed lips, which enhances the delight of amorous indulgences, which effaces all sorrows, which is firmly kissed by the resounding flute, and which erases every other form of longing from the heart of man.

15. When Thou art moving about in the forest of Vṛndāvana during daytime, a moment seems to be like an age to us who do not see Thee then. A fool indeed is the Creator who fitted these eyelids to our eyes that are anxiously looking for the sight of Thy charming face framed in curly locks.

16. Without caring for our husbands, sons, brothers and other relatives, we have come to Thee, O Imperishable Lord, drawn by the music of Thy flute with which Thou didst call us. Who else but Thou, O Rogue, would abandon such women as ourselves at this dead of night!

17. When we think of Thy secret amorous conversations, Thy face lit with a comely smile which kindles love in our hearts, Thy glances scattering love, and Thy broad chest which is the abode of Śrī our mind is bewitched again and again filled with intense longing.

18. O Dear Lover! Thy assumption of a form is verily for the erasing of the miseries of all the inhabitants of this Gokula and of Vṛndāvana in particular, and generally to bring about the good of the world as a whole. How then art Thou so miserly in administering that medicine, held in such abundance by Thee, to cure the heart's ailment of us, who are Thy own?

19. O Dearest One! We shall hold Thy tender feet only very gently and cautiously to our hard breasts. We are in extreme

anguish; we who live only for Thy sake; to think that those feet, to be thus held and protected, are being painfully lacerated by walking over stones and thorns in the forest."

## The Lord comforts the Gopīs

*Śrī Śuka continued:* 1. Thus, O King, did the Gopīs wail at the top of their voice, singing and raving in their intense longing to meet Śrī Kṛṣṇa. 2. And in their midst Śrī Kṛṣṇa now reappeared suddenly with a smiling face. He was dressed in a yellow cloth and wore a garland round his neck, while exhibiting a beauty of form that would have caused agitation in the mind of Cupid even. 3. Just as a swooning man's body would revive in all its parts when the Prāṇa returns, so did all these women rise up in a body, with eyes dilated from the joy of seeing their dear one. 4. One of them went up to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and held his right palm with both her hands. Another lifted his left hand soft and fragrant like sandalwood, and put it on her own right shoulder. 5. One received in her joined palms chewed betel rolls from his mouth while another held his feet and applied them to her bosom in order to get relief from the heat of separation. 6. In a fit of anger caused by a sense of unrequited love, one bit her lips and cast murderous glances, arching her brows. 7. Another drank again and again with her eyes the lotus-face of the Lord, which she had looked at several times before, with unblinking eyes, and yet had not attained the limit of satisfaction, even like devotees serving His feet. 8. Someone drew him into her heart through the orifice of her eyes, and embracing him there, entered into ecstasy like a Yogi, her joy overflowing as it were in the form of horripilations all over. 9. The whole lot of them was recompensed by the riotous joy of having his vision, and the sorrow of separation from which they were suffering subsided, like the worries of men in deep sleep.



*The Response of the Gopīs (10-14)*

10. Surrounded by them with their sorrow dispelled, Śrī Kṛṣṇa of supreme excellence and imperishable puissance shone like the Supreme Being Himself haloed by Śaktīs — His powers, cosmic and transcendental. 11-12. Leading them all in a body, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the all-pervading Being, now stepped on to the delightful banks of the Kālindī and gleamed there where the air was charged with the fragrance of blooming jasmine and Mandāra flowers and with the sound of buzzing honey-bees attracted by that fragrance; where the river-deity Kālindī had with her wavy arms arranged delightful sand dunes with excellent sands for Śrī Kṛṣṇa to sit on; where the clear moonlight had ousted the dark forms of night, rendering the place safe to stay and attractive to see. 13. The ache of their heart being cured by the joy of his vision, the Gopīs passed the bounds of thought, just like the illumined ones who go beyond the mind with the help of the Vedic revelation. To seat the one dearest to their heart they now made a throne with a heap of their upper clothes besmeared with the saffron powder from their breasts. 14. Śrī Kṛṣṇa the worshipful lord of all excellences, the master of the worlds, who is usually supposed to have his seat in the hearts of Yogis, now sat on that seat made by the Gopīs, to be honoured and worshipped by them with all offerings of love. There he sat, bearing a form that seemed to be the centre of all the beauty that has been revealed anywhere in the three worlds.

*Gopīs pose a Question to Śrī Kṛṣṇa (15-22)*

15. Fondling him, the inspirer of love, by gently stroking his hands and legs reposing in their lap, and honouring him by words of praise and admiration, the Gopīs spoke to him in a tone with a touch of anger born of frustrated love, while looking archly with quivering brows. *The Gopīs said:* 16. “Some love others according as they are loved in return. In contrast to this, some love even those who have no love for them. There are still others who have no love for any — neither for those who love them, nor for

those who do not. Please say who is the most virtuous among these three.” *Śrī Bhagavan said*: 17. “In the case of mutual love, that is, where love is something returned for something got, the motive on both sides is only self-interest. There is no real love or altruism. 18. But, O pretty girls, those who love others even if they do not requite it, are of two kinds — men who are by nature kind and loving, and the men who are loving like parents. 19. Those who do not love anyone, whether the others love them or not, are of three kinds — *Ātmārāmas*, or those who are absorbed in the Self: for whom everyone is included in the Self; *Aptakāmas*, or those who have no wants of any kind and so need not have dealings with anyone; and the brute man who has no gratitude or respect for elders. 20. O Friends! I, however, do not belong to any of these categories, being supremely compassionate and friendly, inasmuch as I do not visibly reciprocate the love (and remain out of sight for some time) of even those who love Me, in order that they could ever think of Me in the same way as a penniless person would, on a treasure found by him being lost, remain engrossed in the thought of that wealth alone to the exclusion of all other thoughts. 21. O Gopis! It was only to strengthen the longing for me in you, who have left your name, prospects and position in this world — left what the Vedas promise as reward in the hereafter for following their dictates, and left also your home and relatives for my sake — that I disappeared from your vision. It was only to serve you invisibly by hearing your prayer and seeing your actions. O dear ones! Do not make it a ground of complaint against me, who am all love for you. 22. Even by service for countless divine years I cannot pay back to you anything equal to your glorious act of self-surrender, prompted by love untarnished by any blemish of selfishness, and breaking the ever-powerful chain of attachment for home and worldly concerns. As I cannot pay back the debt, may your generous act be its own reward.



## A description of the Rāsa play

### *The Description of the Dance (1-19)*

*Śrī Śuka said:* 1. O dear one! Hearing these bewitching words of the Lord the Gopīs' cast off the pangs of separation, their desire having been fulfilled through the thrilling touch of his divine personality (the embodiment of bliss). 2. Now Govinda, the embodiment of the teachings of the Upanishads, started the collective dance known as Rāsa, participated in by that large number of beautiful women who were fully devoted and joyous at heart, and who arrayed themselves with hands linked. 3. In a manner that gave to each Gopī the impression that he, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, was by her side, the Lord, by his Yogic power stood between each pair of them, embracing them by their neck. Arraying all these bands of Gopīs in a circular formation, Śrī Kṛṣṇa started the great festive dance of Rāsa. 4. Soon the sky was full of the aerial cars of celestials that along with their wives gathered with great eagerness to witness the Rāsa dance. 5. Then

kettledrums began to sound and showers of flowers to fall from the heavens. The master musicians of the Gandharvas began to sing with their womenfolk, songs dealing with the sanctifying excellences of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. 6. The sound of clanging bangles, of anklets, and of mini-bells on the waist-girdles of those women in unison with the jingling of their dear one's ornaments, filled the atmosphere of that field of Rāsa dance. 7. Just like an emerald between two golden beads, Śrī Kṛṣṇa shone exceedingly bright between the Gopīs on both his sides. 8. With measured treads of the feet and motions of the hands: with gentle smiles and movements of their brows; with their middle region so slender as if it would break; with their clothes over their breasts quivering; with ear-rings moving against the background of their perspiring cheeks; with their wearing apparels and locks dangling loose — these ladies beloved of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who sang loudly about his glories, looked like flashes of lightning amidst a mass of dark clouds. 9. Dancing and singing loudly various tunes and delighted with the touch of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Gopīs whose voice was sweetened with love, nay whose sole delight was loving devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, filled the air with their songs. 10. Singing in chorus with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, one of them produced the pure tones unmixed, at an octave higher than his. Pleased with this, Śrī Kṛṣṇa cried out words of approbation, whereupon she produced the same tune according to the time sequence known as the Dhruvatāla, drawing still more cheers from him. 11. Another, exhausted by the dance, the bracelets on her arms and the flower-wreaths in her braids loosened, supported herself by clinging to the neck of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. 12. Another thrilled with joy had her hair stand on end, as she smelt and kissed the hands of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, sandal-smeared and fragrant like lotus, resting on her shoulder. 13. One of them, whose cheeks were reflecting the brilliance of her ear-pendants rocking by the movements of the dance, closely pressed a cheek of hers to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's, and received from him a roll of betel crushed in his mouth. 14. Another woman who was vigorously dancing to the accompani-

ment of her own song and the delightful sound produced by her anklets and the mini-bells in her girdle, now felt tired, and for relief, pressed the lotus-like palms of nearby Kṛṣṇa to her breasts.

15. Having got as their husband Him, the Imperishable Being who is the object of Śrī Devī's exclusive love, and being embraced by him with his arms around their neck, the Gopīs sported in great joy singing songs on him. 16. As the Gopīs danced with the Lord, their faces shone with the blue lilies in their ears, with their curls adorning the cheeks, and with the profuse perspiration born of exertion. As the flower wreaths in their braids kept falling, the buzzing honeybees thereon provided the music for the dance, while an instrumental, accompaniment was provided by their own clanging bangles, anklets and the mini-bells on their waist-girdle. 17. In this way the Lord played with the Gopīs as a child would do with his own image in a mirror, embracing them, touching them with his hands, casting loving looks at them, kissing them, and smiling lovingly at them. 18. O great leader of the Kurus! Thrilled by the bliss of contact with the Lord's body, the Gopīs were unaware that their flower garlands and ornaments had slipped away, and were incapable even to attend to their loosened locks and the slipping garments. 19. Seeing these love-sports of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the celestial women observing from above were smitten with love, and the moon shining amidst the stars stood still in amazement (thus prolonging the duration of the night).

### *Sporting in Water (20-26)*

20. Though ever poised in the bliss of the Ātman, the all-powerful Lord sported with the Gopīs, assuming as many replicas of his form as there were Gopīs. 21. Śrī Kṛṣṇa now showed his extreme compassion for them by wiping with his own blissful hands the sweating faces of those women, who were extremely tired by the exertion of the dance. 22. The Gopīs, who were stimulated by the contact of his fingernails, and whose cheeks shone with their own lustre mixed with those of their golden

ear-ornaments and their braided hair, honoured their Lord by their glances graced with their nectarine smiles, and by singing about his sanctifying deeds. 23. Together with the Gopīs, the flower garlands on whose bodies were all crushed by now and whose bodies were tinged all over with the saffron powder spread from their breasts in the course of repeated embraces, the Lord, who had broken all bounds set by convention, now walked like an elephant amidst his cows, towards the flowing stream to relieve the exhaustion of himself and the Gopīs through water sports. 24. Profusely sprinkled all over from every side by these young women — who were heartily laughing — in the water, casting loving looks at them and praised and worshipped with showers of flowers from above by celestials stationed in their aerial cars, he sported in the water like an elephant, while remaining unperturbed in his inherent blissful nature. 25. Then, in the lightly wooded regions of the Yamunā banks, rendered fragrant by the pleasant breeze wafting the scent of flowers across land and water, Śrī Kṛṣṇa moved about with this bevy of Gopīs pursued by swarms of honeybees, like an elephant in rut amidst its cows. 26. Thus, during the nights of the Śarat season, replete with all the enthralling beauties extolled in poems, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whose will is truth, sported in the assemblage of Gopīs, but so fully was he established in the Ātman that his virility was restrained within himself.

*The king said:* 27. Prayed to by Brahmā, the worshipful Lord (Bhagavān), in order to establish Dharma and eradicate its opposite (unrighteousness), incarnated as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, along with his part manifestation (Balarāma). 28. O holy one! He is the maker of the moral codes, their protector as well as their teacher. How did he then commit this most atrocious sin of indulgence in sensual relationship with other people's wives? 29. Śrī Kṛṣṇa the Lord of the Yadus, is a spiritually awakened person without any unfulfilled desire in him. How did he then indulge in this most heinous sin? O holy one! Please clear this doubt of mine.



*Śrī Śuka said:* 30. The mighty have been found to transgress the moral code and indulge in aggressive actions. But just like fire, which can consume anything, be it dirt or poison, and yet can remain pure and unaffected, these powerful ones cannot be contaminated by any evil. 31. But insignificant man should not imitate them in this respect even mentally. If he behaves like that stupidly, it would be like one who is without the power of Rudra but drinks poison, following Rudra's example. Death is the sure consequence that would befall him. 32. The teachings of great ones are true and fit to be followed by all. This is so in regard to some of their actions too. The intelligent man should follow only such of their actions as are consistent with their teachings. 33. For these supermen, who are without the egoistic impulse, there is no self-interest — there is nothing to gain by right actions, and nothing to suffer from by the contrary. 34. That being the case even with such exalted men, it is needless to say that no good or evil can bind that ego less one, the Supreme Being, who is the ruler of all Devās, men and brute creations. 35. By the service of His lotus feet, devotees are established in joy and in freedom from bondage. So too are the knowing ones. When such spiritual personages are, through service of Him, seen to go about free from attachment and bondage, how can these accrue to Him who is the Supreme Lord, who has assumed a form out of His own free will for the good of the world? 36. The one Spirit that pervades the souls of these Gopīs, their husbands and all other beings — that universal Witness has assumed the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa for the sake of sport. For the all-pervading Being, where is the distinction between oneself and another, and how can any good or evil therefore accrue to Him? 37. In order to shower His grace on created beings (and attract solely towards Him), He assumes a human body and indulges in sports like the Rāsa play, hearing accounts of which man may get exclusively devoted to Him.

38. Owing to Śrī Kṛṣṇa 's mysterious power, the Gopas felt that their women were with them all the while, and had no

ground to feel any ill will to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. 39. Towards early morning when the Brahma-muhūrta had begun, the Gopīs, persuaded by Śrī Kṛṣṇa their beloved, and congratulated by him, went back home unwillingly. 40. Whoever hears or recites again and again the account of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's amorous dalliances with the Gopīs with deep faith in the Divinity of Śrī Kṛṣṇa — the faith that He is Mahāviṣṇu the Supreme Being — attains to the highest devotion to the Lord, and in the course of the development of devotion, he quickly overcomes lust, the universal malady of mankind.

## The Lord slays Śaṅkhacūḍa

### *Salvation of Sudarśana (1-19)*

*Sri Suka said:* 1. Once during a festive season, the Gopas went with great enthusiasm to a place of pilgrimage known as Ambikāvana in their chariots drawn by oxen. 2. O King! There, after bathing in the Saraswati, they offered devout worship to Śrī Parameswara and Pārvati with ingredients like flower, sandal paste and food offerings. 3. Full of reverence they gave as presents to holy men, cows, gold, cloth and sweetened rice and honey, so that the Supreme Being might be gracious to them. 4. Revered persons like Nanda and Sunanda spent that night on the banks of the Saraswati, observing sacred vows and fasting for the day, taking in nothing but water. 5. While Nanda was sleeping there at night, a python under the grip of terrific hunger happened to come that way by the will of providence and got hold of him. 6. Nanda thereupon cried aloud: “O Kṛṣṇa! O Kṛṣṇa! A huge serpent is devouring me. O dear one! Save me who has taken shelter in you.” 7. His cries roused the Gopas from the sleep and they were shocked to see Nanda in the grip of the python. They began to scourge it with firebrands to get him released. 8. In spite of being scorched that way, the serpent would not release Nanda. Now the Lord arrived at the spot and touched the serpent with his feet.

9. All his evil karma having been wiped out by the contact of the Lord’s glorious foot, the serpent abandoned the reptile body and assumed the form of a Vidyādhara, which by its beauty drew the admiration and divine adoration of all celestials of that group. 10. The Vidyādhara, bedecked with golden necklaces and endowed with beauty, now stood before Śrī Kṛṣṇa after making due prostrations. 11. Śrī Kṛṣṇa asked him: “Who are you possessed of such great beauty and brilliance? How was this detestable snake-body imposed upon you?” The erstwhile serpent said: 12. “I was a Vidyādhara named Sudarśana, noted

for my wealth and beauty, and I could travel anywhere I pleased in my aerial car. 13. Proud of my beauty, I once ridiculed some deformed sages, born in the line of the sage Aṅgirās. My evil nature called forth from those Rishis a curse by which I was condemned to have this form of a snake. 14. The curse of these merciful sages has proved a real blessing to me. For, it was that which brought me the blessing of contact with Thy feet, the teacher of the worlds, and which has erased my sins. 15. Of Thee, who affordest protection from the fear of Saṁsara to all those who seek refuge at Thy feet, I now beseech leave to return to my heavenly abode.

16. O Master-Yogin! O Supreme Being! O protector of devotees! I seek refuge in Thee. Give Thy permission for me to depart. 17. O Imperishable Being! By seeing Thee I have been freed from the curse of the holy men. By uttering Thy name only, a man purifies himself and those who hear the utterance of it. What wonder is there then in the contact with Thy feet purifying me?" 18. Being permitted by Śrī Kṛṣṇa and after circum-ambulating him, Sudarśana went to his heavenly abode, and Nanda was saved from a perilous situation. 19. With their minds struck with wonder to witness such glory of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and completing the observance of their vows at that holy spot, O King, the people of Vraja returned home, speaking again and again with reverence, among themselves, about the astonishing events of the day.

*Śaṁkha-cūḍa carrying away the Gopīs (20-32)*

20. On a certain occasion later on, Śrī Kṛṣṇa along with Rāma was sporting in the forest with the Gopīs. 21-23. In the early part of the night, surrounded by a host of singing Gopīs — who had fastened their love on Them — well-dressed, well-adorned, and amidst surroundings characterised by the light of the rising moon and stars, by the hovering of black bees intoxicated by the fragrance of jasmines and by the cool breeze laden with the fragrance of lotus-flowers — they both sang, going

through the scale of musical notes, to the delight of the mind and ears of all created beings. 24. Hearing their song the Gopīs fell in a trance, and did not notice that their clothes were loosening and the flower wreaths in their braids were falling.

25. When they were thus singing and sporting with the intoxication of joy, a prominent officer of Kubera, known as Śaṅkhacūḍa, happened to go that way. 26 Undaunted, Śaṅkhacūḍa, in the very presence of Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, drove the screaming women who had Them as their protector, in a northerly direction. 27. Hearing their dear ones wailing like a cow in the grasp of a tiger, both Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa ran after Śaṅkhacūḍa. 28. The two nimble-footed brothers, responding to the wailing women through shouts offering protection, and armed with Sala trees, soon overtook the fast running Guhyaka. 29. Thereupon the stupid Śaṅkhacūḍa, seeing them both approaching close upon his heels, like the all-consuming spirit of Time and Death, abandoned the women and fled for his own life. 30. Wherever he ran, Śrī Kṛṣṇa followed him intent on taking off his crest jewel, while Balarāma stood at the spot to protect the women. 31. Śrī Kṛṣṇa approached him as though he was not very far off, and severed the evil Śaṅkhacūḍa's head along with the crest jewel on it, with a stroke of His fist. 32. After destroying Śaṅkha-cūḍa in this way, he lovingly presented the crest jewel to his own brother Rāma in the presence of all the Gopīs, who stood looking on.





## Gopikā Yugala-Gītam

*Gopīs singing of Śrī Kṛṣṇa during daytime (1-26)*

*Śrī Śuka said:* 1. Whenever Śrī Kṛṣṇa went to the forest during the day to pasture cattle, the Gopīs spent their time in anguish, singing about his pastimes.

*The Gopīs said:* 2-3. O Gopīs! When Śrī Kṛṣṇa sounds his flute, applying his lips to it, with his left cheek resting on his left shoulder, with his comely fingers moving along its seven sound-regulating holes, and with his eye-brows dancing — then do the wives of the Siddhas, who hear the music while going with their husbands in aerial cars, feel astounded, and though bashful, become so overwhelmed with amorous sentiment as to forget that their clothes are slipping down.

4-5. Hear of this strange phenomenon, O girls! When Śrī

Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda, — on whose chest smiling with pearl necklaces shines Goddess Lakṣmi like a streak of lightning — sounds his flute, bringing delight to the afflicted people, herds of bulls in Vraja, the deer and cows in the forest, stand absolutely still with ears erect and mouths holding half-chewed grass, as if they are asleep or painted, their mind captivated by the music of the flute heard from a distance.

6-7 O friend! When Śrī Kṛṣṇa, along with Rāma, puts on a wrestler's garb consisting of peacock plumes, mineral paints and garlands of tender leaves, and stands amidst the Gopas and calls the cows by their names, through the notes of his flute — then the river, slackens her speed and stands as if with her wavy arms as if to fold the Lord in their embrace, and yearning for the contact of the dust of his feet blown about by the breeze, incapable of going away even like us unfortunate folk, till she finally comes to an absolute stand-still.

8-9. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa, surrounded by followers singing panegyrics in praise of him, and revealing his immortal splendour like that of the Supreme Being, moves in the forest calling the cows that are grazing on the slopes of Govardhana, by their names, with the help of his flute — then the forest trees and creepers laden with flowers and fruits, are seen bending their heads, as if in salutation and with their frames thrilled with love, shed streams of flower-nectar, as though manifesting the all pervading Lord Viṣṇu (dwelling in them in the form of rapture).

10-11. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa adorned by the charming Tilaka, applies the flute to His lips, admiring the high-pitched, agreeable humming of swarms of black bees inebriated with the nectar of the Tulasi flowers of his garland — then do the water birds like Sārasa, Haṁsa and the like gather, their heart captivated by the dulcet music of the flute, and flock by his side like self-controlled sages, silent, with eyes closed, as if contemplating on the Lord.

12-13. O beauties of Vraja! When Śrī Kṛṣṇa accompanied by Balarāma, gracefully adorned with floral earrings, and standing



on the top of the mountain (Govardhana) fills the universe with the sound of his flute, enrapturing all and filled with delight himself — then the cloud rumbles in gentle tones, keeping time with his tune, and afraid at heart (as it were) of showing disrespect to the Great One, and covers his Friend with a shower of flowers (in the form of spray), spreading over him an umbrella with his shadow.

14-15. O mother Yaśodā! When your son Śrī Kṛṣṇa, master of various physical feats common among the Gopas, and a self-taught expert at flute, applies his lips to the flute and produces varied original tunes — then hearing that music even leading celestials like Indra, Parameswara and Brahma bend their heads in humility and in astonishment at the exquisiteness of that music.

16-17. When playing on his flute, Śrī Kṛṣṇa moves about in Vraja, removing the distress of its soil, arising from the impact of the hooves of cows, by himself treading over it with his feet, bearing the auspicious marks of the flag, thunderbolt, lotus and hook, then we — in whom the fire of love is kindled by his amorous glances and who are then reduced to standing still like trees — being bewitched, are no longer conscious of our loosening braids or even our clothes.

18-19. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa, bedecked with his favourite garland of fragrant Tulasi leaves, sounds his flute while counting the herds of cows with beads, resting one of his hands on the shoulder of a Gopa boy — then the does, the wives of the black deer, carried away by the music of his flute, approach him who is the centre of abounding virtues and remain there, like the Gopikās themselves, abandoning all hopes of returning to their homes.

20-21. O holy lady Yaśodā! When your son Śrī Kṛṣṇa, decorated beautifully with garlands of Kunda flowers and surrounded by cows and Gopa boys, sports on the banks of the Yamunā giving great delight to his devotees — then the gentle breeze serves the Lord by its cool and fragrant touch like sandal paste,



and hosts of demigods, playing the part of his panegyrists, adore him with music, both vocal and instrumental, flowers and other offerings.

22-23. Here comes at eventide the Devaki-born moon of a Kṛṣṇa, having collected all the cattle of Vraja, to whom he is dear because of his protecting them from rain by holding up the mountain. Wearing garlands covered with the dust of the

hooves of cattle he delights the eyes of the onlookers even by the splendour of his fatigued person. His feet being adored on the way by Brahmā and others, his glory being sung by his followers, he comes to fulfill the prayers of his devotees.

24-25. With a bright look, sporting a floral garland and glad-dening his friends, here comes Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the leader of the Yadu clan, like a moon relieving the daylong heat (of separation of the inhabitants of Vraja) — his eyes rolling in a slight intoxication of bliss, his face flushed like a Badara fruit, his cheeks shining with the lustre of his golden ear-rings, and his gait resembling that of a lordly elephant.

*Śrī Śuka said:* 26. O King! In this way, even in the daytime the noble-souled Gopīs rejoiced, celebrating in song Śrī Kṛṣṇa's glorious pastimes, with their minds absorbed in him and in the bliss produced thereby.



### Karṇsa despatches Akrura to Vraja to bring Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Mathura

#### *Destruction of Ariṣṭa (1-15)*

*Śrī Śuka said:* 1. Now there came into Gokula an Ox-demon called Ariṣṭa with a huge hump and a very big body, causing tremors on the earth that was riven by the furrows formed by his hooves. 2-4. Wildly bellowing, scouring the earth with his legs, lifting his tail, removing chunks of earth from hillsides with his horns, the demon Ariṣṭa, excreting urine and dung a little here and a little there, and gazing with fixed eyes, arrived. Frightened by his fierce bellows, pregnant cows and women had abortions and premature deliveries. Clouds rested on his humps, mistaking it for a mountain. 5. Seeing his fierce and sharp horns, the Gopas and the Gopīs trembled in fear, while the cattle got scared and fled away from the cow-pens. 6-9.

Calling aloud Kṛṣṇa, they all took shelter in him. And the Lord, seeing all the people running helter-skelter out of fear, called out to them to be at peace. He challenged the Ox-demon for a fight, and said: "O fool! Sinful one! Of what avail is your frightening the Gopas and the cows? Here am I to put down the pride and power of evil ones like you." Saying so, Śrī Hari (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) provoked the demon with a clap of arms, and stood there with one hand resting on the shoulder of a friend. Roused to anger thereby, Aṛiṣṭa rushed at Śrī Kṛṣṇa, tearing the earth with his hooves and stirring the clouds by his uplifted tail. 10. Like Indra's Vajra weapon, the Asura charged, lifting forward his hooves and casting a downward look at the Lord with his unmoving and bloodshot eyes. 11. Like an elephant confronting another elephant, the Lord caught hold of the Ox-demon by his horns, and with one push sent him eighteen feet back. 12. Knocked down by the Lord, the bull quickly rose again and, filled with fury, rushed forward sweating all over and breathing hard. 13. The Lord caught the charging demon by the horns, and throwing him on the ground, squeezed him with his feet like a wet cloth. Then pulling out his horn, he struck him with it till he fell prostrate. 14. Vomiting blood, evacuating, kicking his legs and gazing with unsteady eyes, the demon departed to Death's abode in great agony. At this the Devas showered flowers and sang the praise of Hari, the destroyer of the troubles and tribulations of devotees. 15. Destroying the Ox-demon thus, the Lord entered the settlement of cowherds along with Bala, praised by the Gopas and providing a feast to the eyes of the Gopīs.

### *Kaṁsa's final resolution to destroy Śrī Kṛṣṇa (16-26)*

16. After the destruction of Aṛiṣṭa by Śrī Kṛṣṇa of astounding deeds, the Devarshi Nārada one day said as follows to Kaṁsa: 17-18. "Know that the girl popularly known as the eighth child of Devakī is really the daughter of Yaśodā, and that Kṛṣṇa who passes for Yaśodā's son is really Devakī's son. And Rāma,

generally taken as Nanda's son, is really the son of Rohiṇī by Vasudeva. They have only been entrusted to Nanda, for fear of you. It is they who have killed so many of your men."

19-22. Hearing this, Kaṁsa became furious with rage. He took up his sword to kill Vasudeva, but was restrained by Nārada. Knowing that the son of Vasudeva would be the cause of his death, Kaṁsa, after the departure of the Devarshi, had Vasudeva and his wife chained with iron fetters. Then he called Keśī and commissioned him to go and kill Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Rāma. After that, he called together his advisers like Muṣṭika, Cānūra, Śāla, Tośalaka and others, as also the masters of his elephant stable, and said: "Now, O valiant wrestlers, Chānūra, Muṣṭika and others! Hear this news. 23. I understand that in the cow-herd settlement of Nanda, the two sons of Vasudeva named Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa are dwelling, and that I shall be meeting my death at their hands. 24. We shall get this Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa here, and kill them in a wrestling match with you. In the amphitheatre for wrestling matches, order galleries to be set up. Let all the inhabitants of the city and the villages have the benefit of enjoying the wrestling match. 25. O my dear chief of the elephant stables! You station the elephant Kuvala-yāpīḍa at the gate of the theatre, and induce the elephant to destroy my enemies. 26. Let a bow-worship be ceremonially inaugurated on the fourteenth lunar day sacred to Śiva, and let animals be sacrificed in honour of Paśupati, the ready bestower of boons.

### *Kaṁsa commissioning Akrūra (27-40)*

27. Kaṁsa, well versed in the methods of achieving his personal ends, next called Akrūra, a leader of the Yadu clan, and clasping his hand said to him as follows: 28. "O Akrūra dear! You have to do for me something, which only a close friend can do. I do not find among the Bhojas and Vṛṣṇis anyone to match you in true humility and generosity. 29. O gentle one! Just as Indra, the Lord of the worlds achieved his ends by depending on Viṣṇu, so I depend on you for a great achievement. 30.

Please go to the cowherd settle-ment of Nanda's Vraja where Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, the sons of Vasudeva, are staying. You have to bring them here in this chariot without delay. 31. With the support of Mahāviṣṇu the Devas have devised a plan for my death through the agency of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. You are to bring these two here along with Nanda and the Gopas carrying their tributes to me. 32. When they arrive here, I shall have them killed by my elephant Kuvalayāpīḍa, who is as good as Death himself. If they escape from the elephant, I shall arrange wrestlers, fierce like thunderbolts to kill them. 33. After they are killed, it is easy to destroy their afflicted friends and relatives — all the important Yādavas and Vṛṣṇis like Vasudeva and the rest. 34. I shall then easily kill Ugrasena, my father, who though old is anxious to regain his sovereignty, as also his brother Devaka and others who are opposed to me.

35. My friend! If this is done, this land will be rid of all its thorns, Jarāsandha (my father-in-law) is as good as my father; while Dvidida is my beloved friend. 36. Besides, Sambara, Naraka, Bāṇa and several others have entered into alliance with me. With their help I will destroy all the kings who are on the side of the Devas, and shall rule over this earth. 37. You now understand the situation. You have therefore to go soon and fetch the boys Rāma and Kṛṣṇa to participate in the Dhanuryajna (worship of the bow) to be held soon and to behold the splendour of the city of Mathurā.” Akrūra replied: 38. “O King! Your resolution to save yourself from death is certainly in order. But you have to be even-minded in success and failure. For it is the unseen divine agency that awards the fruits of all actions. 39. Men often plan without taking the divine will into consideration. When the results are favourable they rejoice, and they are sorrow-stricken when they are unfavourable. Yet I shall carry out your command.” *Śrī Śuka said*: 40. Having ordered Akrūra and his other advisers thus, Kāṁsa left for his palace. Akrūra too went home.

## The destruction of Keśī and Vyomāsura

### *Keśī the Horse-Demon (1-9)*

*Śrī Śuka said:* 1. Then came Keśī, an envoy of Kaṁsa, in the form of a huge and very fast horse, furrowing the earth with his hooves, shattering the clouds by his mane and terrifying everyone by his fierce neighing. 2. With his eyes wide open, mouth resembling a capacious cave, neck massive, resembling a large dark cloud, and mind full of evil, the Asura, intent on pleasing Kaṁsa, approached, sending the cow-herd settlement of Nanda into shivers. 3. The Asura, who was thus frightening all in Gokula with his roar, driving away the clouds by the waving of his tail, and searching everywhere for his enemy, was now confronted by the Lord who appeared before him and beckoned him. The Asura retorted with a wild challenging neigh. 4. Seeing the Lord in front, he charged at Śrī Kṛṣṇa with his huge mouth so wide open that it looked as if he was going to swallow the skies. Angry and formidable, he powerfully kicked the Lord with his two hind legs. 5. Evading his kick, the Lord, roused to anger, caught hold of him by his raised legs and whirling him round and round, threw him contemptuously a hundred yards away, as Garuḍa does with a serpent, and waited. 6. Regaining his consciousness, the Asura charged at Śrī Kṛṣṇa again, with his mouth wide open. With a smiling face, the Lord thereupon thrust his left arm into his mouth fearlessly, as a snake thrusts itself into its hole. 7. Keśī's teeth, with which he tried to bite the Lord's arm, fell out as on contact with red-hot iron. The arm of the Lord that was thrust into him now grew in size like a neglected disease. 8. Keśī was choked to death by that swelling arm of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Suffocated thus, he writhed, striking the ground with his legs, and fell down, perspiring, evacuating, with his eyes popping out. 9. Drawing out his arm from the dead Asura's mouth split like a Karkatika fruit, Śrī Kṛṣṇa stood there without the least pride in having killed the demon with such



ease. The astonished celestials rained flowers from above....

## Destruction of Vyomāsura (26-34)

*Śrī Śuka said:* ...26. The Lord continued to tend the cattle along with the Gopas who were highly jubilant over the destruction of Keśī in a fight. 27. Once Śrī Kṛṣṇa with the Gopa boys, while pasturing cattle on the mountain slope, organised a hide-and-seek game in which some acted as cow-keepers and others as cattle-lifters. 28. O King! Some impersonated as keepers, some as animals and still others as thieves. 29. An Asura named Vyoma, the son of Maya, who had great magical powers, came there assuming the form of a Gopa and stole away many Gopa boys who were playing the part of goats and other animals. 30. The Asura took them one by one and shut them up in mountain caves. Only five or six Gopas were left outside. 31. Coming to know of his mis-deed, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the shelter of the pious, caught hold of the Asura in the act of taking away the Gopas, as a lion would do a jackal. 32. The powerful Asura now resumed his real form as huge as a mountain, and tried his best to get out of the clutches of Śrī Kṛṣṇa but could not. 33. Śrī Kṛṣṇa threw him on the ground and, witnessed by the Devas killed him by suffocating him. 34. He then released the Gopas by breaking open the seal of the caves and, amidst the praise of the Devas and the Gopas, returned to his home in Nanda's settlement

## Akrūra's arrival in Gokula

### *Akrūra's Reveries on the Way (1-23)*

Śrī Śuka said: 1. Commissioned by Kāṁsa, Akrūra spent that night at Mathurā in great expectation and started for Nanda's Gokula in the early morning. 2. The high-souled Akrūra, while on the way, had a great upsurge of devotion to the supreme lotus-eyed Lord, and thought thus: 3. What pious works must I have performed, what Tapas must I have done, what great charity to deserving persons must I have made that I shall be having the good fortune of seeing Keśava today! 4. Just as a man of low culture is not fit to utter the Veda, so to me, a worldly-minded man, the sight of the Lord is impossible. 5. But no, no! Even a degenerate fellow like me is going to have a view of him today. Among the large number of people flowing down the stream of Time, some fortunate ones may be able to go across the current to the other shore through some unexpected help. Like that, the grace of the Lord makes even the impossible possible. 6. Today all my sins have been dispelled and my birth in this world has attained its fulfillment. For, I shall soon be prostrating actually at the lotus-feet of the Lord, on which great Yogis can only meditate upon. 7. Today, even Kāṁsa, unknown to generosity, has done me a very great good. For, it is due to being commissioned by him that I shall be getting an opportunity to prostrate at the feet of Śrī Hari incarnate, by the light of whose toe nails great men in the past have transcended the darkness of ignorance in their hearts. 8. Those holy feet have been worshipped by divinities like Brahmā and Maheswara as also by the divine Śrī Devi, the great sages and all devotees. With those very feet, marked with the saffron from the breasts of the Gopīs, he is now treading the forest of Vṛṇḍāvana along with companions pasturing the cattle. 9. Soon I shall see today the face of Śrī Kṛṣṇa overhung by curly locks,

and possessed of handsome cheeks, nose, smiling looks and eyes resembling red lotuses. There are deer circumambulating me, a sure sign of the good that shall befall me. 10. Indeed, my eyes shall not fail to attain their fulfillment even now, if they will be able to see that human form of Viṣṇu, the centre of abounding beauty, adopted at His own will for the mitigation of the burdens that the earth has been bearing. 11. He who, being without any egoistic sense, is but the uninvolved witness of this universe of cause and effect, and who by His own light of knowledge has dispelled the darkness of ignorance and its attendant experience of duality — even He has by His will brought into existence in His being an embodied form that looks human, and is seen in arbours and in the houses of the Gopikās of Vṛndāvana. 12. Words and works devoted to the description of His sanctifying and auspicious excellences and sportive activities in His Incarnations enlighten, purify and energise the whole world. All literature devoid of them is like decorations on a corpse. 13. He is now born in the clan of the Satvatas for furthering the cause of the Devas, whom He has appointed to administer the laws He has laid down for the good of the world. He stays now in the cowherd settlement with the Gopas, performing deeds that enhance his glory, and the Devas are even now singing about that glory of his. 14. The fact that I nowadays see auspicious sights at dawn, indicates that I shall today see Him who is the one joy-giver and enlightener of the universe, the one worthy of seeing for all endowed with eyes, the one centre of all the aspirations of Śrī Devi, and the one person who is the refuge and teacher of all holy men. 15. Immediately at the sight of Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, I shall jump down from the chariot and prostrate in truth and in reality at their feet, which Yogis can only meditate upon in their mind. I shall also bow down before their pastoral comrades. 16. Would not the Infinite One place on my head, lying prostrate at His feet, those blessed hands that give refuge to all those who run to Him out of fear of the speed with which the serpent of Time is approaching them? 17. By placing some little

offering in those hands, Indra and also Mahābali attained to the lordship of all the three worlds. And the Gopīs of Vṛṇḍāvana felt free from weariness and attained to the highest bliss by those blessed hands, fragrant like the Sau-gandhika flower, being placed on their bodies at the time of the Rāsa dance. 18. Though I am a messenger sent by Kaṁsa, the Lord who is all-seeing will not certainly consider me with an inimical eye. For He, who is the indweller in all, by His penetrative insight sees everything within or without. 19. I shall certainly attain to supreme bliss if He but casts His smiling looks at me, showering a rain of ambrosia on me lying flat at his feet. All my sins being thus dispelled, I shall be free from all doubts and be established in a state of perpetual joy. 20. My body will become a centre of holiness and my bondage of Karma will be destroyed when His powerful arms bind me in embrace, his dearest friend, kinsman and whole-hearted devotee. 21. My birth as a human being would become worthwhile and significant on his addressing me, saying 'O Akṛūra', when I stand before Him humbly bowing down and saluting, after He has thus embraced me. 22. To none is he particularly dear and friendly nor is anyone the object of his enmity or cold indifference. But still He blesses devotees appropriate to the manner in which they worship Him, just as the heavenly Kalpaka tree yields all their wants to those who rest under it. 23. Balarāma too would smilingly embrace me, and taking my hands held in salutation, he would lead me into the house and entertain me, and ask what Kaṁsa was planning and plotting against his clansmen.

*Akrūra's Reactions on arriving at Vraja (24-27)*

Śrī Śuka said: 24. Lost in such reveries about Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Akṛūra, the son of Śvaphalka, travelled and found himself when the sun was about to set in the precincts of that cowherd settlement, and now began to see here and there, the footprints of the holy feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa — the feet that receive the obeisance of the crowned heads of all divinities and are distinguished by

the holy marks of lotus, grain and hook. 26. Highly excited at the sight of these footprints, all the hair on his body stood on end, and tears flowed in torrents from his eyes, as an outburst of devotional feeling. He jumped out of his chariot, exclaiming; "Here is the foot-dust of my Lord! Here is the foot-dust of my Lord!" and began to roll in that holy dust. 27. What happened thus to Akrūra in the course of his conveying the message of Kāṁsa, namely, the attainment of that divine state of devotional inebriation at the very sight of the Lord's holy emblems, or the hearing of his divine names to the utter effacement of all insincerity, fear, and sorrow — that, indeed, is the highest attainment for any human being.

### *Akrūra's Vision of Śrī Kṛṣṇa (28-33)*

28. He saw Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa standing at the milking yard, wearing blue and yellow clothes and having eyes that were as attractive as the petals of a lotus in the Śarat (autumn) season. 29-33, Akrūra saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Rāma still boyish in age, dark and fair in complexion respectively, the abode of Śrī, possessing powerful arms, endowed with pleasant faces and pre-possessing beauty, and charged with the combative spirit of young elephants. He saw Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whose footprints with the marks of flag, thunderbolt, hook, lotus and the like added to the splendour of Vraja, who were magnanimous in spirit, and whose looks and smile scattered love and sympathy all round. Decorated with jewelled necklaces and floral garlands, and dressed in fresh clothes and besmeared with fragrant sandal paste after their evening bath, he found them sublime and attractive in their playful movements. He saw Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the incarnate Lord — the embodiment of Pradhāna and Purusha, the Original Being, the cause and the master of all —, come for the good of the world. He saw them, O King, as two mountains of emerald and silver lined with gold, illumining the quarters with their divine effulgence.

*Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Reception of Akrūra (34-43)*

34-35. On seeing them, Akrūra jumped down from his chariot owing to the upsurge of devotion and threw himself prostrate at the feet of Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, with eyes blinded by tears of joy, and hair standing on end through love. Choked with emotion he could not even announce his own name. 36. The Lord, the lover of his devotees, who understood the cause of Akrūra's visit, drew him towards him, and embraced him with his arms that bore the marks made by his discus Sudarśana. 37. Balarāma also embraced the prostrating Akrūra, and holding him by hand, led him along with his brother into their house. 38. Extending him a warm welcome, they seated him on an elevated seat, washed his feet with due ceremony, and offered him Madhuparka, made of honey, clarified butter and curds. 39. A cow was presented to the guest, whose weary limbs were massaged by the Lord. Next he was served with food consisting of many savoury items. 40. After he was refreshed, Rāma who was an expert in rules of conduct and hospitality, pleased him immensely by offering him betel leaves, sandal paste and wreaths of sweet-smelling flowers. 41. When he had thus been shown the customary hospitality, Nanda addressed him thus: "O distinguished member of the Yadu clan! As long as cruel Kāṁsa is there, how do you Yadavas get on? Your life must necessarily be like that of sheep under the protection of a butcher. 42. What enquiry shall I make of the welfare of the subjects of a cruel king like Kāṁsa whose pleasure consists in killing others and who mercilessly slaughtered the infants of his own weeping sister!" 43. Being welcomed with pleasing words by Nanda, Akrūra felt much relieved from the fatigue of the journey.



## Departure of Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Mathurā

### *Kaṁsa's Order (1-12)*

*Śrī Śuka said:* 1. Being thus greatly honoured by Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa and seated comfortably on a couch, Akrūra felt that all his reveries on the way had now come true. 2. What is there unattainable to one on whom the Lord, the abode of Śrī, is gracious? But, O King, devotees crave for no benefits. 3. After supper, the Lord conversed with Akrūra on the condition of his clansmen, the Yādavas, under Kaṁsa, and about other matters concerning his mission.

*The Lord said:* 4. O dear friend! I hope your journey was pleasant. Are all our kinsmen doing well? 5. When our reputed uncle, Kaṁsa, the canker of our family, is there, what point is there in asking about the welfare of persons who are his subjects and relatives? 6. Alas! Because of us, our respected parents have had to stand a great many trials. They had to witness the death of their children, and also suffer imprisonment. 7. O dear one! It is indeed fortunate that my long-cherished desire of meeting you, my kinsman, has been fulfilled. I would now like to hear what exactly it is that brings you here now.

*Śrī Śuka said:* 8. Thus questioned by the Lord, Akrūra, a scion of Madhu's family, narrated all, about Kaṁsa's antagonism towards the Yadus and of his attempt to kill Vasudeva. 9. He informed Śrī Kṛṣṇa all about the object with which Kaṁsa had sent him on this mission, as also of Nārada's informing Kaṁsa that he (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) was really the son of Vasudeva and not of Nanda. 10. Hearing Akrūra's words, Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the dauntless destroyers of all foemen, laughed and informed their father of the order of the king that they should all attend the bow festival at his palace. 11. Nanda duly instructed the Gopas as follows: "Let all the yield of the cows (milk, curds and clarified butter) be collected, also other objects of presentation for the king, and harness the carts for the journey. 12. We shall



start tomorrow for the city of Mathurā. We shall present to the king all the delicious substances and witness the great sacrificial festival of bow worship. It seems it will be attended by the whole kingdom." Nanda caused this information to be announced all over his cowherd settlement by the watchman by beat of drums.

*The Wailing of the Gopīs (13-30)*

13. The Gopīs, to whom Śrī Kṛṣṇa was the very life-breath, were overwhelmed with grief to hear that Akrūra had come to take Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Mathurā. 14. Pale with grief, some of them sighed while some others knew not that their braids, clothes and bracelets were falling. 15. Others fell into such deep meditation on him that all the movements of their senses and mind became still, and they forgot their very bodies, like sages intuiting the Ātman in Samādhi.

16. Others fainted, as they recalled the talks of Śrī Hari that had touched the very chords of their hearts, with wonderful expressions, uttered with intense love and accompanied by his sweet smiles. 17-18. Those Gopikās, whose minds were absorbed in Śrī Kṛṣṇa, became frightened and sorrow-stricken at the thought of impending separation from him on whose charming gait, loving smile, captivating looks, consoling humour and extraordinary deeds they ruminated over and over again. They gathered together, and with tears in their eyes, began to speak as follows:

*The Gopīs said:* 19. Alas! O Creator! Hast Thou not got even an atom of mercy that Thou forgest bonds of friendship and love between living beings, and then separates them before they have enjoyed the fruits of that friendship and love? Thy actions look like infantile play, without any purpose. 20. Having shown us the face of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, endowed with handsome cheeks and a high nose, framed by dark curly locks and beautified by a smile that dispels all grief bringing joy and courage to all, you are withdrawing it from our vision by separating him

from us. This act of yours is far from good. 21. Thou, cruel one, hast come in the guise of a man named Akrūra (literally 'not cruel'), and art, alas! — as if unknowingly — depriving us of the eye that Thou Thyself hast given us, with which we witnessed the entirety of beauty that Thy creative skill is capable of, in a single limb of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. 22. It is a thousand pities that Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda, does not see how afflicted we are by this, his act of neglect — we who have been enslaved by the spell cast by him and have abandoned our homes, relatives, sons and husbands to become his handmaids in truth and in reality! Surely his affections are short-lived, and he must be after novelty in love! 23. The wishes of the women of the city of Mathurā are going to be fulfilled, and this night shall be the herald of a really happy dawn for them. For tomorrow they will fondly gaze on the countenance of the Lord of Vraja, with his nectarous smiles enhanced by his sidelong glances, even as he fearlessly enters their city. 24. Kṛṣṇa may be a person of great nobility of mind and may have great affection for his parents, but these in themselves will not be able to bring him back to Gokula, much less to us, mere country-bred girls. For Śrī Kṛṣṇa's mind will be stolen away and held captive by the sweet, honey-dripping utterances of the city-bred women of Mathurā as also by their bashful looks and amorous movements. 25. Surely, tomorrow shall witness a great festival for the eyes of the different clans of the Yādavas of Mathurā as also for the passers-by who shall be seeing the face of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devaki and the consort of Śrī. 26. How is it that such a name as Akrūra (not cruel) is given to this man who has no trace of kindness in him! For, he has no hesitation to do so heinous an act as taking away Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the one dearer to us than life, to a distant place without even a word of consolation or hope to us who are drowned in grief and despair.

27. Now Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the hard-hearted, has got into the chariot. Following him, these arrogant Gopas too are urging Akrura to make haste. The elders of the clan are watching unconcerned.

This is a bad time for us, and even God seems to have turned against us. 28. Let us go and supplicate Śrī Kṛṣṇa and stop him. What harm can the elders of our families do to us who stand deprived by Providence of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's company — which is difficult for us to forego even for a minute — and are so distressed in mind? 29. How shall we overcome the anguish of separation from him in whose company we lost the sense of time to such an extent, as to experience as an instant the many nights we spent in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's company in the Rāsa assembly, enlivened by his winsome smiles, charming whispers, playful glances and warm embraces, all of which were inspired by his love? 30. How can we really survive without him who — when he enters Vraja at sunset, surrounded by his brother and Gopa companions and playing on his flute, his curly locks and flower wreaths all bathed in dust raised by the hooves of cows — used to captivate our minds by his sidelong glances full of smiles?

*Behaviour of the Gopīs at Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Departure (31-37)*

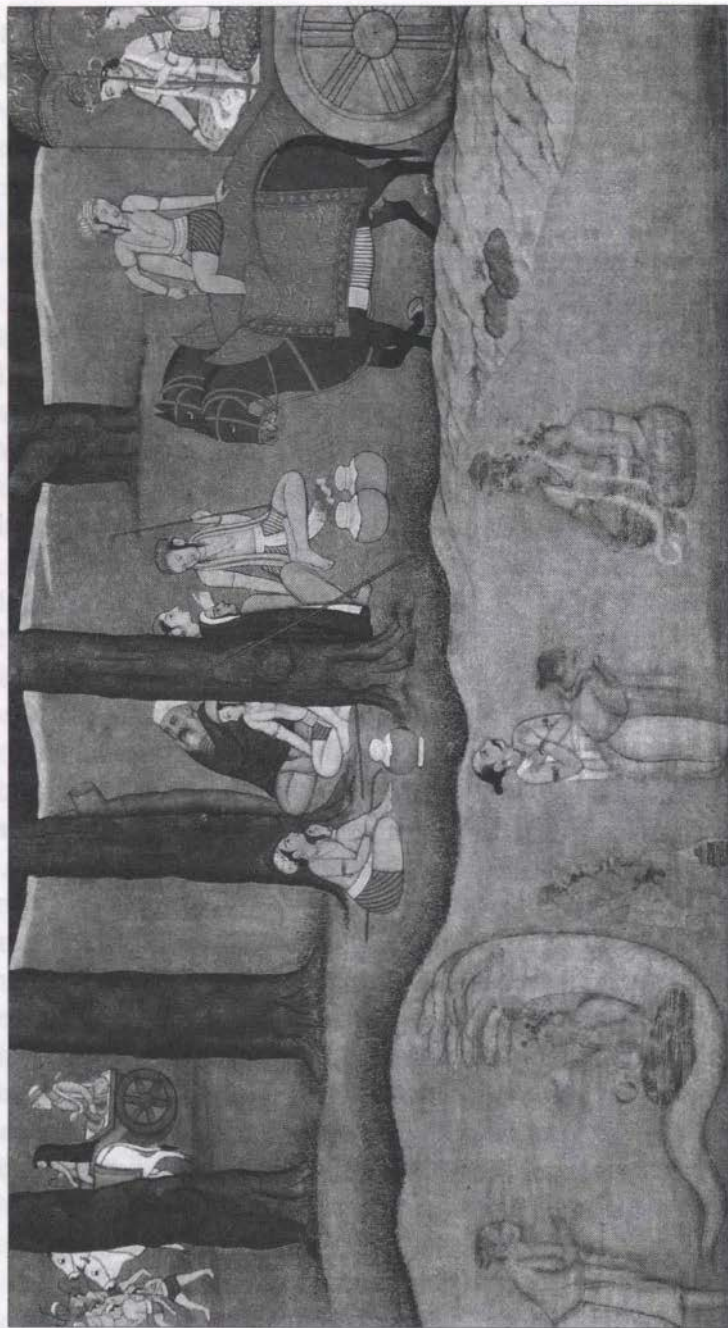
Śrī Śuka said: 31. Thus the women of Vraja, suffering from excruciating pangs of the prospective separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa and having their minds absorbed in him, lost all hesitation arising from modesty and began to cry aloud, saying, "O our Govinda! O our Dāmodara! O our Mādhava!" and so on. 32. The night passed, with the women of Vraja crying like this. When it was daybreak, Akrūra, after his morning prayers, started his chariot with Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Rāma seated within. 33. Nanda and his Gopas in carts laden with pitchers full of milk products and other objects for presentation followed them. 34. The Gopīs, who followed their dear Śrī Kṛṣṇa, felt a little consoled and encouraged when Śrī Kṛṣṇa turned to look at them and smiled. They stopped the chariot and waited for a message from him. 35. Seeing the Gopīs disconsolate at his departure, Śrī Kṛṣṇa comforted them telling them very lovingly that he would return soon. 36. They remained where they were, motionless like pictures drawn on canvas, viewing the departing Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and

mentally absorbed in pursuing his chariot, until the flag of the chariot disappeared from sight and the dust raised by it was no longer visible. 37. Now giving up all hopes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's immediate return, they went back home. Singing about the pastimes of their beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa, they spent days and nights, their sorrow assuaged a little by absorption in his thought.

*Revelation given to Akrūra (38-57)* \*

38. O King! The Lord, with Rāma and Akrūra traveling in his chariot swift as the wind, soon reached the banks of the sacred Kālindī (Yamuna), the destroyer of the sins of those who bathe in it. 39. There, washing hands and feet, they quenched their thirst drinking the pure crystalline waters of the river green as an emerald. Then Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa came back and seated themselves in the chariot that was parked in a shady grove. 40. Akrūra, after escorting Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa to the chariot, went with their permission to have a ceremonial bath at the sacred bathing-ghat on the Yamunā. 41. As Akrūra submerged himself in the water and began repeating the Gāyatri Mantra, he saw Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa within the water (although he had seen them only just before, seated in the chariot). 42. "How could these sons of Vasudeva, who are seated in the chariot, appear in the water of the Kālindī? Have they then left the chariot?"

Thinking thus, he surfaced from the water, and looked at the chariot for corroboration. 43. But, he found them seated in the chariot as before. Now thinking that what he saw in the water was illusory, he submerged himself in it once again. 44. There he saw again the divine vision of the Lord. He saw the great serpent Ādiśeṣa being glorified and prayed to, with bowed heads by hosts of various celestials and divinities. 45. He saw that divine serpent having a thousand heads and a thousand diademed hoods, wearing a blue cloth, white like the filament within the lotus stalk, and resembling Mount Kailāsa with its many peaks. 46. He beheld on the coils of the serpent the supreme Person Mahāviṣṇu, dark in complexion, wearing a yellow



Krishna revealing his divinity to Akura: "He saw Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa within the water" .

silk garment and having four arms and eyes crimson like a lotus flower — a very picture of serenity. 47. He saw Him with a face calm and bewitchingly attractive by its sweet smile and looks, by its expressive brows and high nose, and by its comely ears, cheeks, and lips. 48. He had arms long and stout; shoulders high; chest illumined by Śrī; neck shapely like a conch; navel wide and deep; and abdomen marked by three folds and thin like a leaf. 49. His waist and hips were massive; His thighs were thick and tapering like an elephant's trunk; and His knees and ankles were well formed and handsome. 50. His lotus-feet with their petals of shapely toes were illumined by the sheen of their red-tinged nails and raised anklets. 51-52. His ornaments consisted of a diadem, armlets, and bracelets, all studded with sparkling precious gems, besides the sacred thread and the shining necklace, anklets, and earrings. In one of his hands, he held the play-lotus while in the others he sported the conch, discus, and mace. His chest illumined by the auspicious mark Śrīvatsa, the brilliant neck-jewel Kaustubha, and a floral garland. 53-54. He was being glorified through praises expressive of divergent sentiments by attendants, the foremost of whom were Sunanda and Nanda; by Sanaka and other sages; by Divinities like Brahmā and Rudra; and by the nine Brāhmaṇa sages (Marīci, Atri, Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Bhrigu, Vasishtha and Daksha); and by great Bhāgavatottamas like Prah-lāda, Nārada, Vasu and others. 55. He was being adored by deities like Śrī, Puṣṭi, Saraswatī, Sānti, Kīrti, Tuṣṭi, Bhu, Ūrjā, and by His Mayāśakti consisting of Vidyā and Avidyā that cause liberation and bondage. 56-57. Seeing the Lord in this setting, Akrūra was filled with the highest delight and devotion. All his hairs stood on end, his eyes shed copious tears and he stretched himself down in prostration. Recovering a little from the overpowering effect of devotion, he, with a concentrated mind and with joined palms held in salutation, praised Śrī Kṛṣṇa in a trembling voice charged with excessive devotion.

## Akrūra's eulogy

### *The Primordial Being Nārāyaṇa (1-3)*

*Akrūra said:* 1. I prostrate before Thee, the ultimate cause of all, beyond the cause-and-effect relationship. I prostrate before Nārāyaṇa, the primordial and imperishable Person, from whose navel came the cosmic lotus, in which was seated Brahmā who created all the worlds. 2. All categories of evolution like the earth, water, fire, air, sky, their cause Mahāttattva (cosmic intelligence), Prakriti, the Puruṣa its cause, the mind, senses, objects of the senses, Devas — all these, though considered as causes, are but parts of Thy being. 3. Prakriti and all the above-mentioned categories being material and gras-ed only as objects of consciousness, they and their combinations (the embodied beings) are not able to know Thee who art Pure Spirit, and therefore the Pure Subject. Even Brahmā cannot grasp Thee, the Transcendent Spirit, as he is bound by the modes of material Prakriti.

### *All Paths lead to Thee (4-10)*

4. Persons who have developed the highest spiritual insight worship Thee directly (without the help of any substitute or symbol) through intuition, as the one Lord and Universal Being. Other devotees who require the use of symbols, worship Thee as dwelling in the body, or as dwelling in Nature, or as dwelling in the Devas. 5. Persons devoted to the ritualistic type of Karma Yoga worship Thee according to the Vedic Karma-kāṇḍa through various Yajnas, invoking Thee under the many forms and names of deities known to the sacrificial cult. 6. There are some who, on attaining knowledge, abandon all Karmas and adore Thee, the embodiment of knowledge, through the performance of knowledge-sacrifice (Jñāna-yajna). 7. There are others who follow the path of devotion prescribed by Thee in Pāṇcharātra and other devotional texts and attain to spiritual



perfection, by meditating on Thee as the manifold form of the four Vyuhās (Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Anirudha), and as Mahānārāyaṇa, the one Universal Being. 8. O Lord! Owing to the prevalence of different spiritual traditions based on the teachings of a variety of teachers, there are still others who, following the cult of Śaivism, worship Thee as Siva. 9. Even those who worship Deities other than Thee, and follow a different faith, worship only Thee, whose embodiment all Divinities are. 10. O Lord! Just as all rivers, originating from different mountains and fed by rain, finally enter the ocean, so also all paths of worship lead ultimately to Thee.

### *Divine Manifestations (11-15)*

11. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are the three aspects constituting Thy Prakṛti. All beings, from Brahmā down to inert substances, have come out of these Guṇas of Prakṛti and are sustained by them even as the beads of a necklace are by its thread. 12. Salutations to Thee who art all this, but yet art not attached to anything and art only their witness. This cosmic manifestation is the work of Thy Māyāśakti. It affects beings of various types like Devas, men and animals involved in it, but not Thee who art its master. 13-14. The fire is Thy face; the earth, Thy feet; the sun, Thy eyesight; the sky, Thy navel; the quarters, Thy hearing; the celestials, Thy arms; the ocean, Thy abdomen; the air, Thy vital energy; the trees and plants, Thy hair; the clouds, Thy locks; the mountains, Thy bones and nails; the night and day, Thy winking; the Prajāpati, Thy reproductive organ; and the rain, Thy semen. Such is the conception given for meditation on Thee. 15. Conceived in Thee O Perfect and Imperishable One!, who can only be hinted at by the mind, the numberless universes, — teeming with innumerable Jivas — with their protecting deities, float in Thy numerous dimensions like the eggs of aquatic creatures of minute sizes or like microbes in the fig fruit.

*Refuge in the Lord (16-30)*

16. Whatever forms Thou hast assumed for Thy sportive activities — about them, persons who have been rid of their sins and sorrows sing in glorification with great delight. 17. Salutations to Thee the Causal Fish traversing the waters of the deluge! Salutations to Thee the Horse necked one (Hayagrīva) who destroyed Madhu and Kaiṭabha! 18. Salutations to Thee the great Tortoise who supported the Mandara mountain at the churning of the ocean! Salutations to Thee who incarnated as the Cosmic Boar to lift up the earth as in play and establish it in the proper place! 19. Salutations to Thee who didst assume the form of the wondrous Man-Lion in order to protect Thy devotees from fears and dangers! Salutations to Thee who as Vāmaṇa (the Holy Dwarf) measured the whole universe with three strides! 20. Salutations to Thee! Rāma with the axe, the leader of the Bhṛṅgus, who decimated the tribe of proud and insolent Kṣatriyas! Salutations to Thee, Rāma the leader of the Raghus, who destroyed Rāvaṇa and his followers! 21. Salutations to Thee manifested for the protection of the devotees as the four Vyūhas — Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha! 22. Salutation to Thee as the Buddha, the pure one, who would bring confusion among the Daityas and Dānavas! Salutations to Thee as Kalki who would bring the destruction of kings and other ruling authorities that have degenerated into the state of barbarism! 23. O worshipful Lord! The world of living creatures overpowered by Thy Māya goes round and round the wheel of Saṁsāra, infatuated by the false sense of 'I and mine'. 24. O All-pervading One! I too am subject to the infatuation of holding as permanent such fleeting and dream-like objectives as body, children, houses, wife, sense enjoyments, relatives and other things. 25. I am debarred from knowing Thee, the one source of disinterested love and bliss, because of my misplaced and contrary way of understanding what is the permanent as distinguished from the impermanent, what is the spirit as distinguished from the body, and what leads to joy as distinguished

from what leads to suffering. Because of the oscillation of the mind between such extremes, it is merged in ignorance. 26. Just as a stupid man in search of water leaves a tank because its water is covered over by growths from within like water-weeds, and goes after a mirage, which contains no water, so am I, unmindful of Thee under Māyā's cover, seeking happiness in bodily concerns. 27. Pitiably weak-willed as I am, I find it impossible to control my mind, plagued by desires and the works they prompt one to undertake, and drawn hither and thither by the exciting senses. 28. I, who am thus under the bondage of the senses, nonetheless seek as my refuge Thy feet, which people with impure and uncontrolled minds cannot usually do. O Lord! It is only by Thy grace that I am enabled to do this, in spite of my unworthiness. The contact with holy men is what is generally supposed to turn men's minds towards Thee. But, O Lotus-navelled One, it is only when, by Thy grace, the time to be free from Saṁsāra has come, that one gets holy company and through that, the mental inclination to practice devotion. 29. Salutations to Thee who art Pure Consciousness, who art the source of consciousness everywhere, who art the infinite power of Brahman controlling the three factors of Time, Karma and Nature that determine the destiny of Jīvas! 30. Salutations to Thee Vāsudeva, the soul of all souls; to Thee Saṅkarṣaṇa, the support of Ahaṅkāra; to Thee Pradyumna and Aniruddha, the controllers of the mind and the senses! Protect me who am fallen at Thy feet, O Lord!



## Entry into the city of Mathura

### *Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Query about the Vision (1-5)*

*Śrī Śuka said:* 1. Thus Lord Kṛṣṇa showed to Akrūra, submerged in water, his divine form, which he soon withdrew, just as a dancer drops his pose. 2. Akrūra, noticing that Śrī Kṛṣṇa had disappeared, emerged from the water, performed his noon-day rites in haste, and went back to the chariot in utter astonishment. 3. Śrī Kṛṣṇa now asked him: "You appear to have witnessed something very unusual. What wonder did you see just now on earth, in the heavens or in the water? Signs indicate it. What could it be?"

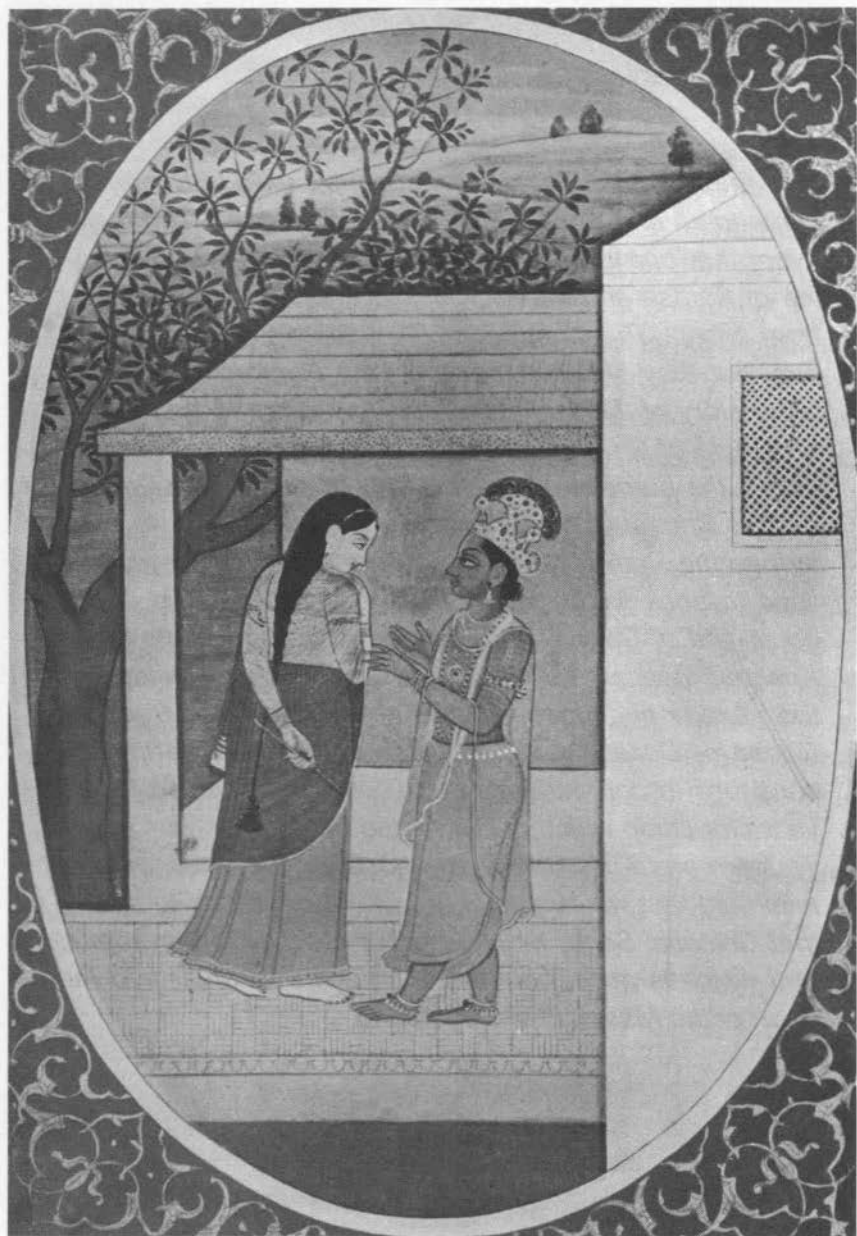
*Akrūra said:* 4. "Whatever wonders there are on this earth, in the firmament or in the water exist in Thee alone, who ensoul the universe. When I see Thee, that Existence before me, what wonderful phenomena can be excluded from my sight? It is therefore impossible for me to distinguish and say what I have seen and what I have not. 5. When I am gazing on Thyself, in whom all marvels exist, O infinite Lord, what miracle could have been seen by me elsewhere — on this earth, in the sky or in water?"

Observing thus, Akrūra drove his chariot, and arrived at Mathurā with Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa at the decline of day.



*With the arrival at Mathura Sri Krishna's exile to Brindavan came to an end. A new chapter of glory began. The major event that occurred in that chapter was Sri Krishna's killing of Kamsa and the liberation of Vasudeva and Devaki from prison. The chapters of Sri Krishna's life are numerous, but they should be read in the Puranas and in the great story of the Mahabharata. How can that great story of the life of Sri Krishna be contained in this small monograph, the purpose of which is only to depict Sri Krishna's exile to Brindavan? That episode of Sri Krishna's life gave birth to the Path of Divine Love. That Path has stirred millions to seek in their hearts, the unutterable love of the gopis and of Radha, and to strive to hear the flute of Sri Krishna, to allow its music and its divine call to drench their hearts and limbs with the nectar that flows from the Ocean of Delight, that had incarnated on the earth, and continues to pour streams and floods on all whose hearts yearn for union with that incarnated Being.*

*To learn more of Sri Krishna, much can be done, but the minimum that we can do is to invite the readers to turn to that Celestial Song, which is known as the Bhagavadgita, and which is accessible to all who care to enter into the heart of the Message of Sri Krishna.*



Radha hiding Krishna 's flute

## Part II

# On Puranic Literature





A few extracts from  
Sri Aurobindo's "The Foundations of Indian Culture"

**T**he Puranas are essentially a true religious poetry, an art of aesthetic presentation of religious truth. All the bulk of the eighteen Puranas does not indeed take a high rank in this kind: there is much waste substance and not a little of dull and dreary matter, but on the whole the poetic method employed is justified by the richness and power of the creation. The earliest work is the best — with one exception at the end in a style which stands by itself and is unique. The Vishnu Purana for instance in spite of one or two desert spaces is a remarkable literary creation of a very considerable quality maintaining much of the direct force and height of the old epic style. There is in it a varied movement, much vigorous and some sublime epic writing, an occasional lyrical element of a lucid sweetness and beauty, a number of narratives of the finest verve and skilful simplicity of poetic workmanship. The Bhagavat coming at the end and departing to a great extent from the more popular style and manner, for it is strongly affected by the learned and more ornately literary form of speech, is a still more remarkable production full of subtlety, rich and deep thought and beauty. It is here that we get the culmination of the movement which had the most important effects on the future, the evolution of the emotional and ecstatic religions of Bhakti.

Indian mind is always compelled by its master impulse to reduce all its experience of life to the corresponding spiritual term and factor and the result was a transfiguring of even these most external things into a basis for new spiritual experience. The emotional, the sensuous, even the sensual motions of the being,

before they could draw the soul farther outward, were taken and transmuted into a psychical form and, so changed, they became the elements of a mystic capture of the Divine through the heart and the senses and a religion of the joy of God's love, delight and beauty. In the Tantra the new elements are taken up and assigned their place in a complete psycho-spiritual and psycho-physical science of Yoga. Its popular form in the Vaishnava religion centres round the mystic apologue of the pastoral life of the child Krishna. In the Vishnu Purana the tale of Krishna is a heroic saga of the divine Avatar; in later Puranas we see the aesthetic and erotic symbol developing and in the Bhagavat it is given its full power and prepared to manifest its entire spiritual and philosophic as well as its psychic sense and to remould into its own lines by a shifting of the center of synthesis from knowledge to spiritual love and delight the earlier significance of Vedanta. The perfect outcome of this evolution is to be found in the philosophy and religion of divine love promulgated by Chaitanya.

Thus under the stress of temperamental variation the poetry of the Vaishnavas puts on very different artistic forms in different provinces. There is first the use of the psychical symbol created by the Puranas, and this assumes its most complete and artistic shape in Bengal and becomes there a long continued tradition. The desire of the soul for God is there thrown into symbolic figure in the lyrical love cycle of Radha and Krishna, the Nature soul in man seeking for the Divine Soul through love, seized and mastered by his beauty, attracted by his magical flute, abandoning human cares and duties for this one overpowering passion and in the cadence of its phases passing through first desire to the bliss of union, the pangs of separation, the eternal longing and reunion, the *lilā* of the love of the human spirit for God. There is a settled frame and sequence, a subtly simple lyrical rhythm, a traditional diction of appealing directness and often of intense beauty. This accomplished lyrical form springs at once to perfect birth from the genius of the first

two poets who used the Bengali tongue, Bidyapati, a consummate artist of word and line, and the inspired singer Chandidas in whose name stand some of the sweetest and most poignant and exquisite love-lyrics in any tongue. The symbol here is sustained in its most external figure of human passion and so consistently that it is now supposed by many to mean nothing else, but this is quite negatived by the use of the same figures by the devout poets of the religion of Chaitanyā. All the spiritual experience that lay behind the symbol was embodied in that inspired prophet and incarnation of the ecstasy of divine love and its spiritual philosophy put into clear form in his teaching. His followers continued the poetic tradition of the earlier singers and though they fall below them in genius, yet left behind a great mass of this kind of poetry always beautiful in form and often deep and moving in substance. Another type is created in the perfect lyrics of the Rajput queen Mirabai, in which the images of the Krishna symbol are more directly turned into a song of the love and pursuit of the divine Lover by the soul of the singer. In the Bengal poetry the expression preferred is the symbolic figure impersonal to the poet: here a personal note gives the peculiar intensity to the emotion. This is given a still more direct turn by a southern poetess in the image of herself as the bride of Krishna. The peculiar power of this kind of Vaishnava religion and poetry is in the turning of all the human emotions Godward, the passion of love being preferred as the intensest and most absorbing of them all, and though the idea recurs wherever there has been a strong development of devotional religion, it has nowhere been used with so much power and sincerity as in the work of the Indian poets.





Krishna and Radha, by Ukil Sarada ( Bengali School )

## PART III

a ) A selection of poems by some of the mystics and poets of India, on themes related to Sri Krishna and his yoga of divine Love.

b ) A selection from Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu ' s experiences of Sri Krishna and Radha.

c ) A selection from Sri Ramakrishna's experiences of Sri Krishna and Radha.





(a)  
Andal  
The Vaishnava Poetess

Preoccupied from the earliest times with divine knowledge and religious aspiration the Indian mind has turned all forms of human life and emotion and all the phenomena of the universe into symbols and means by which the embodied soul may strive after and grasp the Supreme. Indian devotion has especially seized upon the most intimate human relations and made them stepping-stones to the supra-human. God the Guru, God the Master, God the Friend, God the Mother, God the Child, God the Self, each of these experiences — for to us these are more than merely ideas, — it has carried to its extreme possibilities. But none of them has it pursued, embraced, sung with a more exultant passion of intimate realisation than the yearning for God the Lover, God the Beloved. It would seem as if this passionate human symbol were the natural culminating point for the mounting flame of the soul's devotion: for it is found wherever that devotion has entered into the most secret shrine of the inner temple. We meet it in Islamic poetry; certain experiences of the Christian mystics repeat the forms and images with which we are familiar in the East, but usually with a certain timorousness foreign to the Eastern temperament. For the devotee who has once had this intense experience it is that which admits to the most profound and hidden mystery of the universe; for him the heart has the key of the last secret.

The work of a great Bengali poet has recently reintroduced this idea to the European mind which has so much lost the memory of its old religious traditions as to welcome and wonder at it as a novel form of mystic self-expression. On the contrary it is ancient enough, like all things natural and eternal in the human soul. In Bengal a whole period of national poetry has been

dominated by this single strain and it has inspired a religion and a philosophy. And in the Vaishnavism of the far South, in the songs of the Tamil Alvars we find it again in another form, giving a powerful and original turn to the images of our old classic poetry; for there it has been sung out by the rapt heart of a woman to the Heart of the Universe.

The Tamil word, Alvar, means one who has drowned, lost himself in the sea of the divine being. Among these canonised saints of Southern Vaishnavism ranks Vishnuchitta, Yogin and poet, of Villipattan in the land of the Pandyas. He is termed Perialvar, The Great Alvar. A tradition, which we need not believe, places him in the ninety-eighth year of the Kaliyuga. But these divine singers are ancient enough, since they precede the great saint and philosopher Ramanuja whose personality and teaching were the last flower of the long-growing Vaishnava tradition. Since his time Southern Vaishnavism has been a fixed creed and a system rather than a creator of new spiritual greatnesses.

The poetess Andal was the foster-daughter of Vishnuchitta, found by him, it is said, a new-born child under the sacred Tulsi-plant. We know little of Andal except what we can gather from a few legends, some of them richly beautiful and symbolic. Most of Vishnuchitta's poems have the infancy and boyhood of Krishna for their subject. Andal, brought up in that atmosphere, cast into the mould of her life what her foster-father had sung in inspired hymns. Her own poetry — we may suppose that she passed early into the Light towards which she yearned, for it is small in bulk, — is entirely occupied with her passion for the divine Being. It is said that she went through a symbolic marriage with Sri Ranganatha, Vishnu in his temple at Srirangam, and disappeared into the image of her Lord. This tradition probably conceals some actual fact, for Andal's marriage with the Lord is still celebrated annually with considerable pomp and ceremony.

Sri Aurobindo  
The Hour of God, SABCL Vol.17

## Ye Others\*

Ye others cannot conceive of the love that I bear to Krishna. And your warnings to me are vain like the pleadings of the deaf and mute. The Boy who left his mother's home and was reared by a different mother, — Oh, take me forth to his city of Mathura where He won the field without fighting the battle and leave me there.

Of no further avail is modesty. For all the neighbours have known of this fully. Would ye really heal me of this ailing and restore me to my pristine state? Then know ye this illness will go if I see Him, the maker of illusions, the youthful one who measured the world. Should you really wish to save me, then take me forth to his home in the hamlet of the cowherds and leave me there.

The rumour is already spread over the land that I fled with Him and went the lonely way, leaving all of you behind — my parents, relations and friends. The tongue of scandal ye can hardly silence now. And He, the deceiver, is haunting me with his forms. Oh, take me forth at midnight to the door of the Cowherd named Bliss who owns this son, the maker of havoc, this mocker, this pitiless player; and leave me there.

Oh, grieve not ye, my mothers. Others know little of this strange malady of mine. He whose hue is that of the blue sea, a certain youth called Krishna — the gentle caress of his hand can heal me, for his Yoga is sure and proved.

On the bank of the waters he ascended the Kadamba tree and he leaped to his dance on the hood of the snake, the dance that killed the snake. Oh take me forth to the bank of that lake and leave me there.

There is a parrot here in this cage of mine that ever calls out

his name, saying 'Govinda, Govinda'. 'In anger I chide it and refuse to feed it. "O Thou" it then cries, in its highest pitch, "O Thou who hast measured the worlds." I tell you, my people, if ye really would avoid the top of scandal in all this wide country, if still ye would guard your weal and your good fame, then take me forth to his city of Dwaraka of high mansion and decorated turrets; and leave me there.

### **I Dreamed a Dream\***

*I dreamed a dream, O friend.*

The wedding was fixed for the morrow. And He, the Lion, Madhava, the young Bull whom they call the master of radiances, He came into the hall of wedding decorated with luxuriant palms.

*I dreamed a dream, O friend.*

And the throng of the Gods was there with Indra, the Mind Divine, at their head. And in the shrine they declared me bride and clad me in a new robe of affirmation. And Inner Force is the name of the goddess who adorned me with the garland of the wedding.

*I dreamed a dream, O friend.*

There were beatings of the drum and blowings of the conch; and under the canopy hung heavily with strings of pearls He came, my lover and my lord, the vanquisher of the demon Madhu and grasped me by the hand.

*I dreamed a dream, O friend.*

Those whose voices are blest, they sang the Vedic songs. The holy grass was laid. The sun was established. And He who was puissant like a war-elephant in its rage, He seized my hand and we paced round the Flame.

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\* Andal

## Nammalwar

### The Supreme Vaishnava saint and poet

MÀRAN, renowned as Nammalwar ("Our Saint") among the Vaishnavas and the greatest of their saints and poets, was born in a small town called Kuruhur, in the southernmost region of the Tamil country — Tiru-nel-veli (Tinnevely). His father, Kàri, was a petty prince who paid tribute to the Pandyan King of Madura. We have no means of ascertaining the date of the Alwar's birth, as the traditional account is untrustworthy and full of inconsistencies. We are told that the infant was mute for several years after his birth. Nammalwar renounced the world early in life and spent his time singing and meditating on God under the shade of a tamarind tree by the side of the village temple.

It was under this tree that he was first seen by his disciple, the Alwar Madhura-kavi, — for the latter also is numbered among the great Twelve, "lost in the sea of Divine Love". Tradition says that while Madhura-kavi was wandering in North India as a pilgrim, one night a strange light appeared to him in the sky and travelled towards the South. Doubtful at first what significance this phenomenon might have for him, its repetition during three consecutive nights convinced him that it was a divine summons and where this luminous sign led he must follow. Night after night he journeyed southwards till the guiding light came to Kuruhur and there disappeared. Learning of Nammalwar's spiritual greatness he thought that it was to him that the light had been leading him. But when he came to him, he found him absorbed in deep meditation with his eyes fast closed and although he waited for hours the Samadhi did not break until he took up a large stone and struck it against the ground violently. At the noise Nammalwar opened his eyes, but still remained silent. Madhura-kavi then put to him the following enigmatical question, "If the little one (the soul) is born

into the dead thing (Matter)\* what will the little one eat and where will the little one lie?" to which Nammalwar replied in an equally enigmatic style, "That will it eat and there will it lie."

Subsequently Nammalwar permitted his disciple to live with him and it was Madhura-kavi who wrote down his songs as they were composed. Nammalwar died in his thirty-fifth year, but he has achieved so great a reputation that the Vaishnavas account him an incarnation of Vishnu himself, while others are only the mace, discus, conch etc. of the Deity.

From the philosophical and spiritual point of view, his poetry ranks among the highest in Tamil literature. But in point of literary excellence, there is a great inequality; for while some songs touch the level of the loftiest world-poets, others, even though rich in rhythm and expression, fall much below the poet's capacity. In his great work known as the *Tiru-vaymoli* (The Sacred Utterance) which contains more than a thousand stanzas, he has touched all the phases of the life divine and given expression to all forms of spiritual experience. The pure and passionless Reason, the direct perception in the high solar realm of Truth itself, the ecstatic and sometimes poignant love that leaps into being at the vision of the "Beauty of God's face", the final Triumph where unity is achieved and "I and my Father are one" all these are uttered in his simple and flowing lines with a strength that is full of tenderness and truth.

The lines which we translate below are a fair specimen of the great Alwar's poetry; but it has suffered considerably in the translation, — indeed the genius of the Tamil tongue hardly permits of an effective rendering, so utterly divergent is it from that of the English language.

Sri Aurobindo,  
The Hour of God, SABCL Vol. 17

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\* The form of the question reminds one of Epictetus' definition of man, "Thou art a little soul carrying about a corpse." Some of our readers may be familiar with Swinburne's adaptation of the saying, "A little soul for a little bears up the corpse which is man."

## Nammalwar's Hymn of the Golden Age

1. 'Tis glory, glory, glory! For Life's hard curse has expired; swept out are Pain and Hell, and Death has nought to do here. Mark ye, the Iron Age shall end. For we have seen the hosts of Vishnu; richly do they enter in and chañt His praise and dance and thrive.

2. We have seen, we have seen, we have seen — seen things full sweet for our eyes. Come, all ye lovers of God, let us shout and dance for joy with oft-made surrenderings. Wide do they roam on earth singing songs and dancing, the hosts of Krishna who wears the cool and beautiful Tulsi, the desire of the Bees.

3. The Iron Age shall change. It shall fade, it shall pass away. The gods shall be in our midst. The mighty Golden Age shall hold the earth and the flood of the highest Bliss shall swell. For the hosts of our dark-hued Lord, dark-hued like the cloud, dark-hued like the sea, widely they enter in, singing songs, and everywhere they have seized on their stations.

4. The hosts of our Lord who reclines on the sea of Vastness, behold them thronging hither. Me seems they will tear up all these weeds of grasping cults. And varied songs do they sing, our Lord's own hosts, as they dance falling, sitting, standing, marching, leaping, bending.

5. And many are the wondrous sights that strike mine eyes. As by magic have Vishnu's hosts come in and firmly placed themselves everywhere. Nor doubt it, ye fiends and demons, if, born such be in our midst, take heed! ye shall never escape. For the Spirit of Time will slay and fling you away.



6. These hosts of the Lord of the Discus, they are here to free this earth of the devourers of Life, Disease and Hunger and vengeful Hate and all other things of evil. And sweet are their songs as they leap and dance extending wide over earth. Go forth, ye lovers of God and meet these hosts divine; with right minds serve them and live.

7. The Gods that ye fix in your minds, in His name do they grant you deliverance. Even thus to immortality did the sage Markanda attain. I mean no offence to any, but there is no other God but Krishna. And let all your sacrifices be to them who are but His forms.

8. His forms he has placed as Gods to receive and taste the offerings that are brought in sacrifices in all the various worlds. He our divine Sovereign on whose mole-marked bosom the goddess Lakshmi rests — His hosts are singing sweetly and deign to increase on earth. O men, approach them, serve and live.

9. Go forth and live by serving our Lord, the deathless One. With your tongues chant ye the hymns, the sacred Riks of the Veda, nor err in the laws of wisdom. Oh, rich has become this earth in the blessed ones and the faithful who serve them with flowers and incense and sandal and water.

10. In all these rising worlds they have thronged and wide they spread, those beauteous forms of Krishna — the unclad Rudra, is there, Indra, Brahma, all. The Iron Age shall cease to be — do ye but unite and serve these.

\* \* \*

## Love-Mad\*

*The poetic image used in the following verses is characteristically Indian. The mother of a love-stricken girl (symbolising the human soul yearning to merge into the Godhead) is complaining to her friend of the sad plight of her child whom love for Krishna has rendered "mad" — the effect of the "madness" being that in all things she is able to see nothing but forms of Krishna —, the ultimate Spirit of the universe.*

### The Realisation of God in all things by the Vision of Divine Love.

1. Seated, she caresses Earth and cries, "This Earth is Vishnu's";  
Salutes the sky and bids us "behold the Heaven He ruleth";  
Or standing with tear-filled eyes cries aloud, "O sea hued Lord!"  
All helpless am I, my friends; my child He has rendered mad.
2. Or joining her hands she fancies "The Sea where my Lord reposes!"  
Or hailing the ruddy Sun she cries: "Yes, this is His form",  
Languid, she bursts into tears and mutters Narayan's name.  
I am dazed at the things she is doing, my gazelle, my child shaped god-like.

---

\* Nammalwar.

3. Knowing, she embraces red Fire, is scorched and,  
cries "O Death-less!"  
And she hugs the Wind; "Tis my own Govinda", she  
tells us.  
She smells of the honied Tulsi, my gazelle-like child.  
Ah me!  
How many the pranks she plays for my sinful eyes  
to behold.
4. The rising moon she showeth, "'Tis the shining gem-  
hued Krishna".  
Or, eyeing the standing hill, she cries: "O come,  
high Vishnu!"  
It rains; and she dances and cries out "He hath  
come, the God of my love!"  
O the mad conceits He hath given to my tender,  
dear one!
5. The soft-limbed calf she embraces, for "Such did  
Krishna tend"  
And follows the gliding serpent, explaining "That is  
His couch."  
I know not where this will end, this folly's play in my  
sweet one  
Afflicted, ay, for my sins, by Him, the Divine Magi-  
cian.
6. Where tumblers dance with their pots, she runs and  
cries "Govinda";  
At the charming notes of a flute she faints, for  
"Krishna, He playeth."  
When cowherd dames bring butter, she is sure it  
was tasted by Him, —  
So mad for the Lord who sucked out the Demoness'  
life through her bosom!

7. In rising madness she raves, "All worlds are by Krishna made"  
And she runs after folk ash-smeared; forsooth, they serve high Vishnu!  
Or she looks at the fragrant Tulsi and claims Narayan's garland.  
She is ever for Vishnu, my darling, or in, or out of her wits.
8. And in all your wealthy princes she but sees the Lord of Lakshmi.  
At the sight of beautiful colours, she cries, "O my Lord world-scanning!"  
And all the shrines in the land, to her, are shrines of Vishnu.  
In awe and in love, unceasing, she adores the feet of that Wizard.
9. All Gods and saints are Krishna — Devourer of infinite Space!  
And the huge, dark clouds are Krishna; all fain would she fly to reach them.  
Or the kine, they graze on the meadow and thither she runs to find Him.  
The Lord of Illusions, He makes my dear one pant and rave.
10. Languid she stares around her or gazes afar into space;  
She sweats and with eyes full of tears she sighs and faints away;  
Rising, she speaks but His name and cries, "Do come, O Lord."  
Ah, what shall I do with my poor child o'erwhelmed by this maddest love?

## Songs of Bidyapati

\*

How shall I tell of Caanou's beauty bright?  
Men will believe it a vision of the night.

As lightning was his saffron garment blown  
Over the beautiful cloud-limbs half shown.

His coal-black curls assumed with regal grace  
A peacock's plume above that moonlike face.

And such a fragrance fierce the mad wind wafts  
Love wakes and trembles for his flowery shafts.  
Yea, what shall words do, friend? Love's whole estate  
Exhausted was that wonder to create.

\* \* \*

Caanou to see I had desire;  
Caanou seen, my life grew fire.  
Thenceforth deep down, ah, foolish I,  
In a great sea of love I lie.  
Hardly I know, a girl and weak,  
What these words mean my heart would speak.  
Only my tears for ever rain,  
Only my soul burns in its pain.  
O wherefore, friend, did mine eyes see,  
Friend of my bosom, thoughtlessly?

When a little mirth was all I planned,  
I have given my life into another's hand.

I know not what this lovely thief  
Did to me in that moment brief.  
Surely such craft none yet possessed!  
He robbed my heart out of its nest  
Only with seeing, and gone is he -  
Taking my poor heart far from me  
And ah! his eyes did then express  
Such tenderness, such tenderness,  
The more I labour to forget  
My very soul remembers it.  
Mourn not, sweet girl, for thy heart's sake;  
Who took thy heart, thyself at last shall take.

\* \* \*

O friend, my friend, has pain a farther bound  
Which sounds can utter, for which words are found?

Fiercely the flute's breath through me ran and thrilled,  
My body with sweet dreadful sound was filled.

By violence that brooks not of control  
The cruel music enters all my soul.

Then every limb enamoured swoons with shame  
And every thought is wrapped in utter flame.

Yea, all my labouring body mightily  
Was filled and panted with sweet agony.

I dared not lift my eyes. My elders spoke  
Around me when that wave of passion broke,

And such a languor through my being crept,  
My very robe no more its office kept.

With slow feet on their careful steps intent  
Panting into the inner house I went.

Even yet I tremble from the peril past,  
So fierce a charm the flute upon me cast.

\* \* \*

O life is sweet but youth more bright.  
O life, it is youth and youth is delight.  
And what is youth if it be not this,  
Love, true love, and lover's long kiss.  
Love that the noble heart conceives  
Will leave thee never till life leaves.  
Everyday the moons increase,  
Every day love greater is.  
Of all girl-lovers thou art crown,  
Caanou of youth the sole renown.  
When hardest holiest deeds accrue,  
Meet in this world lovers true.  
Stolen love, how sweet it is!  
Two brief words its only keys;  
Murmur but these and thou shalt hold  
Secret delights a thousand-fold.  
So true a lover all wide earth  
To another such gave never birth,  
And Braja's hearts with love are wild  
Of the noble gracious child.



Haste to thy king, sweet, pay him duty  
Of thy loving heart and beauty.

\* \* \*

The best of the year has come, the Spring,  
Of the six seasons one season King;  
And now with all his tribes the bee  
Runs to the creeper spring-honey.  
The sun's rays come of boyish age,  
The day-describing sun, his page,  
A sceptre of gold the saffron-bloom  
And the young leaves a crowning-room.  
Gold-flowers of Chompuk o'er him stand,  
The umbrellaed symbol of command;  
The cary-buds a crown do set  
And before him sings a court-poet  
The Indian cuckoo to whom is given  
The sweetest note of all the seven.  
Peacocks dance and for instrument  
Murmur of bees, while sacrament  
Of blessing and all priestly words  
Brahmins recite, the twice-born birds.  
Pollen, the flying dust of flowers,  
His canopy above him towers.  
His favourite the southern breeze,  
Jasmine of youth and Tuscan-trees  
His battle-flag. The season of dew,  
Seeing sweet blossoms-of-bliss renew,  
Seven-leaf and boughs that fragrance loves  
And Kingshook and the climbing cloves,  
Seven things of bloom together, flees  
Nor waits the perfumed shock of these.  
Spring's army too the chill-estate

Of the dew-season annihilate —  
Invading honey-bees — and make  
Secure the lilies of the lake.  
And these being saved yield them a home  
In their own soft, new-petalled bloom.  
In Brindaban anew is mirth  
For the restored bloom of earth.  
These are the season's sweet and these  
The essence of the spring's increase.

\* \* \*

A new Brindaban I see  
And renewed each barren tree;  
New flowers are blooming,  
And another Spring is; new  
Southern breezes chase the dew  
With new bees roaming.  
And the sweet Boy of Gocul strays  
In new and freshly blossoming ways.  
The groves upon Kalindi's shore  
With his tender beauty bloom  
While fresh-disturbèd heart brims o'er  
By the new-born love o'ercome.

And the new, sweet cary-buds  
Are wild with honey in the woods;  
New birds are singing;  
And the young girls wild with love  
Run delighted to the grove  
New hearts bringing.  
For young the heir of Gocul is  
And young his passionate mistresses.  
Meetings new and fresh love-rites

And lights of ever-fresh desire,  
Sports ever-new and new delights  
Set Bidyapati's heart on fire.

\* \* \*

Hark how round you the instruments sound!  
With the sweet love wild  
Of Gocul's child  
She danceth mistress of the fair arts sixty-four.  
And her hands rhyme keeping time  
Her smitten hands that still the fall restore.

And the tabors keep melody deep  
And the heavy thrum  
Of the measured drum  
And anklets' running cry their own slim music loving.  
The waist bells sprinkle their silver tinkle  
And bracelets gold that gems do hold;  
Loud is the instruments' din to madness moving.

And harps begin and the violin  
And the five vessels  
Where melody swells  
Thro' all the gamut move and various moods express.  
And over and under the twydrums thunder,  
With whose noise the vessels five mix and embrace.

From loosened tresses that toil undresses  
And floating whirls  
On the shoulders of girls  
The jasmine garlands' buds sprinkle the vernal night.  
Ah revels of Spring! with powerless wing  
These verses grieve, not reaching your delight.

\* \* \*

In the spring moonlight the Lord of love  
Thro' the amorous revel's maze doth move;  
The crown of Love love's raptures proves;  
For Radha his amorous darling moves,  
Radha, the ruby of ravishing girls  
With him bathed in love's moonlight whirls.  
And all the merry maidens with rapture  
Dancing together the light winds capture.  
And the bracelets speak with a ravishing cry.  
And the murmur of waist-bells rises high —  
Meanwhile rapture-waking string  
Ripest of strains the sonata of Spring  
That lover and lord of love-languid notes  
With tired delight in throbbing throats.  
And rumours of violin and bow  
And the mighty Queen's-harp mingle and flow;  
And Radha's ravisher makes sweet measure  
With the flute, that musical voice of pleasure.  
Bidyapati's genius richly wove  
For King Roupnaraian this rhythm of love.

\* \* \*



Head of Krishna (Rajasthani, Jaipur )

## Selected Poems of Nidhu Babu

Eyes of the hind, you are my jailors, sweetest;  
My heart with the hind's frightened motion fleetest  
In terror strange would flee,  
But find no issue, sweet; for thy quick smiling,  
Thy tresses like a net with threads beguiling  
Detain it utterly.

I am afraid of thy great eyes and well-like,  
I am afraid of thy small ears and shell-like,  
And everything in thee.  
Comfort my fainting heart with soft assurance  
And soon it will grow tame and love its durance,  
Hearing such melody.

\* \* \*

Line not with these dark rings thy bright eyes ever!  
Such keen shafts are enough to slay unaided;  
To tip the barbs with venom why endeavour?  
O then no heart could live thy glance invaded.

Why any live wouldst thou have explanation?  
Three powers have thine eyes of grievous passion.  
The first is poison making them death's portal.  
The second wine of strong intoxication;  
The third is nectar that makes gods immortal.

\* \* \*

What else have I to give thee? I have yielded  
My heart at thy discretion,  
And is there than the heart a closer-shielded  
Reluctant sweet possession?  
Dear, if thou know of such as yet ungiven,  
I will not grudge but yielding think it heaven.

\* \* \*

My eyes are lost in thine as in great rivers,  
My soul is in their depths of beauty drownèd.  
Love in thine eyes three sacred streams delivers,  
Whose waves with crests of rushing speed are crownèd.

The wind of love has stirred thy fluttering lashes,  
The tide of love heaves in thy sweet emotion;  
My beating heart feels as it seaward washes  
Billows of passion rush a stormy ocean.

\* \* \*

I said in anger, "When next time he prays,  
I will be sullen and repulse his charms."  
Ah me! but when I saw my lover's face,  
I quite forgot and rushed into his arms.

Mine eyes said, "We will joy in him no longer;  
Vainly let him entreat nor pardon crave."  
He came, nor pardon asked; my bonds grew stronger,  
I am become more utterly his slave.

\* \* \*

How much thou didst entreat! with what sweet wooing  
Thou hast bewitched my soul to love thee!  
Now when I've loved thee to my own undoing,  
O marvel! all my piteous tears and suing  
To bless me with thy presence cannot move thee.

Would I, if I had known ere all was over,  
Have given my heart for thy sole pleasure?  
So sweet thy words, I fell in love with loving  
And gave my heart, the very roots removing.  
How could I know that thy love had a measure?

\* \* \*

How could I know that he was waiting only  
For an excuse to leave me ?  
I was so sure he loved me, not one lonely  
Suspicion came to grieve me.

But now a small offence his pretext making  
He has buried Love and left me;  
Blithely has gone, his whole will of me taking,  
Having of bliss bereft me.

Too well he knows my grief of heart, not caring  
Tho' it break through his disdain.  
I sit forsaken, all my beauty wearing  
But as a crown of pain.



\* \* \*

Into the hollow of whose hand my heart  
I gave once, surely thinking him my lover,  
How shall I now forget him? by what art  
My captive soul recover?

I took Love's graver up and slow portrayed  
His beauty on my soul with lingering care.  
How shall the picture\* from its back-ground fade  
Burnt in so deeply there.

"He has forgotten thee, forget him thou;"  
All say to me, "a vain thing is regret,"  
Ah yes, that day when death is on my brow,  
I shall indeed forget.

\* \* \*

I did not dream, O love, that I  
Would ever have thee back again.  
The sunflower drooping hopelessly  
Expects no sun to end her pain.

I did not dream my lord would show  
Favour to his poor slave-girl more,  
That I should mix my eyes as now  
With the dear eyes I panted for.

I did not dream my huge desire  
Would be filled full and grief be over,

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\* etching

But burning in love's bitter fire  
With hopeless longing for my lover,

One thought alone possessed thy slave,  
"Lord of my life, where art thou gone?  
Will thou not come this life to save?"  
Dumbly this thought and this alone.

\* \* \*

In true sweet love what more than utter bliss is,  
He only knows who is himself true lover.  
As moonbird seeks the moon, she seeks his kisses,  
Liberal of nectar he yearns down above her.



In search of the Divine Lover

## Selected poems of Horu Thakur

\*

Look, Lolita, the stream one loves so  
And water brings each day!  
But what is this strange light that moves so,  
In Jamouna today?  
What is it shining, heaving, glimmering,  
Is it a flower or face  
Thus shimmering with the water's shimmering  
And swaying as it sways ?  
Is it a lotus darkly blooming  
In Jamouna's clear stream?  
What else the depths opaque illuming  
Could with such beauty claim?  
Is it his shadow whom dark-burning  
In sudden bloom we see  
When with our brimming jars returning  
We pass the Tamal-tree?  
Is there in upper heavens or under  
A moon that's dark of hue?  
By daylight does that moon of wonder  
Its mystic dawn renew?

\* \* \*

*The soul recognises the Eternal for whom it has failed in its  
earthly conventional duties and incurred the censure of the world.*

I know him by the eyes all hearts that ravish,  
For who is there beside him?

O honey grace of amorous sweetness lavish!  
I know him by his dark compelling beauty,  
Once only having spied him  
For him I stained my honour, scorned my duty.  
I know him by his feet of moonbeam brightness,  
Because for their sake purely  
I live and move, my name is taxed with lightness.  
Ah now I know him surely.

\* \* \*

*The Eternal departing from the soul to His kingdom of action  
and its duties, the latter bemoans its loneliness.*

What are these wheels whose sudden thunder  
Alarms the ear with ominous noise?  
Who brought this chariot to tread under Gocool, our Paradise?  
Watching the wheels our hearts are rent asunder.

Alas! and why is Crishna standing  
With Ocroor in the moving car?  
To Mothura is he then wending,  
To Mothura afar,  
The anguish in our eyes not understanding.  
What fault, what fault in Radha finding  
Hast thou forsaken her who loved thee;  
Her tears upon thy feet not minding?  
Once surely they had moved thee!  
O Radha's Lord, what fault in Radha finding?

But Shyama, dost thou recollect not,  
That we have left all for thy sake?  
Of other thought, of other love we recked not,  
Labouring thy love to wake.  
Thy love's the only thought our minds reject not.

Hast thou forgot how we came running  
At midnight when the moon was full,  
Called by thy flute's enamoured crooning,  
Musician beautiful,  
Shame and reproach for thy sake never shunning?

To please thee was our sole endeavour,  
To love thee was our sole delight; °  
This was our sin; for this, O lover,  
Dost thou desert us quite?  
Is it therefore thou forsakest us forever?

Ah why should I forbid thee so?  
To Mothura let the wheels move thee,  
To Mothura if thy heart go,  
For the sad souls that love thee,  
That thou art happy is enough to know.

But O with laughing face half-willing,  
With eyes that half a glance bestow  
Once only our sad eyes beguiling  
Look backward ere thou go,  
On Braja's neat-herdess once only smiling.

One last look all our life through burning,  
One last look of our dear delight  
And then to watch the great wheels turning  
Until they pass from sight,  
Hopeless to see those well-loved feet returning.

All riches that we had, alone  
Thou wast, therefore forlorn we languish;  
From empty breasts we make our moan,  
Our souls with the last anguish  
Smiting in careless beauty thou art gone!



The magic of Krishna's flute (Kangra)

## Selected Poems of Jnanadas

*The soul, as yet divided from the Eternal, yet having caught a glimpse of his intoxicating beauty grows passionate in remembrance and swoons with the sensuous expectation of union.*

O beauty meant all hearts to move!  
O body made for girls to kiss!  
In every limb an idol of love,  
A spring of passion and of bliss.

The eyes that once his beauty see,  
Poor eyes! can never turn away,  
The heart follows him ceaselessly  
Like a wild beast behind its prey.

Not to be touched those limbs, alas!  
They are another's nest of joy.  
But ah their natural loveliness!  
Ah God, the dark, the wonderful boy!

His graceful sportive motion sweet  
Is as an ornament to earth,  
And from his lovely pacing feet  
Beauties impossible take birth,

Catching one look not long nor sure,  
One look of casual glory shed,  
How many noble maidens pure  
Lay down on love as on a bed.

The heart within the heart deep hid  
He ravishes; almost in play  
One looks, — ere falling of the lid,  
Her heart has gone with him away!

Oh if his eyes wake such sweet pain  
That even sleep will not forget,  
What dreadful sweetness waits me when  
Body and passionate body meet.

\* \* \*

*The Eternal replies that the beauty of human souls has driven out all care for or art of guidance in the phenomenal world and unless the latter reveal themselves naked of earthly desires and gratify his passion, they must sink in the Ocean of life.*

In vain my hands bale out the waves in leaping,  
The boat is drowning, drowning;  
A storm comes over the great river sweeping;  
Huge billows rise up frowning.

The rudder from my hand is wrenched in shivers,  
Death stares in all his starkness.  
The boat is tossed and whirled, and the great river's  
Far banks plunge into darkness.

What can I do? Jamouna's rising, surging  
To take us to her clasp,  
And the fierce rush of waters hurries urging  
The rudder from my grasp.

Never I knew till now, nor any word in  
The mouths of men foretold  
That a girl's beauty was too great a burden



For one poor boat to hold.  
Come, make you bear, throw off your robes, each maiden;  
Your naked beauties bring,  
Lighten your bodies of their sweets o'erladen;  
Then I'll resume rowing.

Girls, you have made me drunk with milk and sweetness,  
You have bewitched my soul,  
My eyes can judge no more the wind's fierce fleetness,  
Nor watch the waters roll.

They are fixed in you, they are tangled in your tresses,  
They will never turn again.  
Where I should see the waves, I see your faces,  
Your bosoms, not the rain.

You will not let me live, you are my haters,  
Your eyes have caused my death.  
I feel the boat sink down in the mad waters,  
Down, down the waves beneath.

\* \* \*

She. For love of thee I gave all life's best treasures.  
He. For love of thee I left my princely pleasures.  
She. For love of thee I roam in woodland ways.  
He. For love of thee the snow-white kine I graze.  
She. For love of thee I don the robe of blue.  
He. For love of thee I wear thy golden hue.  
She. For love of thee my spotless name was stained.  
He. For love of thee my father was disdained.  
She. Thy love has changed my whole world into thee.  
He. Thy love has doomed mine eyes one face to see.  
She. Save love for thee no thought my sense can move.  
He. Thee, thee I worship, and thy perfect love.

\* \* \*

*The human soul, in a moment of rapt excitement when the robe of sense has fallen from it, is surprised and seized by the vision of the Eternal.*

I will lay bare my heart's whole flame,  
To thee, heart's sister, yea the whole.  
The dark-hued limbs I saw in dream,  
To these I have given my body and soul.

It was a night of wildest showers;  
Ever incessant and amain  
The heavens thundered through the hours,  
Outside was pattering of the rain.

Exulting in the lightning's gleams,  
Joyous, I lay down on my bed;  
The dress had fallen from my limbs,  
I slept with rumours overhead.

The peacocks in the treetops high  
Between their gorgeous dances shrilled,  
The cuckoo cried exultantly,  
The frogs were clamorous in the field;

And ever with insistent chime  
The bird of rumour shrieking fled  
Amidst the rain, at such a time  
A vision stood beside my bed.

He moved like fire into my soul,  
The love of him became a part  
Of being, and oh his whispers stole  
Murmuring in and filled my heart.  
His loving ways, his tender wiles,

The hearts that feel, ah me! so burn  
That maidens pure with happy smiles  
From shame and peace and honour turn.

The lustre of his looks effaced  
The moon, of many lovely moods  
He is the master; on his breast  
There was a wreath of jasmine buds.

Holding my feet, down on the bed  
He sat; my breasts were fluttering birds;  
His hands upon my limbs he laid,  
He bought me for his slave with words.

O me! his eyebrows curved like bows!  
O me! his panther body bright!  
Love from his sidelong glances goes  
And takes girls prisoners at sight.

He speaks with little magic smiles  
That force a girl's heart from her breast.  
How many sweet ways he beguiles,  
I know; they cannot be expressed.

Burning he tore me from my bed  
And to his passionate bosom clutched;  
I could not speak a word; he said  
Nothing, his lips and my lips touched.

My body almost swooned away  
And from my heart went fear and shame  
And maiden pride; panting I lay;  
He was around me like a flame.\*

---

\* And felt him round me like a flame.

## Chandidas

Love, but my words are vain as air!  
In my sweet joyous youth, a heart untried,  
Thou took'st me in Love's sudden snare,  
Thou wouldst not let me in my home abide.

And now I have nought else to try,  
But I will make my soul one strong desire  
And into Ocean leaping die:  
So shall my heart be cooled of all its fire.

Die and be born to life again  
As Nanda's son, the joy of Braja's girls,  
And I will make thee Radha then,  
A laughing child's face set with lovely curls.

Then I will love thee and then leave;  
Under the Codome's boughs when thou goest by  
Bound to the water morn or eve,  
Lean on that tree fluting melodiously.

Thou shalt hear me and fall at sight  
Under my charm; my voice shall wholly move  
Thy simple girl's heart to delight;  
Then shalt thou know the bitterness of love.

★

O love, what more shall I, shall Radha speak,  
Since mortal words are weak?  
In life, in death,  
In being and in breath  
No other lord but thee can Radha seek.

About thy feet the mighty net is wound  
Wherein my soul they bound;  
Myself resigned  
To servitude my mind;  
My heart than thine no sweeter slavery found.

I, Radha, thought; through the three worlds my gaze  
I sent in wild amaze;  
I was alone.  
None called me "Radha!", none;  
I saw no hand to clasp, no friendly face.

I sought my father's house; my father's sight  
Was empty of delight;  
No tender friend  
Her loving voice would lend;  
My cry came back unanswered from the night.

Therefore to this sweet sanctuary I brought  
My chilled and shuddering thought.  
Ah, suffer, sweet,  
To thy most faultless feet  
That I should cling unchid; ah, spurn me not!



The sorrow of Radha (Kangra )

Spurn me not, dear, from thy beloved breast,  
A woman weak, unblest.  
Thus let me cling,  
Thus, thus about my king  
And thus remain caressing and caressed.

I, Radha, thought; without my life's sweet lord,  
— Strike now thy mightiest chord —  
I had no power  
To live one simple hour;  
His absence slew my soul as with a sword.

If one brief moment steal thee from mine eyes,  
My heart within me dies.  
As girls who keep  
The treasures of the deep,  
I string thee round my neck and on my bosom prize.

\* \* \*

## Surdas

Udho, hearts like ours can't change;  
They're dyed with Shyam's pure blackness  
and there's no way to wash it away.  
Spare us then your artful speeches  
and let's get down to the root of the matter:  
The yoga you preach means no more to us  
than campa flowers do to you bees —  
How could an insipid thing like that  
erase the fate that is furrowed in our hands?  
Show us Shyam instead, our delight;  
one look says Sur, and we'll come to life.

\* \* \*

Madhav, give ear to what love is in Braj  
I've studied it now for fully half a year,  
the milk-maids' way of life,  
And all the time, Shyam, you and Balaram  
refuse to vacate their hearts.  
Their tears are a torrent of holy oblations,  
their windblown saris the cooling whisk;  
For offering vessels they tender their breasts,  
their hands bear votive lotuses,  
And their lips are alive with hymns that recall  
the playful deeds you displayed.  
Their homes and emotions, their physical frames  
they offer to your lotus-like eyes.

Says Sur, one look at love like theirs  
and how tasteless it seems to be wise.

\* \* \*

Having seen Hari's face, our eyes are opened wide.  
Forgetting to blink, our pupils are naked  
like those who are clad with the sky.  
They've left behind the teachings of home,  
burned up the sacred thread of decorum;  
Family and veil are all cast aside:  
our eyes scan always ahead toward the wood,  
And, there for the love of beauty they pledge  
they'll never, forever, close their lids.  
It comes to this: an ascetic's death.  
Our families are spent in reproach.  
So Udho, though your speeches touch  
our minds, and we understand,  
Nothing can argue with our eyes, says Sur,  
so obstinate and fixed, so blind.





## Nandadas

What light of Brahma? Who are we to hear?  
Of knowledge, Uddhav?  
Shyam the fair is ours!  
Our path of love is straight — Mohan reveals  
In eye, ear, nostril, voice  
His form so dear,  
Snatching our minds and memories with his flute —  
Casting love's spell,  
O friend of Shyam.

You call him Kanha — he who's fatherless,  
Not born of mother! — and from whom arose  
The universe entire,  
The egg of Brahma!  
He took man's shape, and came to earth  
To work his will as Shyam;  
But yoga's discipline alone wins him  
And highest Brahma's city is his home,  
O women of Braj!

Tell him of yoga, Uddhav, whom you find  
Fit for it,  
But to us sing lovingly,  
Of Nanda-nandana's reality!  
In Mohan's eye the proof of his being shines!  
It fills his voice, heart, soul —  
And where's the man  
Who scorns love's nectar, turning to scoop up dust,  
O friend of Shyam?

Shyam has no qualities! The Vedas state  
Their negative, and Upanishads proposed  
The Self as absolute,  
Though seeming qualified  
Vedas, Puranas too have never found  
One quality; if all is qualified,  
Say, what supports the sky!  
O women of Braj?

Has Shyam no qualities? Then how  
Are qualities formed, we'd like to know!  
How can a tree unseeded grow?  
His quality, though single,  
In illusion's mirror gleamed  
Reflected, and many seems:  
So pure and muddy streams  
— Both water — mingle  
O friend of Shyam!

All qualities apparent to the eye  
Must vanish, but eternal Vasudev  
Suffers no taint from these!  
His radiance  
Is that of perfect knowledge — undisclosed  
To the gross senses, seen by those  
Who know this truth of him, the babe reborn,  
O women of Braj!

Can disbelievers recognise  
The form beneficent? They spurn  
The sun itself, in yonder skies,  
And to clutch at its scattered rays they turn!  
But we're intent upon that form  
And countless Brahmas no more prize  
Than a tiny plum, that lies  
Unseen within the palm — O friend of Shyam!

## Mirabai

Sister, the Lord of the Poor  
Came to wed me in a dream.  
Fifty-six crores of deities formed the bridal procession.  
And the bridegroom was the Lord of Braj.  
In my dream,  
I saw the wedding-arch constructed  
And the Lord took my hand.  
In my dream  
I underwent a wedding ceremony  
And entered the married state.  
Giridhara has revealed himself to Mira:  
Her fortunes stem  
From good deeds in past births.

\* \* \*

Let me go to the house of Giridhara  
Giridhara is my true lover:  
On beholding His beauty, I long for him much.  
As night falls I set out to see Him  
And at break of day I return.  
Day and night I sport in His company  
I please Him in any way I can.  
Whatever He clothes me in, that I wear.  
Whatever He offers, that I eat.  
My love for Him  
Is ancient and long-standing.  
Without Him I could not live.

Wherever He places me, there I remain.  
If He sold me into slavery,  
I would acquiesce.  
Mira's Lord is the courtly Giridhara,  
She offers herself in sacrifice again and again.

III

Anklets have I tied and I have danced in ecstasy,  
I am Thine O Narayana, and Thine maid have I  
become to serve Thee.  
The cup of poison has been delivered by the emissary  
of the king  
In mad love and laughter have I drunk it.  
"Mira has lost all sense" so people condemn her  
"Destroyer of the clan is she" such is the  
pronouncement of her elders  
But of what avail is it to Mira?  
Effortlessly has she secured the Imperishable.  
Mira's only utterance is — Giridhara, the only  
Inhabitant of the universe.





**Vallabhacharya**  
(1479 -1531 AD)

**V**allabhacharya is the celebrated founder of Pushti Marg, which is devoted to the worship of Sri Krishna's consciousness and the nourishment of the devotee's soul by the contact and experience of the delight of Sri Krishna's consciousness. It is said that Vallabhacharya had the vision of Sri Krishna, his charm and sweetness one night in August 1494 A.D.

The eight verses that he composed to describe his ecstasy on the vision of the sweetness of Sri Krishna have become well known in Indian literature pertaining to the yoga of devotion as Madhurashtakam (eight verses depicting the sweetness of Sri Krishna). These verses have moved millions of Indians over centuries, and we give in the next few pages the text of the Madhurashtakam and the English translation from the original Sanskrit.

"Madhuram" in Sanskrit means sweet, delicious, delightful, immortalizing ecstasy, nectarous, sweetness of elixir, sweetness of honey, etc.

## Madhurāṣṭakam

### I

|                       |                                     |  |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| अधरं मधुरं            | Adharaṁ Madhuraṁ                    | Madhuraṁ Lips                                    |
| वदनं मधुरं            | Vadanaṁ Madhuraṁ                    | Madhuraṁ Face                                    |
| नयनं मधुरं            | Nayanaṁ Madhuraṁ                    | Madhuraṁ Eyes                                    |
| हसितं मधुरं           | Hasitaṁ Madhuraṁ                    | Madhuraṁ Smile                                   |
| हृदयं मधुरं           | Hṛdayaṁ madhuraṁ                    | Madhuraṁ Heart                                   |
| गमनं मधुरं            | Gamaṇaṁ Madhuraṁ                    | Madhuraṁ Gait                                    |
| मधुराधिपतेरखिलं मधुरं | Madhurādhipater<br>Akhilaṁ Madhuraṁ | Madhuraṁ The<br>Charming Lord Wholly<br>Madhuraṁ |

### II

|                       |                                       |  |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| वचनं मधुरं            | Vacanaṁ Madhuraṁ                      | Madhuraṁ Words                                   |
| चरितं मधुरं           | Caritaṁ Madhuraṁ                      | Madhuraṁ Acts                                    |
| वसनं मधुरं            | Vasanaṁ Madhuraṁ                      | Madhuraṁ Dress                                   |
| वलितं मधुरं           | Valitaṁ Madhuraṁ                      | Madhuraṁ Stance                                  |
| चलितं मधुरं           | Calitaṁ Madhuraṁ                      | Madhuraṁ Walk                                    |
| भ्रमितं मधुरं         | Bhramitaṁ Madhuraṁ                    | Madhuraṁ Wandering                               |
| मधुराधिपतेरखिलं मधुरं | Madhurādhipater ,<br>Akhilaṁ Madhuraṁ | Madhuraṁ The<br>Charming Lord Wholly<br>Madhuraṁ |

### III

|                       |                                     |  |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| वेनुर्मधुरो           | Veṇur Madhuro                       | Madhuraṃ Flute                                   |
| रेणुर्मधुरः           | Reṇur Madhuraḥ                      | Madhuraṃ Sand                                    |
| पाणिर्मधुरः           | Pāṇir Madhuraḥ                      | Madhuraṃ Hands                                   |
| पादौ मधुरौ            | Pādau Madhurai                      | Madhuraṃ Feet                                    |
| नृत्यं मधुरं          | Nṛtyaṃ Madhuraṃ                     | Madhuraṃ Dance                                   |
| सख्यं मधुरं           | Sakhyaṃ Madhuraṃ                    | Madhuraṃ Friendship                              |
| मधुराधिपतेरखिलं मधुरं | Madhurādhīpater<br>Akhilāṃ Madhuraṃ | Madhuraṃ The<br>Charming Lord Wholly<br>Madhuraṃ |

### IV

|                       |                                     |  |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| गीतं मधुरं            | Gītaṃ Madhuraṃ                      | Madhuraṃ Song                                    |
| पीतं मधुरं            | Pītaṃ Madhuraṃ                      | Madhuraṃ Drink                                   |
| भुक्तं मधुरं          | Bhuktaṃ Madhuraṃ                    | Madhuraṃ Food                                    |
| सुप्तं मधुरं          | Suptaṃ Madhuraṃ                     | Madhuraṃ Sleep                                   |
| रूपं मधुरं            | Rūpaṃ Madhuraṃ                      | Madhuraṃ Form                                    |
| तिलकं मधुरं           | Tilakaṃ Madhuraṃ                    | Madhuraṃ Forehead<br>Mark                        |
| मधुराधिपतेरखिलं मधुरं | Madhurādhīpater<br>Akhilāṃ Madhuraṃ | Madhuraṃ The<br>Charming Lord Wholly<br>Madhuraṃ |

V

|                       |                                     |  |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| करनं मधुरं            | Karaṇaṁ Madhuraṁ                    | Madhuraṁ Deeds                                   |
| तरणं मधुरं            | Taraṇaṁ Madhuraṁ                    | Madhuraṁ Swim                                    |
| हरणं मधुरं            | Haraṇaṁ Madhuraṁ                    | Madhuraṁ Thief                                   |
| रमणं मधुरं            | Ramaṇaṁ Madhuraṁ                    | Madhuraṁ Joy                                     |
| वमितं मधुरं           | Vamitaṁ Madhuraṁ                    | Madhuraṁ Release                                 |
| शमितं मधुरं           | Śamitaṁ Madhuraṁ                    | Madhuraṁ Apeace                                  |
| मधुराधिपतेरखिलं मधुरं | Madhurādhipater<br>Akhilaṁ Madhuraṁ | Madhuraṁ The<br>Charming Lord Wholly<br>Madhuraṁ |

VI

|                       |                                     |  |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| गुज्जा मधुरा          | Guñjā Madhurā                       | Madhuraṁ Beads                                   |
| माला मधुरा            | Mālā Madhurā                        | Madhuraṁ Garland                                 |
| यमुना मधुरा           | Yamunā Madhurā                      | Madhuraṁ Yamunā                                  |
| वीची मधुरा            | Vīchī Madhurā                       | Madhuraṁ Waves                                   |
| सलिलं मधुरं           | Salilaṁ Madhuraṁ                    | Madhuraṁ Water                                   |
| कमलं मधुरं            | Kamalaṁ Madhuraṁ                    | Madhuraṁ Lotus                                   |
| मधुराधिपतेरखिलं मधुरं | Madhurādhipater<br>Akhilaṁ Madhuraṁ | Madhuraṁ The<br>Charming Lord wholly<br>Madhuraṁ |



## VII

|                       |                                     |  |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| गोपी मधुरा            | Gopī Madhurā                        | Madhuraṃ Gopī                                    |
| लीला मधुरा            | Līlā Madhurā                        | Madhuraṃ Games                                   |
| युक्तं मधुरं          | Yuktaṃ Madhuraṃ                     | Madhuraṃ Meeting                                 |
| मुक्तं मधुरं          | Muktaṃ Madhuraṃ                     | Madhuraṃ Liberation                              |
| दृष्टं मधुरं          | Dr̥ṣṭaṃ Madhuraṃ                    | Madhuraṃ Sight                                   |
| शिष्टं मधुरं          | Śiṣṭaṃ Madhuraṃ                     | Madhuraṃ Nobility                                |
| मधुराधिपतेरखिलं मधुरं | Madhurādhipater<br>Akhilaṃ Madhuraṃ | Madhuraṃ The<br>Charming Lord Wholly<br>Madhuraṃ |

## VIII

|                       |                                     |  |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| गेपा मधुरा            | Gopā Madhurā                        | Madhuraṃ Gopā                                    |
| गावो मधुरा            | Gāvo Madhurā                        | Madhuraṃ Cow                                     |
| यष्टिर्मधुरा          | Yaṣṭir Madhurā                      | Madhuraṃ Stick                                   |
| सृष्टिर्मधुरा         | Sṛṣṭir Madhurā                      | Madhuraṃ Creation                                |
| दलितं मधुरं           | Dalitaṃ Madhuraṃ                    | Madhuraṃ Flourishing                             |
| फलितं मधुरं           | Phalitaṃ Madhuraṃ                   | Madhuraṃ Fruit                                   |
| मधुराधिपतेरखिलं मधुरं | Madhurādhipater<br>Akhilaṃ Madhuraṃ | Madhuraṃ The<br>Charming Lord Wholly<br>Madhuraṃ |



Chaitanya with his disciples, by Abanindranath Tagore

(b)

## Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's experiences of Sri Krishna (A Selection)

In the spiritual history of India Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486 AD — 1534 AD) is considered to be the incarnation of Sri Krishna, who came down to illustrate how a devotee should worship Sri Krishna. The yogic phenomena of this incarnation are extremely enchanting and revelatory of some of the secret delights of union with Sri Krishna as also the agonies of separation from Sri Krishna. In these phenomena, we have the revelations of the reality of Radha and her ineffable relationships with Sri Krishna.

The life of Sri Chaitanya illustrates in a singular manner, various states of Sri Krishna's consciousness, and as one reads Chaitanya Bhagavata, Chaitanya-caritāmṛta, Sri Kṛṣṇa Chaitanya Carita Mahā-Kavya, Chaitanya Mangala and

Chaitanya-Candrodaya-nātaka, one finds that Sri Chaitanya lived and breathed innumerable states of Krishna consciousness that used to inundate the entire being and the body of Sri Chaitanya.

The distinction of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's mark of yoga is its intimacy of relations with Sri Krishna and Radha, all of which are based on the life of Sri Krishna when he was in exile in Brindavan. The greatest significance of that life in Brindavan lies in the special form of the Indian religion of divine love that has developed and flourished through the life of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

In the next few pages we have given a few extracts from the literature related to Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. These extracts are very few but it is hoped that they will lead the reader to the study of that vast literature consisting of Chaitanya-caritāmṛta and others in order to gain the indescribable sweetness and delight that are so distinctive of Sri Krishna's manifestation in Brindavan.

*It is said that Sri Chaitanya once, in the company of his devotees was dancing in ecstasy, and all those around him were infused with ecstatic love. When he stopped dancing he sat on Vishnu's simhasana in a majestic mood, while his devotees stood around him in great reverence, and then Sri Chaitanya revealed His identity as the Supreme Lord. We give below an extract from the Chaitanya Bhagavata:*

Sri Chaitanya said: " I am Kṛṣṇa, I am Rama, and I am Nārāyaṇa. I am Matsya, I am Kurma, I am Varāha and Vāmana.

I am Buddha, Kalki, Haṁsa, and Haladhara. I am Prśnigarbha, I am Hayagrīva, and I am Maheśvara.

I am Nīlācala-candra, I am Kapila, and I am Nṛsimha. All visible and invisible beings are servants of my lotus feet.

All the Vedas narrate my glories and qualities. Innumerable universes serve my lotus feet.

I am all-devouring time for everyone other than the devotees. Simply by remembering me, one overcomes all difficulties.

I delivered Draupadi from being dishonoured, and I protected the five Pandavas from the house of lac.

I killed Vṛkasura and saved Lord Śiva. I delivered my servant Gajendra.

I delivered Prahlada, and I protected the cowherd residents of Vraja.

In the past I had the nectar churned from the ocean. I then deceived the demons and protected the demigods.

I killed Kamsa, who was inimical to my devotees. I annihilated the wicked Rāvaṇa along with his dynasty.

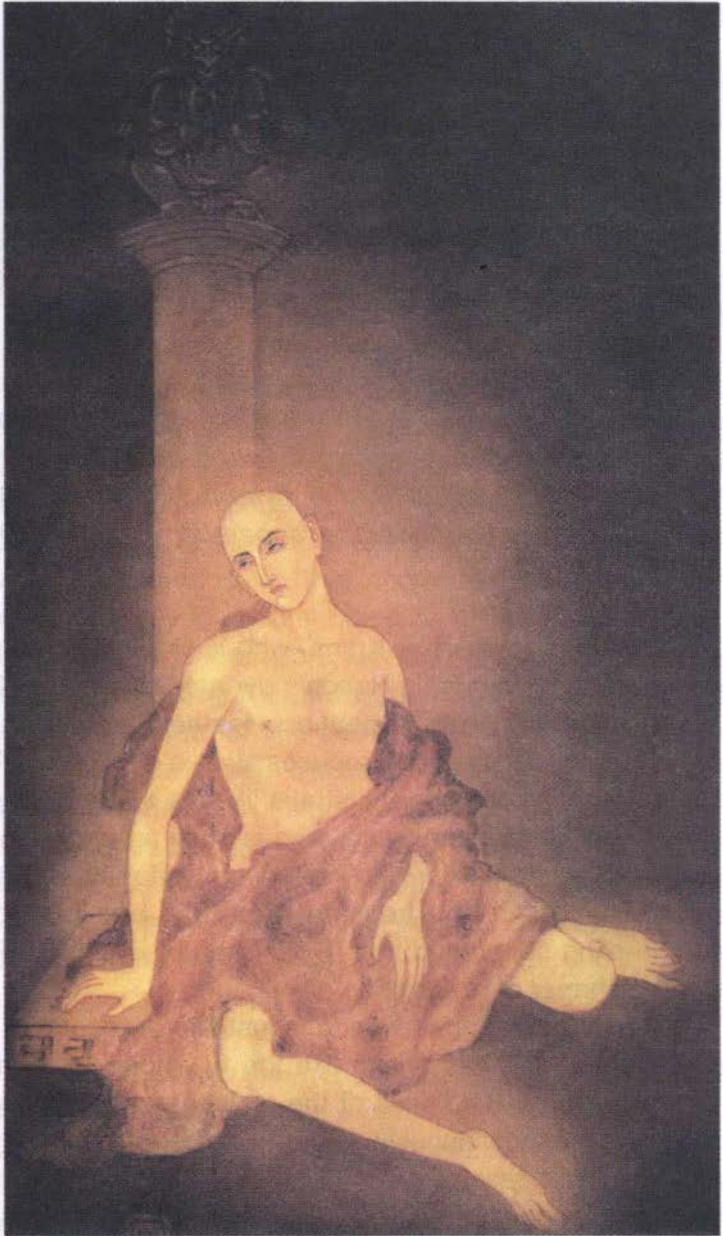
I lifted Govardhana Hill with My left hand. I chastised the serpent Kāliya.

I taught the process of tapasya in Satya-Yuga. I incarnated to teach the process of sacrifice in Treta-yuga. I incarnated in Dvapara-yuga to teach the process of deity worship. Even the Vedas do not know all my incarnations. I have now come to initiate the process of chanting the holy names. For starting the saṅkīrtana movement, devotional service in ecstatic love, have I appeared in this age of Kali.

All the Vedas and Purāṇas teach everyone to take my shelter. I always reside in the company of my devotees.

There is no one dearer to me than my devotees. They are my father, mother, friend, son, and brother.

Although I am free and my actions are also free, it is



Shri Chaitanya under Garuda Stambh, by Nandalal Bose ( NGMA )

my nature to be controlled by my devotees.

All of you associate with me birth after birth. It is for your sake that I incarnate in this world.

Know for certain that I do not leave you to stay elsewhere for even a moment."



*Sri Chaitanya, during the later part of his life, displayed an intense agony of separation from Sri Krishna. In the following extracts from the Chaitanya-caritamṛta, he in his state, identified with the consciousness of Radha (when Sri Krishna has left Vrndavana), and who finds the separation unbearable and questions a friend thus:*

"My dear friend, where is Kṛṣṇa, who is like the moon rising from the ocean of Mahārāja Nanda's dynasty? Where is Kṛṣṇa, His head decorated with a peacock feather? Where is He? Where is Kṛṣṇa, whose flute produces such a deep sound? Oh, where is Kṛṣṇa, whose bodily lustre is like the lustre of the blue indranila jewel? Where is Kṛṣṇa, who is such an expert in rāsa dancing? Oh, where is He, who can save my life? Kindly tell me where to find Kṛṣṇa, the treasure of my life and best of my friends. Feeling separation from Him, I hereby condemn Providence, the shaper of my destiny."

"The family of Mahārāja Nanda is just like an ocean of milk, wherein Lord Kṛṣṇa has arisen like the full moon to illuminate the entire universe. The eyes of the residents of Vraja are like cakora birds that continuously drink the nectar of His bodily lustre and thus live peacefully...

My dear friend, where is that beautiful crown with a peacock feather upon it like a rainbow upon a new cloud? Where are those yellow garments, shining like lightning? And where is that



necklace of pearls that resemble flocks of ducks flying in the sky? The blackish body of Kṛṣṇa triumphs over the new blackish rain cloud. If a person's eyes even once capture that beautiful body of Kṛṣṇa, it remains always prominent within his heart. Kṛṣṇa's body resembles the sap of the mango tree, for when it enters the minds of women, it will not come

out, despite great endeavour. Thus Kṛṣṇa's extraordinary body is like a thorn of the seyā tree...

Alas, alas! O Kṛṣṇa, where have you gone?"

*Again...* "O Providence, you are so unkind! You reveal the beautiful face of Kṛṣṇa and make the mind and eyes greedy, but after they have drunk that nectar for only a moment, you whisk Kṛṣṇa away to another place. "

*And again in lamentation:* "Though the hearts of the gopis are like high-standing hills, they are inundated by the waves of the nectarean ocean of Kṛṣṇa's beauty. His sweet voice enters their ears and gives them transcendental bliss, the touch of His body is cooler than millions and millions of moons together, and the nectar of His bodily fragrance over floods the entire world. O my dear friend, that Kṛṣṇa, who is the son of Nanda Mahārāja and whose lips are exactly like nectar, is attracting my five senses by force."

*Late one night, Sri Chaitanya, immersed in the ecstatic ocean of Sri Krishna's love, entered a garden and saw Sri Krishna under a tree; as he ran to embrace His Lord, the smiling vision vanished. The intoxicating fragrance of Sri Krishna's body filled the garden. Sri Chaitanya in heightened ecstasy and identified with the consciousness of Radha spoke thus:*





*Hang on my ears the jewelled ear-rings!*

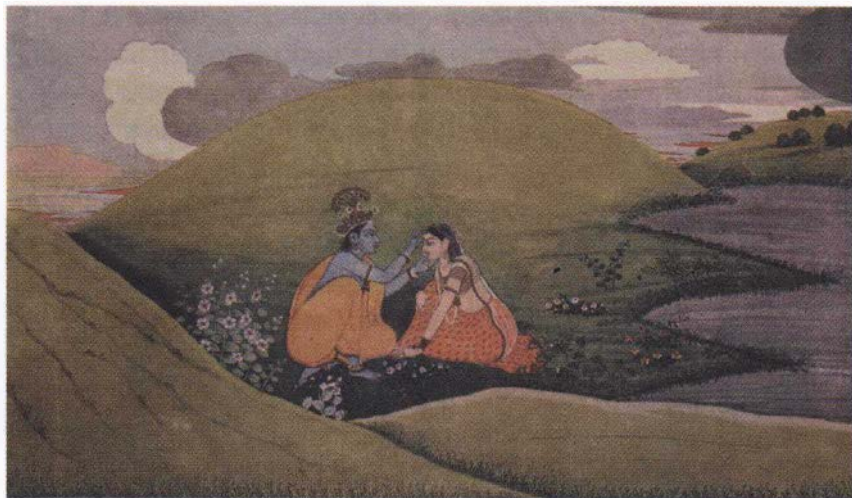
Kangra painting of the Gitagovinda

*(Extract from Chaitanya-caritamrita)* “The scent of Sri Kṛṣṇa’s body surpasses the aroma of musk and attracts the minds of all women. The eight lotus-like parts of His body distribute the fragrance of lotuses mixed with that of camphor, sandalwood and aguru. O my dear friend, that Personality of Godhead, also known as the enchanter of Cupid, always increases the desire of my nostrils.”

“My dear friend, the scent of Kṛṣṇa’s body enchants the entire world. It especially enters the nostrils of women and remains seated there. Thus it captures them and forcibly brings them to Kṛṣṇa.”

“The scent of Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental body is so attractive that it enchants the bodies and minds of all women. It bewilders their nostrils, loosens their belts and hair, and makes them madwomen. All the women of the world come under its influence, and therefore the scent of Kṛṣṇa’s body is like a plunderer.





*Place a circle of musk on my forehead!*

Kangra painting of the Gitagovinda

Falling completely under its influence, the nostrils yearn for it continuously, although sometimes they obtain it and sometimes not. When they do they drink their fill, though they still want more and more, but if they don't, out of thirst they die.

The dramatic actor Madana-mohana has opened a shop of scents that attract the women of the world to be his customers. He delivers the scents freely, but they make the women all so blind they cannot find the path returning home."

*Sri Caitanya speaking to his disciple on the irresistible power of Sri Kṛṣṇa's Flute:*

*(Extract from Chaitanya-caritamṛta)* "The sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute spreads in the four directions. Even though Kṛṣṇa vibrates His flute within this universe, its sound pierces the universal covering and goes to Vaikuntha. Thus the vibration enters the

ears of all the inhabitants. It especially enters Goloka Vrndāvan-dhāma and attracts the minds of the young damsels of Vrajabhūmi, bringing them forcibly to where Kṛṣṇa is present.

The vibration of Kṛṣṇa's flute is very aggressive, and it breaks the vows of all chaste women. Indeed, its vibration takes them forcibly from the laps of their husbands. The vibration of His flute attracts even the goddesses of fortune in the Vaikuntha, to say nothing of the poor damsels of Vrndāvana."

*And again... Sri Chaitanya said,* [The gopis said:] 'My dear lord Kṛṣṇa, where is that woman within the three worlds who would not be captivated by the rhythms of the sweet songs coming from Your wonderful flute? Who would not deviate from the path of chastity in this way? Your beauty is the most sublime within the three worlds. Upon seeing your beauty, even cows, birds, animals and trees in the forest are stunned in jubilation.

When You play your flute, the vibration acts like a messenger in the form of a yogini perfect in the art of chanting mantras. This messenger enchants all the women in the universe and attracts them to You. Then she increases their great anxiety and induces them to give up the principle of obeying superiors. Finally, she forcibly brings them to You to surrender in amorous love.

The vibration of Your flute, accompanied by your glance, which pierces us forcibly with the arrows of lust, induces us to ignore the regulative principles of religious life. Thus we become excited and come to you, giving up all shame and fear. But now you are angry with us. You are finding fault with our violating religious principles and leaving our homes and husbands. And as you instruct us about religious principles, we become helpless.' "

*Identifying with Radha's consciousness Sri Chaitanya recited a verse spoken by Radha. Explaining it he spoke the following:*

*(Extract from Chaitanya-caritamṛta)* “Kṛṣṇa’s deep voice is more resonant than newly arrived clouds, and His sweet song defeats even the sweet voice of the cuckoo. Indeed, His song is so sweet that even one particle of its sound can inundate the entire world. If such a particle enters one’s ear, one is immediately bereft of all other types of hearing.

My dear friend, please tell me what to do. My ears have been plundered by the qualities of Kṛṣṇa’s sound. Now, however, I cannot hear His transcendental sound, and I am almost dead for want of it.

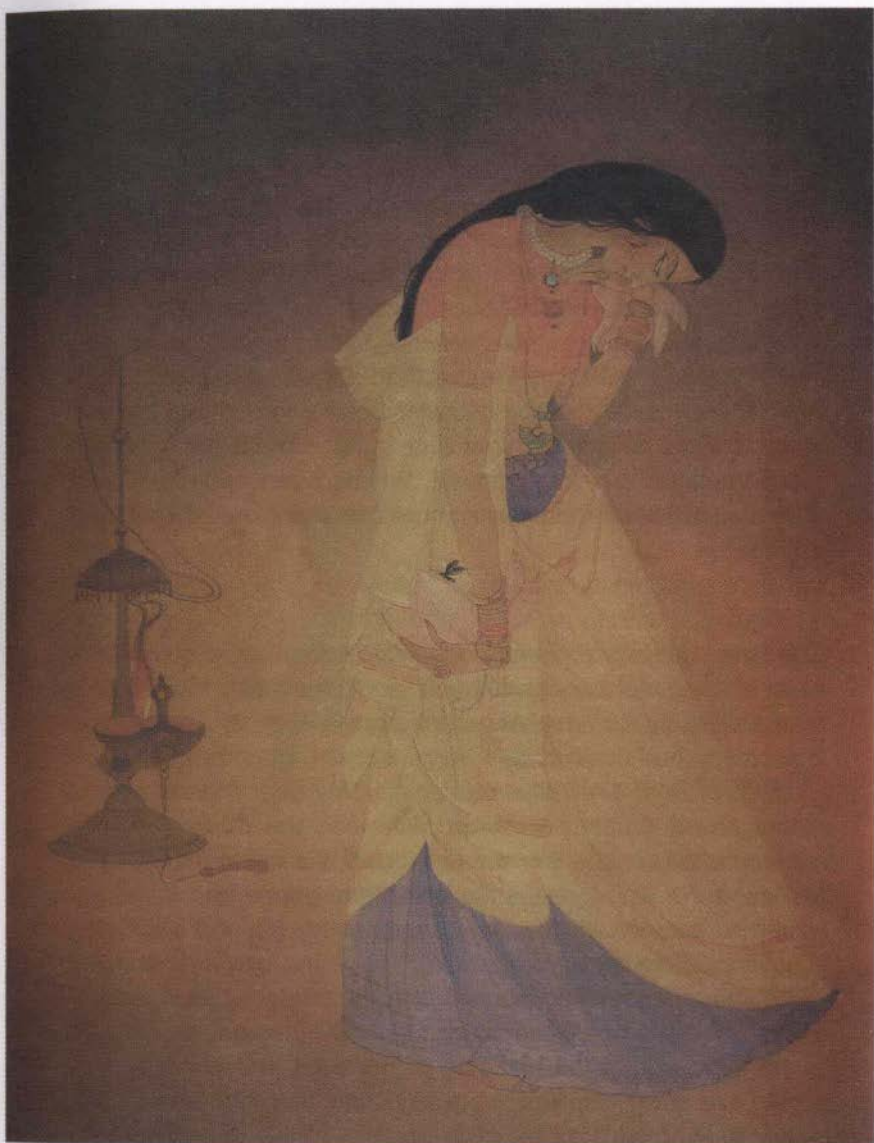
Kṛṣṇa’s speech is far sweeter than nectar... One particle of that transcendental, blissful nectar is the life and soul of the ear, which is like a cakora bird that lives in hope of tasting that nectar. Sometimes by good fortune, the bird can taste it, but at other times he unfortunately cannot and therefore almost dies of thirst.”

*Chaitanya Mahaprabhu fully identified with Radha’s mood of separation upon seeing Krishna at Kurukshetra. In Radha-bhava, Mahaprabhu addressed the gopis:*

*(Extract from Chaitanya-caritamṛta)* “My dear friends, where is that Kṛṣṇa, Cupid personified, who has the effulgence of a kadamba flower, who is sweetness itself, the nectar of my eyes and mind. He who loosens the hair of the gopis, who is the supreme source of transcendental bliss and my life and soul? Has He come before my eyes again?

“Is Cupid personified present with the effulgence and reflection of the kadamba tree? Is He the same person, personified sweetness, who is the pleasure of my eyes and mind, who is my life and soul? Has Kṛṣṇa actually come before my eyes?

*Sri Chaitanya while dancing at the annual Ratha-yatra was filled*



Radhika, by Chughtai (NGMA)



Krishna and Radha, by Chughtai (NGMA)



*with the ecstasy of Radha meeting Shyama at Kurukshetra, and revealed his heart before Sri Jagannatha as follows:*

*(Extract from Chaitanya-caritamṛta)* “The very personality who stole away my heart during my youth is now again my master. These are the same moonlit nights of the month of Caitra. The same fragrance of mālātī flowers is there, and the same sweet breezes are blowing from the kadamba forest. In our intimate relationship, I am also the same lover, yet my mind is not happy here. I am eager to go back to that place on the bank of the Revā under the Vetasi tree. That is my desire.

You are the same Kṛṣṇa, and I am the same Rādhārāṇī. We are meeting again in the same way that we met in the beginning of our lives. Although we are both the same, my mind is still attracted to Vṛndavana-dhama. I wish that You will please again appear with your lotus feet in Vṛndavana.

In Kurukshetra there are crowds of people, elephants and horses, and also the rattling of chariots. But in Vṛndāvana there are flower gardens, and the humming of bees and chirping of the birds can be heard.

Here at Kurukshetra You are dressed like a royal prince, accompanied by great warriors, but in Vṛndāvana You appeared just like an ordinary cowherd boy, accompanied only by your flute.”....

*At the Rath-yatra, after identifying with Radha meeting Sri Krishna at Kurukshetra, Chaitanya Mahāprabhu would play the part of Sri Krishna pacifying Radha:*

*(Extract from Chaitanya-caritamṛta)* Sri Chaitanya said [in Krishna-bhava] “All the inhabitants of Vṛndavana-dhama — My mother, father, cowherd friends and everything else — are like my life and soul. And among all the inhabitants of Vṛndavana, the gopis are my very life and soul. And among the gopis, you Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, are the chief. Therefore you are the very life of my life.

“You are my most dear, and I know that in my absence you cannot live for a moment. Just to keep you living, I worship Lord Nārāyana. By His merciful potency, I come to Vrndāvana every-day to enjoy pastimes with you. I then return to Dvārakādhāma. Thus you can always feel my presence there in Vrndāvana.”





Krishna and Radha in a grove



(c)

## Sri Ramakrishna's pilgrimage to Brindavan\*

One can find parallels between Sri Ramakrishna's pilgrimage to Brindavan (1868), and that of Sri Caitanya (1515). Both these visits had their own importance. Sri Caitanya's pilgrimage resulted in the resurrection of the dead pilgrimage centres of Brindavan and Mathura. Through his spiritual experiences, Sri Caitanya discovered some of the lost sites associated with Sri Krishna, and authenticated some of the episodes recorded in the Bhagavata Purana.

Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) corroborated Sri Caitanya's discovery of Brindavan and the restoration made by the Goswamis. In this way, Sri Ramakrishna's pilgrimage turned into an exploration that resulted in a renewed interest in the spirit of holy Brindavan. Sparks of supreme love of God, which were almost always manifesting in Sri Ramakrishna, recharged the devotees' beliefs in the glories of Brindavan.

Sri Ramakrishna visited Mathura on his way to Brindavan. According to Sri Ramakrishna's biographer Akshay Kumar Sen, the Master had a vivid vision at Mathura of Vasudeva, Krishna's father, crossing the Yamuna River through a storm at night, carrying the newborn child. Later Sri Ramakrishna reminisced, "The moment I came to the Dhruva Ghat [a place for bathing in the Yamuna where Vasudeva had crossed the river] at Mathura, in a flash I saw Vasudeva crossing the Jamuna with Krishna in his arms." So deep was his ecstasy then that Sri Ramakrishna had to be carried in a palanquin to Brindavan, and it was a few hours before he came down to the normal plane of consciousness.

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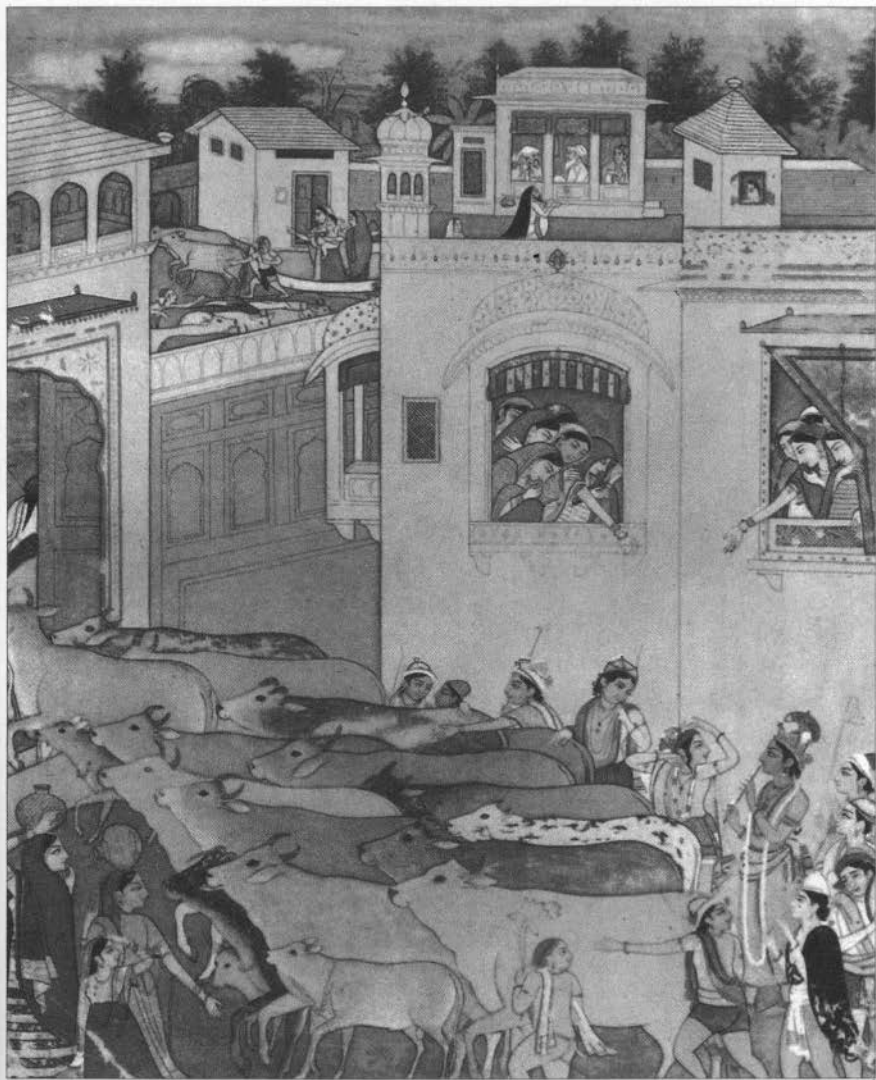
\* Adapted from *Journeys with Ramakrishna* by Swami Prabhananda.

Sri Ramakrishna experienced a special manifestation of divine presence at Brindavan. Praising the spiritual atmosphere there, he once told a devotee: "Did you observe the single-minded love of the gopis for Krishna? The ideal of Brindavan is unique." One such ideal is the traditional belief, popularised by Saint Mira, that in Brindavan Sri Krishna is the only male and everyone else there is his handmaid. Sri Ramakrishna himself endorsed this view.

Sri Ramakrishna was in an elevated state of consciousness during the entire period of his stay in Brindavan, as was the case with Sri Caitanya. Referring to Sri Caitanya's spiritual state, Sri Ramakrishna once observed: "So intense is one's love of God that one becomes unconscious of outer things. Caitanya had this ecstatic love; he 'took a wood for the sacred grove of Brindavan and the ocean for the dark waters of the Jamuna.'" Sri Ramakrishna lovingly cherished the memory of Sri Caitanya's ecstatic love all through.

Sri Ramakrishna also experienced similar ecstatic moods at Brindavan. By way of illustration we can recall an episode recounted by Sri Ramakrishna himself. He said: "When my father chanted the name of Raghuvira, his chest would turn crimson. This also happened to me. When I saw the cows at Brindavan returning from the pasture, I was transported into a divine mood and my body became red." So enamoured did he become of the holy atmosphere of Brindavan that he thought of spending the rest of his life there. But ultimately he returned to Calcutta.

During his stay at Brindavan, Sri Ramakrishna decided to visit Syamakunda, Radhakunda, and Giri Govardhan. As Sri Ramakrishna described it: "I went to Syamakunda and Radhakunda in a palanquin and got out to visit the holy Mount Govardhan. At the very sight of the mount I was overpowered with divine emotion and ran to the top. I lost all consciousness of the world around me. The residents of the place helped me to come down." At another time he said: "On my way to the sacred pools of Syamakunda and Radhakunda, when I saw the



Cowdust



The exchange of clothes (Kangra) . The blue complexioned Krishna is seen wearing the clothes of Radha while she is seen wearing a yellow costume.

meadows, the trees, the shrubs, the birds, and the deer, I was overcome with ecstasy. My clothes became wet with tears. I said: 'O Krishna! Everything here is as it was in the olden days. You alone are absent.' Seated inside the palanquin I lost all power of speech."

It appears that Sri Ramakrishna's pilgrimage to Brindavan rekindled the flame of divine love lighted by Sri Caitanya 353 years earlier. Its import becomes quite significant when we recall Sri Ramakrishna's startling statement recorded by Hariprasanna Chattopadhyaya (later, Swami Vijnanananda). One day Sri Ramakrishna said to him, "As Sri Krishna, I enacted the divine drama of love with the milkmaids and shepherds."

M. heard Sri Ramakrishna say: "But one undoubtedly finds inspiration in a holy place. I accompanied Mathur Babu to Brindavan. Hriday and the ladies of Mathur's family were in our party. No sooner did I see the Kaliyadaman Ghat than a divine emotion surged up within me. I was completely overwhelmed. Hriday used to bathe me there as if I was a child."

His biographer Swami Saradananda, who had an eye for detail, wrote: "When he [Sri Ramakrishna] saw cowherd boys returning from pastures and crossing the Yamuna with herds of cattle at sunset, he became filled with spiritual emotion, inasmuch as among them, he had the vision of the cowherd Krishna, dark-blue like a newly formed cloud and bedecked with the feathers of a peacock's tail on his head. At such times his soul soared into the realm of divine consciousness, his body remained motionless, and his breathing almost ceased. People nearby were amazed at the change in his appearance."

In a letter dated 26 December 1895, Swami Premananda, who collected material from Hridayram as well as from old residents of Brindavan, wrote: ".... While at Brindavan he passed his days almost in a constant state of ecstasy, and he could hardly walk. He had to be carried in a palanquin with the doors open on both sides so that he could see everything. At times holy thoughts would overwhelm him so much that he would try



to jump out, and Hriday would hold him back with difficulty. Hriday usually walked with the palanquin bearers."

On 16 October 1882, Sri Ramakrishna reminisced: "In the dusk I would walk on the bank of the Jamuna when the cattle returned along the sandy banks from their pastures. At the very sight of those cows the thought of Krishna would flash in my mind. I would run along like a madman, crying: "Oh, where is Krishna? Where is my Krishna?"

And on another occasion he gave further details: "One evening I was taking a stroll on the bank of the river. There were small thatched huts on the bank and big plum trees. It was the 'cow-dust' hour. The cows were returning from the pasture, raising dust with their hoofs. I saw them fording the river. Then came some cowherd boys crossing the river with their cows. No sooner did I behold this scene than I cried out, 'O Krishna, where are you?' and became unconscious."

Sri Krishna's divine love for the gopis of Brindavan was a theme that always appealed to him and would throw him into ecstatic moods. As Sri Caitanya assumed the role of Radha and manifested her deep longing to be united with Krishna, Sri Ramakrishna too worshipped his beloved Krishna, looking on himself as one of the gopis or as God's handmaid.

That the pilgrimage to Brindavan left its mark on the saint's life is evident from some later incidents. One or two may be mentioned by way of illustration. One of them happened in 1879, when he was a guest of a Vaishnava priest, Natavar Goswami. Recalling it later, Sri Ramakrishna said: "Once at Syambazar, they arranged a kirtan at Natvar Goswami's house. There I had a vision of Krishna and the gopis of Brindavan. I felt that my subtle body was walking at Krishna's heels." Concerning another incident, Sri Ramakrishna said: "Once at Sihore, I fed the cowherd boys. I put sweetmeats into their hands. I saw that these boys were actually the cowherd boys of Brindavan, and I partook of the sweetmeats from their hands." These incidents show how much the glory of Brindavan had filled the

saint's mind.

But more importantly, his mind had become saturated, as it were, with ecstatic love for Radha and Krishna. This love used to well up occasionally from his heart, reminding the devotees of the spiritual zeal of the gopis. One day Sri Ramakrishna's nephew Ramlal sang a song describing the pangs of the gopis on being separated from their beloved Krishna:

Hold not, hold not the chariot's wheels!  
Is it the wheels that make it move?  
The Mover of its wheels is Krishna,  
By whose will the worlds are moved....

"The Master went into deep samadhi. His body was motionless; he sat with folded hands as in his photograph. Tears of joy flowed from the corners of his eyes. After a long time his mind came down to the ordinary plane of consciousness. He mumbled something, of which the devotees in the room could hear only a word now and then. He was saying, 'Thou art I, and I am Thou — Thou eatest — Thou — I eat! ...' Continuing, the Master said: 'I see everything like a man with jaundiced eyes! I see Thee alone everywhere. O Krishna, friend of the lowly! O Eternal Consort of my soul! O Govinda!' Again he went into samadhi, and the eyes of all the devotees were riveted on his beaming face. They saw Krishna, the King of Brindavan, before them."\*



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\* Vide *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* translated by Swami Nikhilananda.



Drawing: Aron Nicolet



Part IV

Sri Aurobindo on Integral Yoga of  
Divine Love

(Some Extracts)



## The Way of Devotion

**B**hakti in itself is as wide as the heart-yearning of the soul for the Divine and as simple and straightforward as love and desire going straight towards their object. It cannot, therefore, be fixed down to any systematic method, cannot found itself on a psychological science like the Rajayoga, or a psychophysical like the Hathayoga, or start from a definite intellectual process like the ordinary method of the Jnanayoga. It may employ various means or supports, and man, having in him a tendency towards order, process and system, may try to methodise his resort to these auxiliaries: but to give an account of their variations one would have to review almost all man's numberless religions upon their side of inner approach to the Deity. Really, however, the more intimate Yoga of Bhakti resolves itself simply into these four movements, the desire of the Soul when it turns towards God and the straining of its emotion towards him, the pain of love and the divine return of love, the delight of love possessed and the play of that delight, and the eternal enjoyment of the divine Lover which is the heart of celestial bliss. These are things that are at once too simple and too profound for methodising or for analysis. One can at best only say, here are these four successive elements, steps, if we may so call them, of the Siddhi, and here are, largely, some of the means which it uses, and here again are some of the aspects and experiences of the Sadhana of devotion. We need only trace broadly the general line they follow before we turn to consider how the way of devotion enters into a synthetic and integral Yoga, what place it takes there and how its principle affects the other principles of divine living.

All Yoga is a turning of the human mind and the human soul, not yet divine in realisation, but feeling the divine impulse and attraction in it, towards that by which it finds its greater being. Emotionally, the first form which this turning takes must be that of adoration. In ordinary religion this adoration wears the form of external worship and that again develops a most external form of ceremonial worship. This element is ordinarily necessary because the mass of men live in their physical minds, cannot realise anything except by the force of a physical symbol and cannot feel that they are living anything except by the force of a physical action. We might apply here the Tantric gradation of *sādhana*, which makes the way of the *paśu*, the herd, the animal or physical being, the lowest stage of its discipline, and say that the purely or predominantly ceremonial adoration is the first step of this lowest part of the way. It is evident that even real religion, — and Yoga is something more than religion, — only begins when this quite outward worship corresponds to something really felt within the mind, some genuine submission, awe or spiritual aspiration, to which it becomes an aid, an outward expression and also a sort of periodical or constant reminder helping to draw back the mind to it from the preoccupations of ordinary life. But so long as it is only an idea of the Godhead to which one renders reverence or homage, we have not yet got to the beginning of Yoga. The aim of Yoga being union, its beginning must always be a seeking after the Divine, a longing after some kind of touch, closeness or possession. When this comes on us, the adoration becomes always primarily an inner worship; we begin to make ourselves a temple of the Divine, our thoughts and feelings a constant prayer of aspiration and seeking, our whole life an external service and worship. It is as this change, this new soul-tendency grows, that the religion of the devotee becomes a Yoga, a growing contact and union. It does not follow that the outward worship will necessarily be dispensed with, but it will increasingly become only a physical expression or outflowing of the inner devotion and adoration, the

wave of the soul throwing itself out in speech and symbolic act.

Adoration, before it turns into an element of the deeper Yoga of devotion, a petal of the flower of love, its homage and self-uplifting to its sun, must bring with it, if it is profound, an increasing consecration of the being to the Divine who is adored. And one element of this consecration must be a self-purifying so as to become fit for the divine contact, or for the entrance of the Divine into the temple of our inner-being, or for his self-revelation in the shrine of the heart. This purifying may be ethical in its character, but it will not be merely the moralist's seeking for the right and blameless action or even, when once we reach the stage of Yoga, an obedience to the law of God as revealed in formal religion; but it will be a throwing away, *katharsis*, of all that conflicts whether with the idea of the Divine in himself or of the Divine in ourselves. In the former case it becomes in habit of feeling and outer act an imitation of the Divine, in the latter a growing into his likeness in our nature. What inner adoration is to ceremonial worship, this growing into the divine likeness is to the outward ethical life. It culminates in a sort of liberation by likeness to the Divine, a liberation from our lower nature and a change into the divine nature.

Consecration becomes in its fullness a devoting of all our being to the Divine; therefore also of all our thoughts and our works. Here the Yoga takes into itself the essential elements of the Yoga of works and the Yoga of knowledge, but in its own manner and with its own peculiar spirit. It is a sacrifice of life and works to the Divine, but a sacrifice of love more than a tuning of the will to the divine Will. The Bhakta offers up his life and all that he is and all that he has and all that he does to the Divine. This surrender may take the ascetic form, as when he leaves the ordinary life of men and devotes his days solely to prayer and praise and worship or to ecstatic meditation, gives up his personal possessions and becomes the monk or the mendicant whose one only possession is the Divine, gives up all actions in life except those only which help or belong to the

communion with the Divine and communion with other devotees, or at most keeps the doing, from the secure fortress of the ascetic life, of those services to men which seem peculiarly the outflowing of the divine nature of love, compassion and good. But there is the wider self-consecration, proper to any integral Yoga, which, accepting the fullness of life and the world in its entirety as the play of the Divine, offers up the whole being into his possession; it is a holding of all one is and has as belonging to him only and not to ourselves and a doing of all works as an offering to him. By this comes the complete active consecration of both the inner and the outer life, the unmutilated self-giving.

There is also the consecration of the thoughts to the Divine. In its inception this is the attempt to fix the mind on the object of adoration, — for naturally the restless human mind is occupied with other objects and, even when it is directed upwards, constantly drawn away by the world, — so that in the end it habitually thinks of him and all else is only secondary and thought of only in relation to him. This is done often with the aid of a physical image or, more intimately and characteristically, of a Mantra or a divine name through which the divine being is realised. There are supposed by those who systematise, to be three stages of the seeking through the devotion of the mind, first, the constant hearing of the divine name, qualities and all that has been attached to them, secondly, the constant thinking on them or on the divine being or personality, thirdly, the settling and fixing of the mind on the object; and by this comes the full realisation. And by these, too, there comes when the accompanying feeling or the concentration is very intense, the Samadhi, the ecstatic trance in which the consciousness passes away from outer objects. But all this is really incidental; the one thing essential is the intense devotion of the thought in the mind to the object of adoration. Although it seems akin to the contemplation of the way of knowledge, it differs from that in its spirit. It is in its real nature not a still, but an ecstatic contemplation; it seeks not to pass into the being of the Divine, but to bring the Divine into

ourselves and to lose ourselves in the deep ecstasy of his presence or of his possession; and its bliss is not the peace of unity, but the ecstasy of union. Here, too, there may be the separative self-consecration which ends in the giving up of all other thought of life for the possession of this ecstasy, eternal afterwards in planes beyond, or the comprehensive consecration in which all the thoughts are full of the Divine and even in the occupations of life every thought remembers him. As in the other Yogas, so in this, one comes to see the Divine everywhere and in all and to pour out the realisation of the Divine in all one's inner activities and outward actions. But all is supported here by the primary force of the emotional union: for it is by love that the entire self-consecration and the entire possession is accomplished, and thought and action become shapes and figures of the divine love which possesses the spirit and its members.

This is the ordinary movement by which what may be at first a vague adoration of some idea of the Divine takes on the hue and character and then, once entered into the path of Yoga, the inner reality and intense experience of divine love. But there is the more intimate Yoga which from the first consists in this love and attains only by the intensity of its longing without other process or method. All the rest comes but it comes out of this, as leaf and flower out of the seed; other things are not the means of developing and fulfilling love, but the radiations of love already growing in the soul. This is the way that the soul follows when, while occupied perhaps with the normal human life, it has heard the flute of the Godhead behind the near screen of secret woodlands and no longer possesses itself, can have no satisfaction or rest till it has pursued and seized and possessed the divine flute-player. This is in essence the power of love itself in the heart and soul turning from earthly objects to the spiritual source of all beauty and delight. There live in this seeking all the sentiment and passion, all the moods and experiences of love concentrated on a supreme object of desire and intensified a hundredfold beyond the highest acme of intensity possible to a

human love. There is the disturbance of the whole life, the illumination by an unseized vision, the unsatisfied yearning for a single object of the heart's desire, the intense impatience of all that distracts from the one preoccupation, the intense pain of the obstacles that stand in the way of possession, the perfect vision of all beauty and delight in a single form. And there are all the many moods of love, the joy of musing and absorption, the delight of the meeting and fulfilment and embrace, the pain of separation, the wrath of love, the tears of longing, the increased delight of reunion. The heart is the scene of this supreme idyll of the inner consciousness, but a heart which undergoes increasingly an intense spiritual change and becomes the radiantly unfolding lotus of the spirit. And as the intensity of its seeking is beyond the highest power of the normal human emotions, so also the delight and the final ecstasy are beyond the reach of the imagination and beyond expression by speech. For this is the delight of the Godhead that passes human understanding.

Indian Bhakti has given to this divine love powerful forms, poetic symbols which are not in reality so much symbols as intimate expressions of truth which can find no other expression. It uses human relations and sees a divine person, not as mere figures, but because there are divine relations of supreme Delight and Beauty with the human soul of which human relations are the imperfect but still the real type, and because that Delight and Beauty are not abstractions or qualities of a quite impalpable metaphysical entity, but the very body and form of the supreme Being. It is a living Soul to which the soul of the Bhakta yearns; for the source of all life is not an idea or a conception or a state of existence, but a real Being. Therefore in the possession of the divine Beloved all the life of the soul is satisfied and all the relations by which it finds and in which it expresses itself, are wholly fulfilled; therefore, too, by any and all of them can the Beloved be sought, though those which admit the greatest intensity, are always those by which he can be most intensely



pursued and possessed with the profoundest ecstasy. He is sought within in the heart and therefore apart from all by an inward-gathered concentration of the being in the soul itself; but he is also seen and loved everywhere where he manifests his being. All the beauty and joy of existence is seen as his joy and beauty; he is embraced by the spirit in all beings; the ecstasy of love enjoyed pours itself out in a universal love; all existence becomes a radiation of its delight and even in its very appearances is transformed into something other than its outward appearance. The world itself is experienced as a play of the divine Delight, a Lila, and that in which the world loses itself is the heaven of beatitude of the eternal union.

## The Mystery of Love

The adoration of the impersonal Divine would not be strictly a Yoga of devotion according to the current interpretation; for in the current forms of Yoga it is supposed that the Impersonal can only be sought for a complete unity in which God and our own person disappear and there is none to adore or to be adored; only the delight of the experience of oneness and infinity remains. But in truth the miracles of spiritual consciousness are not to be subjected to so rigid a logic. When we first come to feel the presence of the infinite, as it is the finite personality in us which is touched by it, that may well answer to the touch and call with a sort of adoration. Secondly, we may regard the Infinite not so much as a spiritual status of oneness and bliss, or that only as its mould and medium of being, but rather as the presence of the ineffable Godhead to our consciousness, and then too love and adoration find their place. And even when our personality seems to disappear into unity with it, it may still be — and really is — the individual divine who is melting to the universal or the supreme by a union in which love and lover and loved are forgotten in a fusing experience of ecstasy, but are

still there latent in the oneness and subconsciously persisting in it. All union of the self by love must necessarily be of this nature. We may even say, in a sense, that it is to have this joy of union as the ultimate crown of all the varied experiences of spiritual relation between the individual soul and God that the One became many in the universe.

Still, the more varied and most intimate experience of divine love cannot come by the pursuit of the impersonal Infinite alone; for that the Godhead we adore must become near and personal to us. It is possible for the Impersonal to reveal within itself all the riches of personality when we get into its heart, and one who sought only to enter into or to embrace the infinite Presence alone, may discover in it things he had not dreamed of; the being of the Divine has surprises for us which confound the ideas of the limiting intellect. But ordinarily the way of devotion begins from the other end; it starts from and it rises and widens to its issue by adoration of the divine Personality. The Divine is a Being and not an abstract existence or a status of pure timeless infinity; the original and universal existence is He, but that existence is inseparable from consciousness and bliss of being, and an existence conscious of its own being and its own bliss is what we may well call a divine infinite Person,— Purusha. Moreover all consciousness implies power, Shakti; where there is infinite consciousness of being, there is infinite power of being, and by that power all exists in the universe. All beings exist by this Being; all things are the faces of God; all thought and action and feeling and love proceed from him and return to him, all their results have him for source and support and secret goal. It is to this Godhead, this Being that the Bhakti of an integral Yoga will be poured out and uplifted. Transcendent, it will seek him in the ecstasy of an absolute union; universal, it will seek him in infinite quality and every aspect and in all beings with a universal delight and love; individual, it will enter into all human relations with him that love creates between person and person.

It may not be possible to seize from the beginning on all the complete integrality of that which the heart is seeking; in fact, it is only possible if the intelligence, the temperament, the emotional mind have already been developed into largeness and fineness by the trend of our previous living. That is what the experience of the normal life is meant to lead to by its widening culture of the intellect, the aesthetic and emotional mind and of our parts too of will and active experience. It widens and refines the normal being so that it may open easily to all the truth of That which was preparing it for the temple of its self-manifestation. Ordinarily, man is limited in all these parts of his being and he can grasp at first only so much of the divine truth as has some large correspondence to his own nature and its past development and associations. Therefore God meets us first in different limited affirmations of his divine qualities and nature; he presents himself to the seeker as an absolute of the things he can understand and to which his will and heart can respond; he discloses some name and aspect of his Godhead. This is what is called in Yoga the *iṣṭa-devatā*, the name and form elected by our nature for its worship. In order that the human being may embrace this Godhead with every part of himself, it is represented with a form that answers to its aspects and qualities and which becomes the living body of God to the adorer. These are those forms of Vishnu, Shiva, Krishna, Kali, Durga, Christ, Buddha, which the mind of man seizes on for adoration. Even the monotheist who worships a formless Godhead, yet gives to him some form of quality, some mental form or form of Nature by which he envisages and approaches him. But to be able to see a living form, a mental body, as it were, of the Divine gives to the approach a greater closeness and sweetness.

The way of the integral Yoga of Bhakti will be to universalize this conception of the Deity, to personalise him intimately by a multiple and an all-embracing relation, to make him constantly present to all the being and to devote, give up, surrender the

whole being to him, so that he shall dwell near to us and in us and we with him and in him. *Manana* and *darśana*, a constant thinking of him in all things and seeing of him always and everywhere is essential to this way of devotion. When we look on the things of physical Nature, in them we have to see the divine object of our love; when we look upon men and beings, we have to see him in them and in our relation with them to see that we are entering into relations with forms of him; when breaking beyond the limitation of the material world we know or have relations with the beings of other planes, still the same thought and vision has to be made real to our minds. The normal habit of our minds which are open only to the material and apparent form and the ordinary mutilated relation and ignore the secret Godhead within, has to yield by an unceasing habit of all-embracing love and delight to this deeper and ampler comprehension and this greater relation. In all godheads we have to see this one God whom we worship with our heart and all our being; they are forms of his divinity. So enlarging our spiritual embrace we reach a point at which all is he and the delight of this consciousness becomes to us our normal uninterrupted way of looking at the world. That brings us the outward or objective universality of our union with him.

Inwardly, the image of the Beloved has to become visible to the eye within, dwelling in us as in his mansion, informing our hearts with the sweetness of his presence, presiding over all our activities of mind and life as the friend, master and lover from the summit of our being, uniting us from above with himself in the universe. A constant inner communion is the joy to be made close and permanent and unfailing. This communion is not to be confined to an exceptional nearness and adoration when we retire quite into ourselves away from our normal pre-occupations, nor is it to be sought by a putting away of our human activities. All our thoughts, impulses, feelings, actions have to be referred to him for his sanction or disallowance, or if we cannot yet reach this point, to be offered to him in our sacrifice

of aspiration, so that he may more and more descend into us and be present in them all and pervade them with all his will and power, his light and knowledge, his love and delight. In the end all our thoughts, feelings, impulses, actions will begin to proceed from him and change into some divine seed and form of themselves; in our whole inner living we shall have grown conscious of ourselves as a part of his being till between the existence of the Divine whom we adore and our own lives there is no longer any division. So too in all happenings we have to come to see the dealings with us of the divine Lover and take such pleasure in them that even grief and suffering and physical pain become his gifts and turn to delight and disappear finally into delight, slain by the sense of the divine contact, because the touch of his hands is the alchemist of a miraculous transformation. Some reject life because it is tainted with grief and pain, but to the God-lover grief and pain become means of meeting with him, imprints of his pressure and finally cease as soon as our union with his nature becomes too complete for these masks of the universal delight at all to conceal it. They change into the Ananda.

All the relations by which this union comes about, become on this path intensely and blissfully personal. That which in the end contains, takes up or unifies them all, is the relation of lover and beloved, because that is the most intense and blissful of all and carries up all the rest into its heights and yet exceeds them. He is the teacher and guide and leads us to knowledge; at every step of the developing inner light and vision, we feel his touch like that of the artist moulding our clay of mind, his voice revealing the truth and its word, the thought he gives us to which we respond, the flashing of his spears of lightning which chase the darkness of our ignorance. Especially, in proportion as the partial lights of the mind become transformed into lights of gnosis, in whatever slighter or greater degree that may happen, we feel it as a transformation of our mentality into his and more and more he becomes the thinker and seer in us. We

cease to think and see for ourselves, but think only what he wills to think for us and see only what he sees for us. And then the teacher is fulfilled in the lover; he lays hands on all our mental being to embrace and possess, to enjoy and use it.

He is the Master; but in this way of approach all distance and separation, all awe and fear and mere obedience disappear, because we become too close and united with him for these things to endure and it is the lover of our being who takes it up and occupies and uses and does with it whatever he wills. Obedience is the sign of the servant, but that is the lowest stage of this relation, *dāśya*. Afterwards we do not obey, but move to his will as the string replies to the finger of the musician. To be the instrument is this higher stage of self-surrender and submission. But this is the living and loving instrument and it ends in the whole nature of our being becoming the slave of God, rejoicing in his possession and its own blissful subjection to the divine grasp and mastery. With a passionate delight it does all he wills it to do without questioning and bears all he would have it bear, because what it bears is the burden of the beloved being.

He is the friend, the adviser, helper, saviour in trouble and distress, the defender from enemies, the hero who fights our battles for us or under whose shield we fight, the charioteer, the pilot of our ways. And here we come at once to a closer intimacy; he is the comrade and eternal companion, the playmate of the game of living. But still there is so far a certain division, however pleasant, and friendship is too much limited by the appearance of beneficence. The lover can wound, abandon, be wroth with us, seem to betray, yet our love endures and even grows by these oppositions; they increase the joy of reunion and the joy of possession; through them the lover remains the friend, and all that he does, we find in the end, has been done by the lover and helper of our being for our soul's perfection as well as for his joy in us. These contradictions lead to a greater intimacy. He is the father and mother too of our being,

its source and protector and its indulgent cherisher and giver of our desires. He is the child born to our desire whom we cherish and rear. All these things the lover takes up; his love in its intimacy and oneness keeps in it the paternal and maternal care and lends itself to our demands upon it. All is unified in that deepest many-sided relation.

From the beginning even it is possible to have this closest relation of the lover and beloved, but it will not be as exclusive for the integral Yogin as for certain purely ecstatic ways of Bhakti. It will from the beginning take into itself something of the hues of the other relations, since he follows too knowledge and works and has need of the Divine as teacher, friend and master. The growing of the love of God must carry with it in him an expansion of the knowledge of God and of the action of the divine Will in his nature and living. The divine Lover reveals himself; he takes possession of the life. But still the essential relation will be that of love from which all things flow, love passionate, complete, seeking a hundred ways of fulfilment, every means of mutual possession, a million facets of the joy of union. All the distinctions of the mind, all its barriers and "cannot be"s, all the cold analyses of the reason are mocked at by this love or they are only used as the tests and fields and gates of union. Love comes to us in many ways; it may come as an awakening to the beauty of the Lover, by the sight of an ideal face and image of him, by his mysterious hints to us of himself behind the thousand faces of things in the world, by a slow or sudden need of the heart, by a vague thirst in the soul, by the sense of someone near us drawing us or pursuing us with love or of someone blissful and beautiful whom we must discover.

We may seek after him passionately and pursue the unseen beloved; but also the lover whom we think not of, may pursue us, may come upon us in the midst of the world and seize on us for his own whether at first we will or no. Even, he may come to us at first as an enemy, with the wrath of love, and our earliest relations with him may be those of battle and struggle. Where

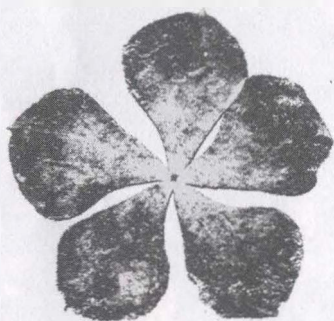
first there is love and attraction, the relations between the Divine and the soul may still for long be chequered with misunderstanding and offence, jealousy and wrath, strife and the quarrels of love, hope and despair and the pain of absence and separation. We throw up all the passions of the heart against him, till they are purified into a sole ecstasy of bliss and oneness. But that too is monotony; it is not possible for the tongue of human speech to tell all the utter unity and all the eternal variety of the Ananda of divine love. Our higher and our lower members are both flooded with it, the mind and life no less than the soul: even the physical body takes its share of the joy, feels the touch, is filled in all its limbs, veins, nerves with the flowing of the wine of the ecstasy, *amṛta*. Love and Ananda are the last word of being, the secret of secrets, the mystery of mysteries.

Thus universalised, personalised, raised to its intensities, made all-occupying, all-embracing, all-fulfilling, the way of love and delight gives the supreme liberation. Its highest crest is a supracosmic union. But for love complete union is *mukti*; liberation has to it no other sense; and it includes all kinds of Mukti together, nor are they in the end, as some would have it, merely successive to each other and therefore mutually exclusive. We have the absolute union of the divine with the human spirit, *sā-yujya* ; in that reveals itself a content of all that depends here upon difference, — but there the difference is only a form of oneness, — Ananda too of nearness and contact and mutual presence, *sāmīpya*, *sālokya*, Ananda of mutual reflection, the thing that we call likeness, *sādṛśya*, and other wonderful things too for which language has as yet no name. There is nothing which is beyond the reach of the God-lover or denied to him; for he is the favourite of the divine Lover and the self of the Beloved.









# Sri Aurobindo

## *Extract from "Ahana"*

*Sri Aurobindo wrote a long poem entitled 'Ahana', where Ahana is described as the Dawn of God who is greeted by the troubled and toiling mortals of the world who seek the meaning of their toil on the earth. Ahana in reply explains the meaning of her arrival and reveals to the toiling humanity the significance of the earth and the labour of the earth. Towards the end of her message, she brings tidings that she has brought with her the One, Sri Krishna, whose love and joy and dance on the earth is the meaning of all the toil of humanity. She adds that humanity need not suffer always, and that the struggle and the suffering are meant to be the prelude to the coming of the Supreme Divine Consciousness on the earth so that humanity and the Divine can join together and humanity can partake of the manifestation of the Divine Bliss on the earth and rejoice in the Rasa of Sri Krishna. Let us read her message:*

Thou shalt not suffer always nor cry to me lured and forsaken:  
I have a snare for his footsteps, I have a chain for him taken.  
Come then to Brindavan, soul of the joyous; faster and faster  
Follow the dance I shall teach thee with Shyama for slave and  
for master.  
Follow the notes of the flute with a soul aware and exulting;  
Trample Delight that submits and crouch to a sweetness  
insulting.  
Then shalt thou know what the dance meant, fathom the song  
and the singer,

Hear behind thunder its rhymes, touched by lightning thrill to his  
finger,  
Brindavan's rustle shalt understand and Yamuna's laughter,  
Take thy place in the Ras and thy share of the ecstasy after.

SABCL, Volume 5, page 536

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## Sri Aurobindo

### *Extract from "Letters on Yoga"*

The historicity of Krishna is of less spiritual importance and is not essential, but it has still a considerable value. It does not seem to me that there can be any reasonable doubt that Krishna the man was not a legend or a poetic invention but actually existed upon earth and played a part in the Indian past. Two facts emerge clearly, that he was regarded as an important spiritual figure, one whose spiritual illumination was recorded in one of the Upanishads, and that he was traditionally regarded as a divine man, one worshipped after his death as a deity; this is apart from the story in the Mahabharata and the Puranas. There is no reason to suppose that the connection of his name with the development of the Bhagavata religion, an important current in the stream of Indian spirituality, was founded on a mere legend or poetic invention. The Mahabharata is a poem and not history, but it is clearly a poem founded on a great historical event, traditionally preserved in memory; some of the figures connected with it, Dhritarashtra, Parikshit, for instance, certainly existed and the story of the part played by Krishna as

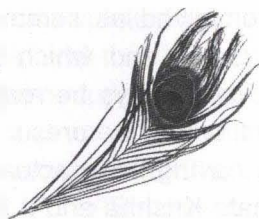
leader, warrior and statesman can be accepted as probable in itself and to all appearance founded on a tradition which can be given a historical value and has not the air of a myth or a sheer poetical invention. That is as much as can be positively said from the point of view of the theoretical reason as to the historic figure of the man Krishna; but in my view there is much more than that in it and I have always regarded the incarnation as a fact and accepted the historicity of Krishna as I accept the historicity of Christ.

The story of Brindavan is another matter; it does not enter into the main story of the Mahabharata and has a Puranic origin and it could be maintained that it was intended all along to have a symbolic character. At one time I accepted that explanation, but I had to abandon it afterwards; there is nothing in the Puranas that betrays any such intention. It seems to me that it is related as something that actually occurred or occurs somewhere. The Gopis are to them realities and not symbols. It was for them at the least an occult truth, and occult and symbolic are not the same thing; the symbol may be only a significant mental construction or only a fanciful invention, but the occult is a reality which is actual somewhere, behind the material scene as it were and can have its truth for the terrestrial life and its influence upon it may even embody itself there. The Lila of the Gopis seems to be conceived as something which is always going on in a divine Gokul and which projected itself in an earthly Brindavan and can always be realised and its meaning made actual in the soul. It is to be presumed that the writers of the Puranas took it as having been actually projected on earth in the life of the incarnate Krishna and it has been so accepted by the religious mind of India.

These questions and the speculations to which they have given rise have no indispensable connection with the spiritual life. There what matters is the contact with Krishna and the growth towards the Krishna consciousness, the presence, the spiritual relation, the union in the soul and till that is reached,

the aspiration, the growth in bhakti and whatever illumination one can get on the way. To one who has had these things, lived in the presence, heard the voice, known Krishna as Friend or Lover, Guide, Teacher, Master or, still more, has had his whole consciousness changed by the contact, or felt the presence within him, all such questions have only an outer and superficial interest. So also, to one who has had contact with the inner Brindavan and the Lila of the Gopis, made the surrender and undergone the spell of the joy and the beauty or even only turned to the sound of the flute, the rest hardly matters. But from another point of view, if one can accept the historical reality of the incarnation, there is this great spiritual gain that one has a *point d'appui* for a more concrete realisation in the conviction that once at least the Divine has visibly touched the earth, made the complete manifestation possible, made it possible for the divine supernature to descend into this evolving but still very imperfect terrestrial nature.

SABCL, Volume 22, pp. 425-27

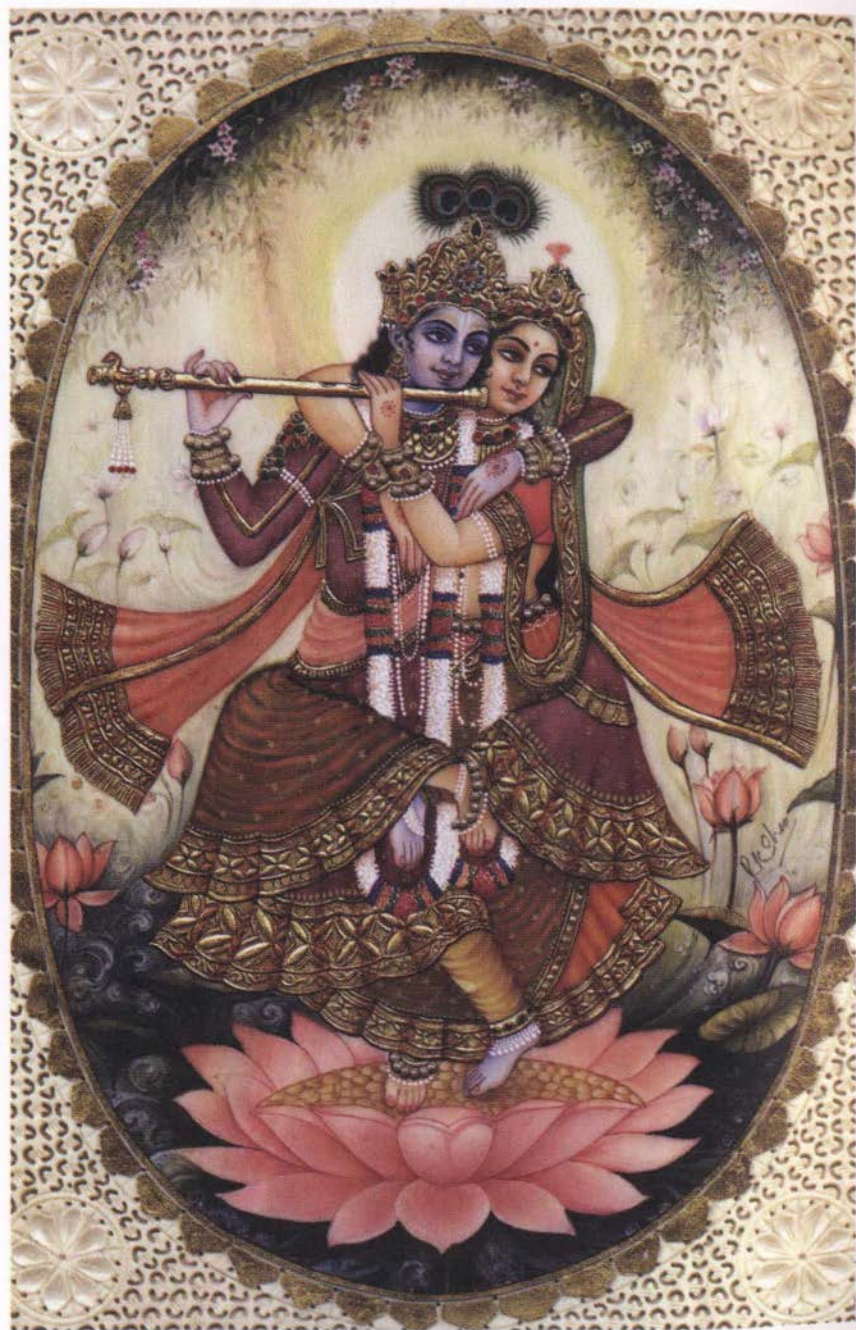


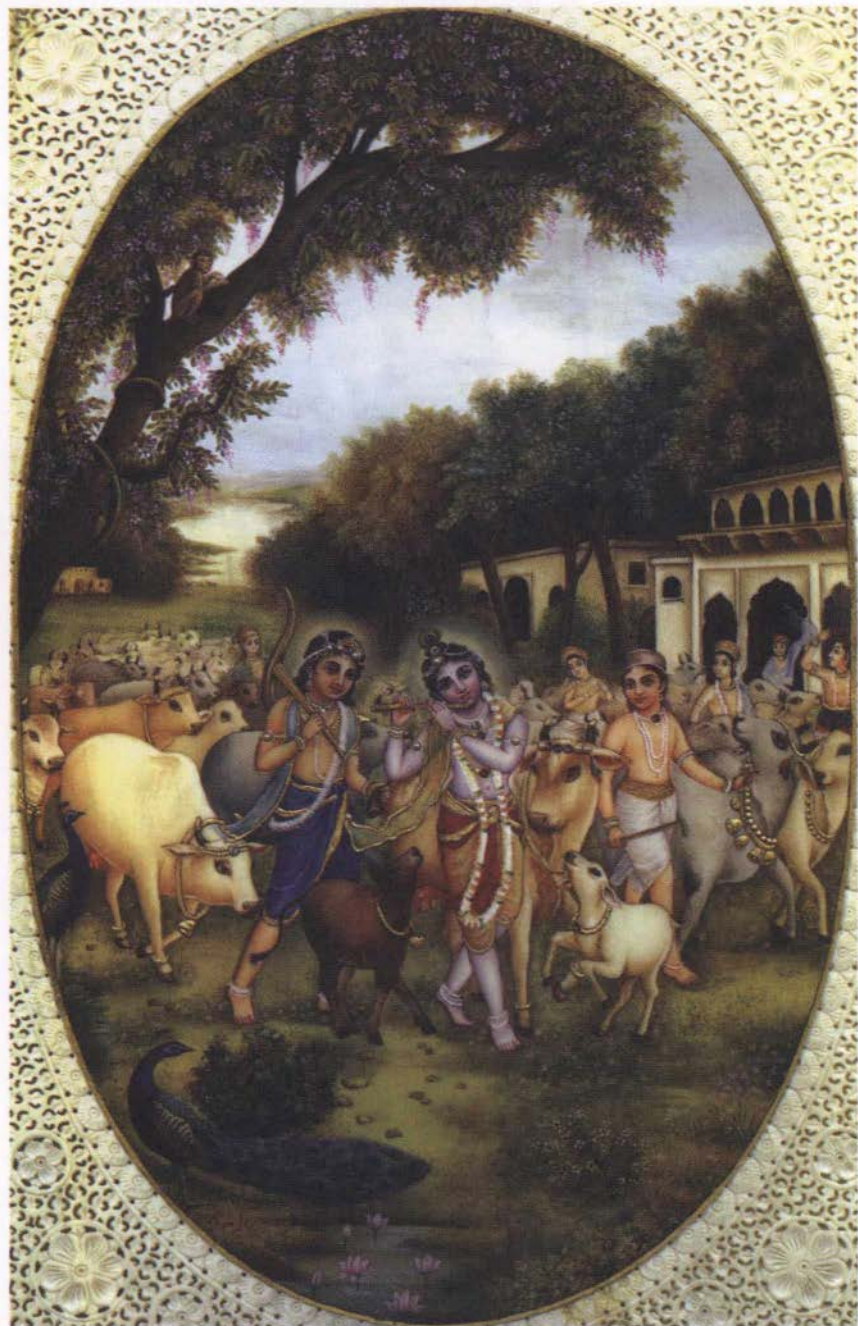














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**S**ri Krishna's exile to Brindavan is a landmark in the history of Indian religion, considering that the episodes connected with that exile have given birth to the practice and yoga of divine love which takes us to the depths and intimacies of human emotions turned to the Divine and the Divine response that uplifts various layers of human consciousness, even the vital and sensuous to their divine counterparts. Sri Krishna's sweetness and the alluring charm of His flute surpass even the oceans of Ananda and capture the human soul into the most intimate secrecy of the human relationship with the Divine. The Rasa Lila of Sri Krishna with the Gopis and the love of Sri Krishna with Radha and of Radha with Sri Krishna have become for all spiritual seekers a symbol of the Divine Harmony that can be established on the earth as also of the creative power of Divine Love.

This book is an anthology of episodes taken from various literary works that depict the episodes connected with Sri Krishna's exile to Brindavan as also of some of the significant poems, comments and essays that aim at clarifying and illumining the secrets of Sri Krishna as an Avatara and the impact that Sri Krishna has made on the human hearts that have turned to the intimacies of Divine Love. A few extracts from Sri Chaitanya and Sri Ramakrishna, as also from Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's "Radha's Prayer" indicate the living testimony of the reality of Sri Krishna and the work that He continues to do for the evolution of consciousness on the earth.

The aim of this anthology is to introduce to the reader some significant passages and poems that will provide illuminating impressions of some of the relevant original works, and it is hoped that the reader will feel invited to turn to the original works in an ever continuing pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Sri Krishna.

