

Sri Krishna of Vraja

SWAMI DEVISHANANDA

The divine magic

The graceful Yamuna flowed past Vraja, joyfully echoing the name of the divine Enchanter. With the advent of the mighty Bhagavān, health, opulence, bliss reigned over the land and shone with an ethereal beauty of supernatural dimension. A streamlet of love was murmuring through the banks of Kalindi, showering immense joy and untold bliss. The boy Krishna was the darling of his mother Yashoda. He was named Krishna by his parents: KRISH means truth and NA means bliss (*Sadānanda*). He was the very idol of all the village people. He was the most beloved companion of his friends and the loving joy of all the women of Vraja. Without their dear Kānāi, they would desist from going to the pasture ground. If they ever went, no play was interesting in his absence. It was so dull and monotonous. The whole day would seem weary and tiresome. In the opinion of the wise, a leader is born and not made. The teachers of men generally exude a wonderful charm and sweetness of personality and earn the trust of their companions even when they are young. In Sri Krishna's life this law was literally true. He became the guide and chosen leader of his friends when he was a mere boy under teens.

Slowly and silently, a halo of love was spreading round this amiable figure. It was as if a new world of peace had been created, filled with festivity in pure joy. But the fortunate ones who enjoyed most were the

cowherd boys and girls of Vraja, who knew nothing but gentle Krishna in their thought, word and deed. His beauty and grace, his amiability and love attracted their hearts like a magnet. He carried a flute and a grazing stick, wore an orange dress and bells on his waist. That magic flute held such power that it bound the souls of the village nymphs forever to his lotus feet. How entralling and captivating was the music of this simple pipe. The guileless maids of Sri Vraja were perfect emblems of devotion, purity and uncompromising self-surrender. There was not the least trace of carnality in this grand super-human love, a love in which there was no rivalry but equality of all devoted souls that offered their best to the sublime personality of their beloved Lord. Unconsciously, by his grace, they were carried away by this tremendous power of divine love.

The divine mercy

Hitherto, they were occupied with their household duties by forgetting their real selves, dominated, as they were, by the attachment to the body, by the attachment of the senses to sensual objects. They had little time to think of higher things in life. But the Lord is ever compassionate to His devotees. He would never allow deadly clouds to overshadow the mental horizon of His consecrated companions. How can He suffer His votaries to perish in the quagmire of mortal *samsāra*? His main reason for incarnation is to make Himself available to all and let them take refuge in

Him. He does not care if His votaries have not done any yoga such as *Karma*, *Jnāna*, etc. What was the instrument He used to recall those of His people who had strayed in Vraja? Not the dreadful implements forged to fix the disobedient and disinterested. The instrument that caused a wholesale reformation was a simple flute, too insignificant to be used as a missile. But its gentle note was strong enough to stir up and create a total revolution in the forgetful minds of His adherents. Lord's flute is an instrument, which stands for the Guru and its music expresses the Lord's power in this process of reformation. Flute is known as 'Venu' in sanskrit. Etymology of *Venu* has three words—'Va' means the bliss of Brahman (*Brahmānanda*), the letter 'E' denotes the pleasures of material world, and the word 'anu' denotes petty. Thus, the flute symbolizes the Guru, who renounces both the bliss of Brahman and worldly pleasures willingly, so that he may draw everyone closer to the presence of the Lord. Flute (Guru) which touches the nectar lips of the Lord urges devotees to dedicate their bodies, minds, senses for attaining the highest devotion to Him. It was a sign to quickly move towards the leader, and everyone rushed to the Lord, who guides all penitent souls.

The divine tutor

Sri Krishna was a mere boy, only eleven years old, when he became a regular teacher of his clan. He did not instruct his students on any intricate philosophy. He did not preach to his beloved companions any subtle metaphysics from the book of the sages. How, then, could he enlighten them in the path of righteousness and lead them towards the sacred ideal of a spiritual life? He was an adept in schooling. He knew

how to adapt his teachings to the needs of his students. He tutored them in the school of nature amidst running brooks and shadowy woods.

The scenery was charming and the whole atmosphere was animated with lovely beauty and pleasing grandeur. Sri Krishna's companions had no academic training. In their time, book-learning and formal education for the rural boys and girls was conspicuous by its absence. Was there any need of educating these unsophisticated people within the thick walls of a classroom, taking them through the maze of books? Mother Nature nurtured them in her own seminary in the art of leading a plain, unassuming life, free from cares and anxieties. The master-mind of Krishna shaped these pliable moulds into images of exquisite beauty and noble grandeur. What psychological effect was produced by the charming melody of the flute? It sent a thrill of joy into the hearts of his devotees and stirred their captivated souls into deep ecstatic love. Later on, this simple pipe would be turned into a conch (*pāñchajanya*) and inspire, with its solemn note, the drooping heart of many a faint-hearted soldier on the field of the righteous battle of Kurukshetra.

The divine dance

After the rectification, when their hearts became pure, it is said in the *Shrimad Bhāgavatam* that Sri Krishna blessed the cowherds with fivefold wisdom of detachment, knowledge, yoga, penance and devotion by way of preparation for a spiritual union in the form of *Rāsa Lilā*. It was a ring dance involving the Lord and 16 cowherds. It was like a garland of sixteen pearls, held together by Sri Krishna who appeared in eight shapes, each with a pair of *gopis*. The dance was performed to

bring out the divine bliss in them and, during this dance, the Lord conferred His Divine Rasa or bliss on each of the cowherds and, symbolically, established the unity or oneness of the Lord with each of us in this universe. It is a fine portrayal of the blissful communion that a yearning heart experiences in the depth of spiritual realization. When an enthusiastic devotee comes in close proximity with the Lord at the ripening of devotion, such a devotee breaks down strong barriers and transcends all the bounds of social conventions and ordinary ethical rules. Nothing can turn him back from his destined goal of oneness with his Lord. Until a man dies to this puny life of selfishness and attachment and is born again to the cosmic life of universal love and sympathy, unless a person lets go of selfishness (lust) and worldly attachments (money), and awakens to a higher life of universal love and compassion, it is meaningless to desire the ultimate spiritual vision of God, which is beyond human comprehension. A *sādhaka* must sacrifice himself at the altar of love in order that he may attain resurrection in a glowing transcendental life. Unless he is ready to make unconditional surrender to the holy flame of Truth, the goal he seeks for is a distant one. This sacred episode shows how all sincere seekers express their love by wanting closeness with the Lord alone, free from attachment to anything else.

The incarnation of the Almighty

When we think of Sri Krishna's supernatural birth and consider the series of amazing divine plays that marked the life of our immortal hero, we cannot but conclude that he was not a man but the

incarnation of the almighty Providence, who blessed this Mother Earth for the redemption of the oppressed and rescue of her suffering children. There was no spot in his luminous character. He was proof against all temptation as Hrishikesha. Deluded men may find fault with his stainless conduct, but the saints and seers like Vyasa, Alwars and Shuka have described Him as *Āptakāma* and *Ātmārāma*, one who has all his desires fulfilled without much effort and always enjoys the bliss of his own Self. The way he instantly transformed into a strong commander and wise advisor when duty called clearly shows that his youthful pastimes were beyond any criticism. He had much to do in the field of politics. When broken-hearted shepherd girls came to Mathura to take him back to Vraja, most seriously he asked them to return. He requested them to forget him and try to be happy with Him as formless. He remained steadfast, calm and serene wherever he served his devotees.

The oppressive and atrocious evildoers like Kamsa, Jarāsandha and Kauravas sent a thrill of fear across the land. At a glance, the Lord saw the benighted condition of the land and immediately set Himself to the task of fighting the devils out of existence. Peace and order was restored in society and light was brought back, scattering darkness. His multifarious work of establishing righteousness was for the prosperity of the whole world. May He continue to inspire all of us to contemplate on His glories and divine acts, with true wisdom, and to work in detachment in order to transcend His *Māyā* which is otherwise so difficult to transcend. ■

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