

CHAPTER ONE

The Advent of Lord Kṛṣṇa: Introduction

The summary of the First Chapter is as follows. This chapter describes how Kāṁsa, frightened by hearing an omen about his being killed by the eighth son of Devakī, killed Devakī's sons one after another.

When Śukadeva Gosvāmī finished describing the dynasty of Yadu, as well as the dynasties of the moon-god and sun-god, Mahārāja Parīkṣit requested him to describe Lord Kṛṣṇa, who appeared with Baladeva in the Yadu dynasty, and how Kṛṣṇa performed His activities within this world. Kṛṣṇa is transcendental, the King said, and therefore to understand His activities is the occupation of liberated persons. Hearing of kṛṣṇa-līlā is the boat by which to achieve the ultimate goal of life. Except for an animal killer or one who is following a policy of suicide, every intelligent person must strive to understand Kṛṣṇa and His activities.

Kṛṣṇa was the only worshipable Deity for the Pāṇḍavas. When Mahārāja Parīkṣit was in the womb of his mother, Uttarā, Kṛṣṇa saved him from the attack of the brahma-śastra. Now Mahārāja Parīkṣit asked Śukadeva Gosvāmī how His Lordship Baladeva, the son of Rohiṇī, could have appeared in the womb of Devakī. Why did Kṛṣṇa transfer Himself from Mathurā to Vṛndāvana, King Parīkṣit asked, and how did He live there with His family members? What did Kṛṣṇa do in Mathurā and Vṛndāvana, and why did He kill His maternal uncle Kāṁsa? For how many years did Kṛṣṇa reside in Dvārakā, and how many queens did He have? Mahārāja Parīkṣit asked Śukadeva Gosvāmī all these questions. He also requested Śukadeva Gosvāmī to describe other activities of Kṛṣṇa about which he could not inquire.

When Śukadeva Gosvāmī began to speak about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Mahārāja Parīkṣit forgot the fatigue brought about by his fasting. Enthusiastic to describe Kṛṣṇa, Śukadeva Gosvāmī said, “Like the waters of the Ganges, descriptions of the activities of Kṛṣṇa can purify the entire universe. The speaker, the inquirer and the audience all become purified.”

Once when the entire world was overburdened by the increasing military power of demons in the form of kings, mother earth assumed the shape of a cow and approached Lord Brahmā for relief. Sympathetic to mother

earth's lamentation, Brahmā, accompanied by Lord Śiva and other demigods, took the cow-shaped mother earth to the shore of the Milk Ocean, where he offered prayers to please Lord Viṣṇu, who lay there on an island in transcendental ecstasy. Brahmā thereafter understood the advice of Mahā-Viṣṇu, who informed him that He would appear on the surface of the earth to mitigate the burden created by the demons. The demigods, along with their wives, should appear there as associates of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the family of Yadu to increase the sons and grandsons in that dynasty. By the will of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Anantadeva would appear first, as Balarāma, and Kṛṣṇa's potency, Yoga-māyā, would also appear. Brahmā informed mother earth about all this, and then he returned to his own abode.

After marrying Devakī, Vasudeva was returning home with her on a chariot driven by Kaṁsa, her brother, when an ominous voice addressed Kaṁsa, warning him that Devakī's eighth son would kill him. Upon hearing this omen, Kaṁsa was immediately ready to kill Devakī, but Vasudeva diplomatically began to instruct him. Vasudeva stressed that it would not be good for Kaṁsa to kill his younger sister, especially at the time of her marriage. Anyone who possesses a material body must die, Vasudeva advised him. Every living entity lives in a body for some time and then transmigrates to another body, but one is unfortunately misled into accepting the body as the soul. If a person under this mistaken conception wants to kill another body, he is condemned as hellish.

Because Kaṁsa was not satisfied by Vasudeva's instructions, Vasudeva devised a plan. He offered to bring Kaṁsa all of Devakī's children so that Kaṁsa could kill them. Why then should Kaṁsa kill Devakī now? Kaṁsa was satisfied by this proposal. In due course of time, when Devakī gave birth to a child, Vasudeva brought the newborn baby to Kaṁsa, who, upon seeing Vasudeva's magnanimity, was struck with wonder. When Vasudeva gave Kaṁsa the child, Kaṁsa, showing some intelligence, said that since he was to be killed by the eighth child, why should he kill the first? Although Vasudeva did not trust him, Kaṁsa requested Vasudeva to take the child back. Later, however, after Nārada approached Kaṁsa and disclosed to him that the demigods were appearing in the Yadu and Vṛṣṇi dynasties and conspiring to kill him, Kaṁsa decided to kill all the children born in these families, and he also decided that any child born from the womb of Devakī must be killed. Thus he arrested and imprisoned both Devakī and Vasudeva and killed six of their sons, one after another. Nārada

had also informed Kaṁsa that in his previous birth Kaṁsa was Kālanemi, a demon killed by Viṣṇu. Consequently, Kaṁsa became a great enemy to all the descendants of the yadu-vaṁśa, the Yadu dynasty. He even arrested and imprisoned his own father, Ugrasena, for Kaṁsa wanted to enjoy the kingdom alone.

Kṛṣṇa has threefold pastimes — the Vraja-līlā, Māthura-līlā and Dvārakā-līlā. As already mentioned, in the Tenth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam there are ninety chapters, which describe all these līlās. The first four chapters describe Brahmā's prayers for the relief of the earth's burden, and they also describe the appearance of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Chapters Five through Thirty-nine recount Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in Vṛndāvana. The Fortieth Chapter describes how Kṛṣṇa enjoyed in the water of the Yamunā and how Akrūra offered prayers. Chapters Forty-one through Fifty-one, eleven chapters, tell of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in Māthura, and Chapters Fifty-two through Ninety, thirty-nine chapters, relate Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in Dvārakā.

Chapters Twenty-nine through Thirty-three describe Kṛṣṇa's dancing with the gopīs, known as the rāsa-līlā. Therefore these five chapters are known as rāsa-pañcādhyāya. The Forty-seventh Chapter of the Tenth Canto is a description known as the bhramara-gītā.

Text 1:

King Parīkṣit said: My dear lord, you have elaborately described the dynasties of both the moon-god and the sun-god, with the exalted and wonderful character of their kings.

Text 2:

O best of munis, you have also described the descendants of Yadu, who were very pious and strictly adherent to religious principles. Now, if you will, kindly describe the wonderful, glorious activities of Lord Viṣṇu, or Kṛṣṇa, who appeared in that Yadu dynasty with Baladeva, His plenary expansion.

Text 3:

The Supersoul, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the cause of the cosmic manifestation, appeared in the dynasty of Yadu. Please

tell me elaborately about His glorious activities and character, from the beginning to the end of His life.

Text 4:

Glorification of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is performed in the paramparā system, that is, it is conveyed from the spiritual master to disciple. Such glorification is relished by those no longer interested in the false, temporary glorification of this cosmic manifestation. Descriptions of the Lord are the right medicine for the conditioned soul undergoing repeated birth and death. Therefore, who will cease hearing such glorification of the Lord except a butcher or one who is killing his own self?

Texts 5-7:

Taking the boat of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, my grandfather Arjuna and others crossed the ocean of the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra, in which such commanders as Bhīṣmadeva resembled great fish that could very easily have swallowed them. By the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa, my grandfathers crossed this ocean, which was very difficult to cross, as easily as one steps over the hoofprint of a calf. Because my mother surrendered unto Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, the Lord, Sudarśana-cakra in hand, entered her womb and saved my body, the body of the last remaining descendant of the Kurus and the Pāṇḍavas, which was almost destroyed by the fiery weapon of Aśvatthāmā. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, appearing within and outside of all materially embodied living beings by His own potency in the forms of eternal time — that is, as Paramātmā and as virāṭ-rūpa — gave liberation to everyone, either as cruel death or as life. Kindly enlighten me by describing His transcendental characteristics.

Text 8:

My dear Śukadeva Gosvāmī, you have already explained that Saṅkarṣaṇa, who belongs to the second quadruple, appeared as the son of Rohiṇī named Balarāma. If Balarāma was not transferred from one body to another, how is it possible that He was first in the womb of Devakī and then in the womb of Rohiṇī? Kindly explain this to me.

Text 9:

Why did Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, leave the house of His father, Vasudeva, and transfer Himself to the house of Nanda in

Vṛndāvana? Where did the Lord, the master of the Yadu dynasty, live with His relatives in Vṛndāvana?

Text 10:

Lord Kṛṣṇa lived both in Vṛndāvana and in Mathurā. What did He do there? Why did He kill Kāṁsa, His mother's brother? Such killing is not at all sanctioned in the śāstras.

Text 11:

Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, has no material body, yet He appears as a human being. For how many years did He live with the descendants of Vṛṣṇi? How many wives did He marry, and for how many years did He live in Dvārakā?

Text 12:

O great sage, who know everything about Kṛṣṇa, please describe in detail all the activities of which I have inquired and also those of which I have not, for I have full faith and am very eager to hear of them.

Text 13:

Because of my vow on the verge of death, I have given up even drinking water, yet because I am drinking the nectar of topics about Kṛṣṇa, which is flowing from the lotus mouth of your Lordship, my hunger and thirst, which are extremely difficult to bear, cannot hinder me.

Text 14:

Sūta Gosvāmī said: O son of Bhṛgu, after Śukadeva Gosvāmī, the most respectable devotee, the son of Vyāsadeva, heard the pious questions of Mahārāja Parīkṣit, he thanked the King with great respect. Then he began to discourse on topics concerning Kṛṣṇa, which are the remedy for all sufferings in this Age of Kali.

Text 15:

Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: O Your Majesty, best of all saintly kings, because you are greatly attracted to topics of Vāsudeva, it is certain that your intelligence is firmly fixed in spiritual understanding, which is the only true goal for humanity. Because that attraction is unceasing, it is certainly sublime.

Text 16:

The Ganges, emanating from the toe of Lord Viṣṇu, purifies the three worlds, the upper, middle and lower planetary systems. Similarly, when one asks questions about the pastimes and characteristics of Lord Vāsudeva, Kṛṣṇa, three varieties of men are purified: the speaker or preacher, he who inquires, and the people in general who listen.

Text 17:

Once when mother earth was overburdened by hundreds of thousands of military phalanxes of various conceited demons dressed like kings, she approached Lord Brahmā for relief.

Text 18:

Mother earth assumed the form of a cow. Very much distressed, with tears in her eyes, she appeared before Lord Brahmā and told him about her misfortune.

Text 19:

Thereafter, having heard of the distress of mother earth, Lord Brahmā, with mother earth, Lord Śiva and all the other demigods, approached the shore of the Ocean of Milk.

Text 20:

After reaching the shore of the Ocean of Milk, the demigods worshiped the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Viṣṇu, the master of the whole universe, the supreme God of all gods, who provides for everyone and diminishes everyone's suffering. With great attention, they worshiped Lord Viṣṇu, who lies on the Ocean of Milk, by reciting the Vedic mantras known as the Puruṣa-sūkta.

Text 21:

While in trance, Lord Brahmā heard the words of Lord Viṣṇu vibrating in the sky. Thus he told the demigods: O demigods, hear from me the order of Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, the Supreme Person, and execute it attentively without delay.

Text 22:

Lord Brahmā informed the demigods: Before we submitted our petition to the Lord, He was already aware of the distress on earth. Consequently,

for as long as the Lord moves on earth to diminish its burden by His own potency in the form of time, all of you demigods should appear through plenary portions as sons and grandsons in the family of the Yadus.

Text 23:

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who has full potency, will personally appear as the son of Vasudeva. Therefore all the wives of the demigods should also appear in order to satisfy Him.

Text 24:

The foremost manifestation of Kṛṣṇa is Saṅkarṣaṇa, who is known as Ananta. He is the origin of all incarnations within this material world. Previous to the appearance of Lord Kṛṣṇa, this original Saṅkarṣaṇa will appear as Baladeva, just to please the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa in His transcendental pastimes.

Text 25:

The potency of the Lord, known as viṣṇu-māyā, who is as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, will also appear with Lord Kṛṣṇa. This potency, acting in different capacities, captivates all the worlds, both material and spiritual. At the request of her master, she will appear with her different potencies in order to execute the work of the Lord.

Text 26:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: After thus advising the demigods and pacifying mother earth, the very powerful Lord Brahmā, who is the master of all other Prajāpatīs and is therefore known as Prajāpati-pati, returned to his own abode, Brahmāloka.

Text 27:

Formerly, Śūrasena, the chief of the Yadu dynasty, had gone to live in the city of Mathurā. There he enjoyed the places known as Māthura and Śūrasena.

Text 28:

Since that time, the city of Mathurā had been the capital of all the kings of the Yadu dynasty. The city and district of Mathurā are very intimately connected with Kṛṣṇa, for Lord Kṛṣṇa lives there eternally.

Text 29:

Some time ago, Vasudeva, who belonged to the demigod family [or to the Śūra dynasty], married Devakī. After the marriage, he mounted his chariot to return home with his newly married wife.

Text 30:

Kaṁsa, the son of King Ugrasena, in order to please his sister Devakī on the occasion of her marriage, took charge of the reins of the horses and became the chariot driver. He was surrounded by hundreds of golden chariots.

Texts 31-32:

Devakī's father, King Devaka, was very much affectionate to his daughter. Therefore, while she and her husband were leaving home, he gave her a dowry of four hundred elephants nicely decorated with golden garlands. He also gave ten thousand horses, eighteen hundred chariots, and two hundred very beautiful young maidservants, fully decorated with ornaments.

Text 33:

O beloved son, Mahārāja Parīkṣit, when the bride and bridegroom were ready to start, conchshells, bugles, drums and kettledrums all vibrated in concert for their auspicious departure.

Text 34:

While Kaṁsa, controlling the reins of the horses, was driving the chariot along the way, an unembodied voice addressed him, "You foolish rascal, the eighth child of the woman you are carrying will kill you!"

Text 35:

Kaṁsa was a condemned personality in the Bhoja dynasty because he was envious and sinful. Therefore, upon hearing this omen from the sky, he caught hold of his sister's hair with his left hand and took up his sword with his right hand to sever her head from her body.

Text 36:

Wanting to pacify Kaṁsa, who was so cruel and envious that he was shamelessly ready to kill his sister, the great soul Vasudeva, who was to be the father of Kṛṣṇa, spoke to him in the following words.

Text 37:

Vasudeva said: My dear brother-in-law Kaṁsa, you are the pride of your family, the Bhoja dynasty, and great heroes praise your qualities. How could such a qualified person as you kill a woman, your own sister, especially on the occasion of her marriage?

Text 38:

O great hero, one who takes birth is sure to die, for death is born with the body. One may die today or after hundreds of years, but death is sure for every living entity.

Text 39:

When the present body turns to dust and is again reduced to five elements — earth, water, fire, air and ether — the proprietor of the body, the living being, automatically receives another body of material elements according to his fruitive activities. When the next body is obtained, he gives up the present body.

Text 40:

Just as a person traveling on the road rests one foot on the ground and then lifts the other, or as a worm on a vegetable transfers itself to one leaf and then gives up the previous one, the conditioned soul takes shelter of another body and then gives up the one he had before.

Text 41:

Having experienced a situation by seeing or hearing about it, one contemplates and speculates about that situation, and thus one surrenders to it, not considering his present body. Similarly, by mental adjustments one dreams at night of living under different circumstances, in different bodies, and forgets his actual position. Under this same process, one gives up his present body and accepts another [tathā dehāntara-prāptiḥ].

Text 42:

At the time of death, according to the thinking, feeling and willing of the mind, which is involved in fruitive activities, one receives a particular body. In other words, the body develops according to the activities of the mind. Changes of body are due to the flickering of the mind, for otherwise the soul could remain in its original, spiritual body.

Text 43:

When the luminaries in the sky, such as the moon, the sun and the stars, are reflected in liquids like oil or water, they appear to be of different shapes — sometimes round, sometimes long, and so on — because of the movements of the wind. Similarly, when the living entity, the soul, is absorbed in materialistic thoughts, he accepts various manifestations as his own identity because of ignorance. In other words, one is bewildered by mental concoctions because of agitation from the material modes of nature.

Text 44:

Therefore, since envious, impious activities cause a body in which one suffers in the next life, why should one act impiously? Considering one's welfare, one should not envy anyone, for an envious person must always fear harm from his enemies, either in this life or in the next.

Text 45:

As your younger sister, this poor girl Devakī is like your own daughter and deserves to be affectionately maintained. You are merciful, and therefore you should not kill her. Indeed, she deserves your affection.

Text 46:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: O best of the Kuru dynasty, Kaṁsa was fiercely cruel and was actually a follower of the Rākṣasas. Therefore he could be neither pacified nor terrified by the good instructions given by Vasudeva. He did not care about the results of sinful activities, either in this life or in the next.

Text 47:

When Vasudeva saw that Kaṁsa was determined to kill his sister Devakī, he thought to himself very deeply. Considering the imminent danger of death, he thought of another plan to stop Kaṁsa.

Text 48:

As long as he has intelligence and bodily strength, an intelligent person must try to avoid death. This is the duty of every embodied person. But if death cannot be avoided in spite of one's endeavors, a person facing death commits no offense.

Texts 49-50:

Vasudeva considered: By delivering all my sons to Kaṁsa, who is death personified, I shall save the life of Devakī. Perhaps Kaṁsa will die before my sons take birth, or, since he is already destined to die at the hands of my son, one of my sons may kill him. For the time being, let me promise to hand over my sons so that Kaṁsa will give up this immediate threat, and if in due course of time Kaṁsa dies, I shall have nothing to fear.

Text 51:

When a fire, for some unseen reason, leaps over one piece of wood and sets fire to the next, the reason is destiny. Similarly, when a living being accepts one kind of body and leaves aside another, there is no other reason than unseen destiny.

Text 52:

After thus considering the matter as far as his knowledge would allow, Vasudeva submitted his proposal to the sinful Kaṁsa with great respect.

Text 53:

Vasudeva's mind was full of anxiety because his wife was facing danger, but in order to please the cruel, shameless and sinful Kaṁsa, he externally smiled and spoke to him as follows.

Text 54:

Vasudeva said: O best of the sober, you have nothing to fear from your sister Devakī because of what you have heard from the unseen omen. The cause of death will be her sons. Therefore I promise that when she gives birth to the sons from whom your fear has arisen, I shall deliver them all unto your hands.

Text 55:

Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: Kaṁsa agreed to the logical arguments of Vasudeva, and, having full faith in Vasudeva's words, he refrained from killing his sister. Vasudeva, being pleased with Kaṁsa, pacified him further and entered his own house.

Text 56:

Each year thereafter, in due course of time, Devakī, the mother of God and all the demigods, gave birth to a child. Thus she bore eight sons, one after another, and a daughter named Subhadrā.

Text 57:

Vasudeva was very much disturbed by fear of becoming a liar by breaking his promise. Thus with great pain he delivered his first-born son, named Kīrtimān, into the hands of Kāṁsa.

Text 58:

What is painful for saintly persons who strictly adhere to the truth? How could there not be independence for pure devotees who know the Supreme Lord as the substance? What deeds are forbidden for persons of the lowest character? And what cannot be given up for the sake of Lord Kṛṣṇa by those who have fully surrendered at His lotus feet?

Text 59:

My dear King Parīkṣit, when Kāṁsa saw that Vasudeva, being situated in truthfulness, was completely equipoised in giving him the child, he was very happy. Therefore, with a smiling face, he spoke as follows.

Text 60:

O Vasudeva, you may take back your child and go home. I have no fear of your first child. It is the eighth child of you and Devakī I am concerned with because that is the child by whom I am destined to be killed.

Text 61:

Vasudeva agreed and took his child back home, but because Kāṁsa had no character and no self-control, Vasudeva knew that he could not rely on Kāṁsa's word.

Texts 62-63:

The inhabitants of Vṛndāvana, headed by Nanda Mahārāja and including his associate cowherd men and their wives, were none but denizens of the heavenly planets, O Mahārāja Parīkṣit, best of the descendants of Bharata, and so too were the descendants of the Vṛṣṇi dynasty, headed by Vasudeva and Devakī and the other women of the dynasty of Yadu. The friends, relatives and well-wishers of both Nanda Mahārāja and Vasudeva and even

those who externally appeared to be followers of Kaṁsa were all demigods.

Text 64:

Once the great saint Nārada approached Kaṁsa and informed him of how the demoniac persons who were a great burden on the earth were going to be killed. Thus Kaṁsa was placed into great fear and doubt.

Texts 65-66:

After the departure of the great saint Nārada, Kaṁsa thought that all the members of the Yadu dynasty were demigods and that any of the children born from the womb of Devakī might be Viṣṇu. Fearing his death, Kaṁsa arrested Vasudeva and Devakī and chained them with iron shackles. Suspecting each of the children to be Viṣṇu, Kaṁsa killed them one after another because of the prophecy that Viṣṇu would kill him.

Text 67:

Kings greedy for sense gratification on this earth almost always kill their enemies indiscriminately. To satisfy their own whims, they may kill anyone, even their mothers, fathers, brothers or friends.

Text 68:

In his previous birth, Kaṁsa had been a great demon named Kālanemi and been killed by Viṣṇu. Upon learning this information from Nārada, Kaṁsa became envious of everyone connected with the Yadu dynasty.

Text 69:

Kaṁsa, the most powerful son of Ugrasena, even imprisoned his own father, the King of the Yadu, Bhoja and Andhaka dynasties, and personally ruled the states known as Śūrasena.