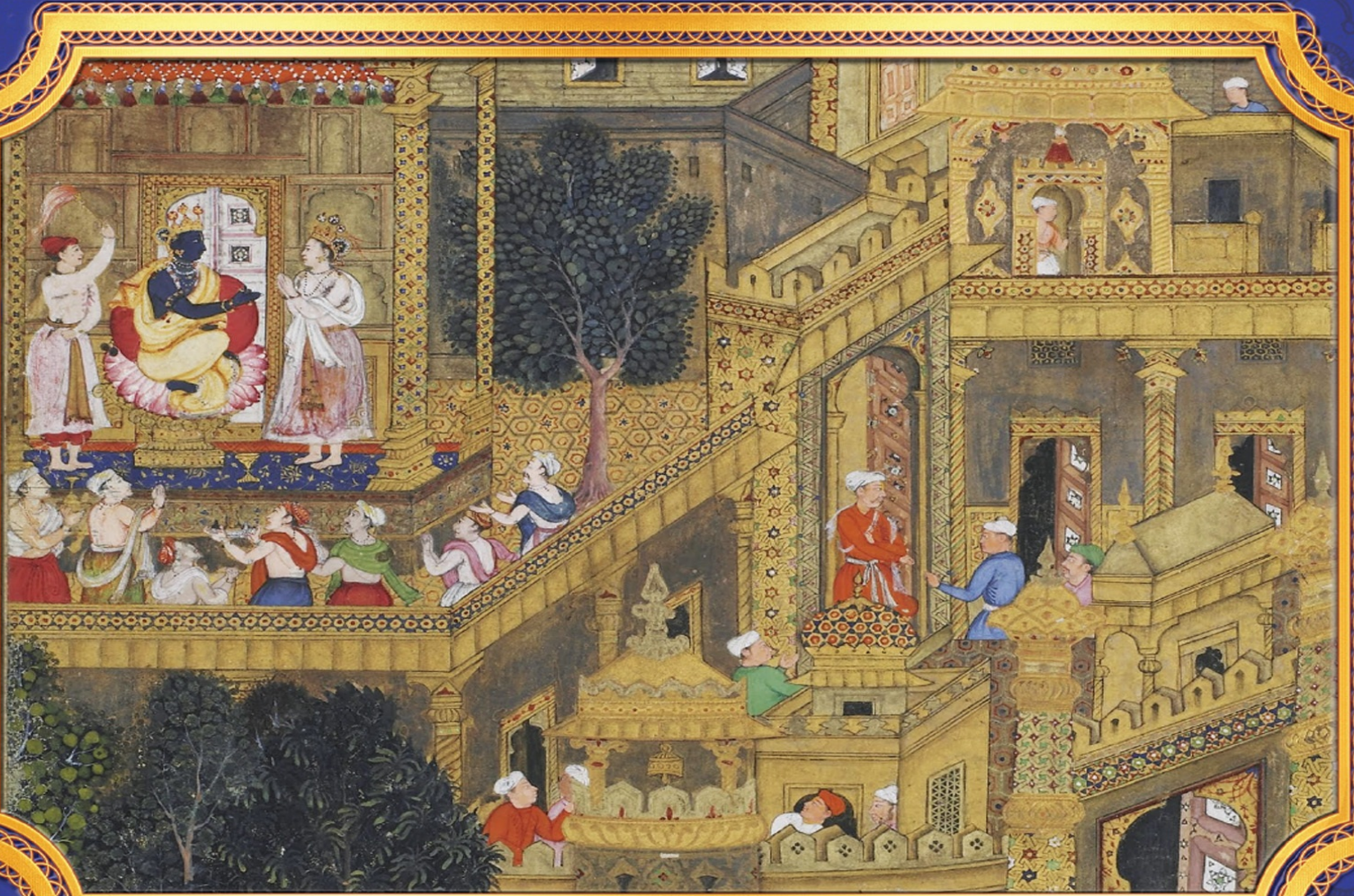


In the Lost City *of* Sri Krishna

The Story of Ancient Dwaraka



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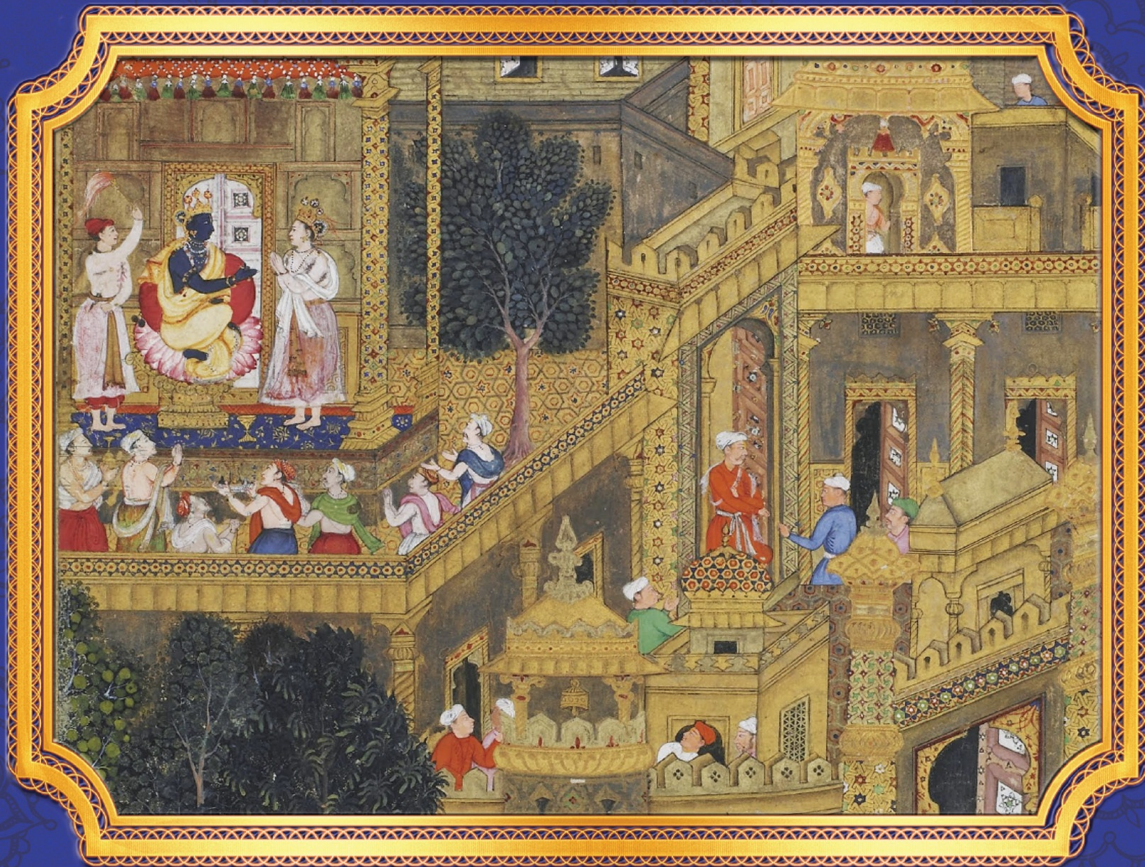
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 **KAPWING**

In the Lost City *of* Sri Krishna

The Story of Ancient Dwaraka



VANAMALI

In the **Lost City** *of*
Sri Krishna

The Story of Ancient Dwaraka

VANAMALI



Inner Traditions
Rochester, Vermont • Toronto, Canada



Sri Krishnaaya Paramatmane Namaha!

This book is dedicated to my beloved daughter-in-law,
SUMATI

Whose name is a mirror of her soul.

In the Lost City of **Sri Krishna**

“Vanamali transports the reader to Lord Krishna’s heavenly kingdom of Dwaraka. Her devotion invites the reader to make a leap in consciousness and to join her on an ecstatic pilgrimage to the heart of Mother India’s legendary wisdom.”

ARVIND BRUCE BURGER, AUTHOR OF *ESOTERIC ANATOMY: THE BODY AS CONSCIOUSNESS*

“*In the Lost City of Sri Krishna* is an enthralling journey from India’s leading female mystic. Vanamali’s intricate accounts of higher Vedic civilizations and culture will entertain and satisfy not only students of yoga but all those interested in the secrets of India, which only adept mystics can reveal.”

NISCHALA CRYER, AUTHOR OF *THE FOUR STAGES OF YOGA* AND
COFOUNDER OF ANANDA UNIVERSITY

“This inspired book by Vanamali not only brings to life the events at the time when Sri Krishna ruled over Dwaraka but also imparts profound wisdom and uplifts spiritually. It lovingly connects us to one of the main pillars of India’s great tradition, Sri Krishna.”

MARIA WIRTH, WRITER/RESEARCHER OF INDIA’S HERITAGE AND
SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS

“Which of us has not imagined ourself as a character in His great play? In *In the Lost City of Sri Krishna* the author envisions herself as a direct witness to Lord Krishna’s sojourn in Dwaraka. In doing so she masterfully transports the reader into that time, giving each of us a personal glimpse of what it may have been like to walk beside Him.”

NITYA MENON, LL.M., DIPLOMAT AND INTERNATIONAL LAWYER



May Lord Ganesha bless me and help me to write this book without a
hitch

*Aum Mahapurushaaya vidmahe,
Vaktratundaaya dimahi,
Tanno Dhanti prajodayaath.*

I meditate on that Great Person,
I concentrate on the one with a curved trunk,
May that Ganesha enlighten me.

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Foreword

By Sri Bhakti Yog Swamiji

Madhuban Ashram, Rishikesh

Philosophers, skeptics, and devotees have long been divided on the idea of the *harikatha* (stories of Hari or Krishna) as a genuine source of spiritual commentary and discourse. While some label it as myth, legend, or simple story, others hail it as classic literature. The charitable among skeptics label the pastimes of Krishna as parables. For the faithful, *harikatha* is absolute perfect fact and a history that transcends time.

All are, in fact, right within their own field of vision. The Krishna stories have been narrated, retold, sung, painted, enacted, and presented by all—the agnostics, the atheists, the literary and creative minded, and the devotees alike. The thin line between creative freedom, scriptural sincerity, social correctness, and aesthetics of literature remains hazy from a neutral viewpoint, but it is always well defined when looked at from the viewpoint of each stand individually. From the absolute level, that is, through the eyes of God, it is an equidistant approach. However, any rendition that stirs an understanding or love of God is valid and right.

This book has a mix of them all. It is a dramatized narration of Krishna's kingly pastimes at Dwaraka, which the author visualizes in a dream world. Despite being a flight of creative liberty, it hovers around the scriptural story line, like a butterfly fluttering over flowers of different hues. It thus leaves the reader to his or her own take on the profound subject.

Everything about Krishna has been narrated and recorded by Vyas Dev (Sage Vyasa) and expounded on by great sages, and all spiritual masters and holy men are agreed on it. About five centuries ago, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu explained that the intricacy of the *krishnakatha* (stories of Krishna) can be understood not by literary excellence or erudition but by humility and devotion. The pastimes of Krishna are not part of a material novel, penned by someone expert in wordplay or poetry. However, that doesn't bar a retelling since freedom and choice are the first prerequisites of spiritual life.

Krishna's pastimes in Dwaraka form the latter part of his *lila*, when he was known as Dwarakanatha. Dwaraka is a historical city, an important pilgrim

center, and an archaeologist's playground for research and exploration, and it is the site where great stories were unveiled. It was also a great port and is the subject of much oceanographic research today. Some purists delight in the fact that excavations and explorations beneath the sea point toward a thriving metropolis in ancient times—as if that was proof of Krishna's existence and presence.

The opinions and agendas of Indologists, historians, and lovers of folk lore and scriptural purity will always vary, but that dilemma should be set aside for a while, if only to enjoy this book. Making a success out of a book on fictionalized history or dramatized narrative is a difficult task. This book is an attempt to walk the narrow path between both, though it is based on the *sahajiya* sentiment of proximity to God. While an assumption of special favor from God is frowned upon, it does not take away the strength of the original story and sentiment. Its appeal will rest in how the reader relates to the sincerity and motivation in a retelling of the story of Dwarakanatha—the Lord of Dwaraka.

SRI BHAKTI YOG SWAMIJI was a great Krishna *bhakta*. He was a follower of the Bhakti Vedanta School founded by Sri Prabhudhanandaji. He opened the Madhuban Ashram in Rishikesh, which is devoted to the teachings of Lord Krishna and also does a lot of charitable work for the poor. He was truly a beautiful soul filled with love for the Divine in the form of Krishna.



Aum Sri Krishnaaya Paramatmane Namaha!

Aum I bow to Krishna, the Supreme Soul!

INTRODUCTION

Dwarakanatha, the Lord of Dwaraka

The famous temple called Dwarakadhish, dedicated to Lord Krishna, the Lord of Dwaraka, is found in the city of Dwaraka on the west coast of India in the state of Gujarat. It is considered to be one of the seven holy cities of India. The others are Ayodhya, Mathura, Haridwar, Varanasi, Kanchipuram, and Ujjain. According to tradition, the original temple of Dwarakadhish was built by Krishna's great-grandson, Vajranabha, over the ruins of Lord Krishna's own palace, which was the only building that was not washed away by the tsunami.

However, the ancient, famed city of Dwaraka existed five thousand years ago during the time of the Krishnavatara. It is no more to be seen now since it lies at the bottom of the sea. Dwaraka's majesty and beauty have been described by many poets and writers, and saints and sages of ancient India. It is referred to as the "Golden City" in the Srimad Bhagavatam, Skanda Purana, Vishnu Purana, Harivamsha, and the Mahabharata. One of the verses in the Bhagavatam says: "The yellow glitter of the golden fort of the Dwaraka City in the sea, throwing yellow light all round, looked as if the flames of Vadavagni (the fire of eternity) came out, tearing asunder the sea."

Dwaraka was a bustling port and had an island close by that also served as a harbor. If the number, size, and variety of stone anchors are any indication of the size of the port, it can be said that Dwaraka must have been the largest port of the third millennium BC on the Indian coast. As many as fifty stone anchors are still visible, but several hundred must have been buried in the sediment. This was probably one of the reasons the city got its name. *Dwara* means "gate" in Sanskrit, and the port of Dwaraka was perhaps the gate that enabled the ancient

seafaring cities of the West to enter the great subcontinent of India. The Sanskrit word *Ka* also stands for “Brahma,” so perhaps it was a city dedicated to Brahma, the creator in the Hindu trinity.

Mathura had been the capital of the Surasenas (a Yadava clan), but it was fully exposed and could not defend itself from the continued attacks of King Jarasandha of Magadha. Krishna decided that his clan would have to move if they wanted a peaceful life without the threat of constant attacks from enemies. By a series of forced marches, he took all his people to the west coast of India and the ancient city of Kushasthali (Gujarat), which had the sea as one of its boundaries, and decided that it was best suited for their needs. He then proceeded to reclaim land from the ocean, and there he built a wonderful city called Dwaravati (Dwaraka). His kingdom included many of the islands along the shore as well as the Anarta kingdom of the mainland. This is the Dwaraka about which mention has been made in all our Puranas. There are many stories written about Krishna’s early life in Gokula and Vrindavana, but very few about his sojourn in Dwaraka, even though it was the place he spent the major portion of his life.

He had foretold that the part of the city that had been reclaimed would return to the sea seven days after his departure from this planet, and that is exactly what happened. The ocean has hidden its secrets well, and for many years the descriptions of the famed Dwaraka were thought to be only myth and not based on anything real.

However, in the twentieth century, archaeological and astronomical studies, as well as many maritime explorations, have established the historicity of the city of Dwaraka and have helped to date many of the events narrated in the epic, Mahabharata. They have also helped to bring to light the history of ancient India and have led to the conclusion that the Mahabharata War was actually fought in 3126 BCE and the city of Dwaraka was submerged in the sea thirty-six years later.

Underwater explorations have also unearthed the remains of a city that has been dated to have existed twenty-one thousand years ago. Six other cities had been built over this one, and Lord Krishna’s Dwaraka was the last. Archaeological excavations in more than ten thousand sites scattered over major parts of India prove beyond a doubt the existence of a flourishing culture now known as the Indus Valley Civilization from 3400 BC to 1500 BC. This proves that the cradle of human civilization is not Sumeria in Mesopotamia as Western scholars believe, but the Sapta Sindhu, the land of the seven rivers, in northwest India. From the densely populated Sapta Sindhu, our ancestors, the Vedic

Aryans, traveled from India to various parts of Asia and Europe and spread the knowledge of the Vedic civilization and the Sanskrit language. Sanskrit-speaking people migrated to Iran, Greece, and farther west.

The Vedic culture, which has come to be known as Hinduism, is the oldest religion in the world. The real name of this religion is the Sanatana Dharma (the ancient way of righteousness). It was born and nurtured on the soil of this holy land of Aryavrata or Bharatavarsha. Unfortunately our history books, which have been written by Western scholars, say that a tribe of people known as the Aryans came to India from Central Asia in their war chariots in the fifteenth century BC. According to this fictitious theory, both the Vedas and the Sanskrit language were brought into India by these Aryan invaders. The most influential proponents of this theory were Max Müller, the famous German Indologist, and William Jones, who was a linguist. They arrived at this brilliant conclusion because they were struck by the affinities between Sanskrit and the European languages, not realizing that the exodus of Sanskrit, as well as a lot of other mathematical and scientific information, went from India to the West, and not vice versa, which is why European languages have their basis in Sanskrit and not the other way around, as Max Müller and William Jones would have us believe. The fact is that both these Indologists had a secret desire to undermine the faith of this country and impose Christianity on the so-called heathens! It is a well-known fact that history written by the conquerors is always recorded from the viewpoint of the conquerors in an attempt to prove the superiority of their own culture and the inferiority of the culture they have subjugated.^{*1}

Max Müller wrote in a letter to his wife, “My translation of the Vedas will affect the fate of India and the growth of millions of souls in that country. It is the root of their religion and to show them what the root is, I feel, is the only way of uprooting all that has sprung from it during the last 3,000 years.”^{†2}

In fabricating a date for the so-called Aryan invasion, Müller was strongly influenced by the Christian belief that the creation of the world had taken place at 9:00 a.m. on October 23, 4004 BC. Assuming this was the actual date on which the world was created, as Müller did, leads us to the conclusion that the Biblical flood came in the year 2248. If another thousand years are allowed for the waters to subside and the soil to get dry enough for the Aryans to begin their invasion of India, we are left with 1400 BC. Adding another two hundred years before they could begin composing the Rig Veda brings us right up to Müller’s date of 1200 BC of the composition of the Rig Veda! How objective can you get!

David Frawley, truly a great lover of the Veda, says, “Max Müller, with his hidden agenda, lifted metaphorical passages from the Rig Veda to buttress his ‘Aryan-invasion-from-Europe’ theory. The literary evidence taken in its entirety shows that the Vedic civilization was an indigenous development.”

Monier Williams, in a speech given at the Oxford Missionary Conference on May 2, 1877, said, “When the walls of the mighty fortress of Brahmanism are encircled, undermined and finally stormed by the soldiers of the cross, the victory of Christianity must be signal and complete!” These are the people who were supposed to be objective scholars!

These so-called Indologists also proclaimed that the Aryans defeated the Dravidians, who were the original inhabitants of the continent. Modern research has proved that there was neither an Aryan invasion nor a conflict between the Aryans and Dravidians. The term *arya* means “noble and good.” It refers to a quality of behavior and not of a race. Likewise the word *dasyu*, which was used to refer to the Dravidians, means “misconduct” and does not denote a race. The arguments over a separate Dravidian language have also been solved by our own scholars. They have identified some twenty Dravidian words in the Rig Veda, and the so-called Dravidian language has borrowed at least 50 percent of its vocabulary from Sanskrit. Many Dravidian scholars credit the creation of Tamil, the oldest Dravidian tongue, to Agastya, who figures in the Rig Veda as one of the prominent sages of his era. The Dravidian kings have always referred to themselves as Aryans and have traced their descent from Manu. Shiva clearly is the Vedic god, Rudra. Sanskrit has been shown to include some elements from the language of the tribes called Munda. All three languages are indigenous developments. Thus north and south India share a common culture and religion, and the whole of India is irrevocably bound together by our common heritage, which is the Vedic culture.

When the ruins of the great Indus Valley Civilization were discovered, the proponents of the Aryan invasion theory suggested that the invading Aryans had defeated the Dravidian inhabitants of the Indus valley, thus suggesting that the invading Aryans, instead of being the bringers of civilization to the poor barbarians, as they had been trying to prove, were instead the destroyers of a great civilization and culture developed by the native Indians! Moreover, had such an exodus existed it would surely have been mentioned in the Vedas themselves, which are a vast storehouse of information about everything we can think of. They could never have failed to record such an important event. Unfortunately, this bit of false information has not yet been removed from our history books, which are still being used in Indian schools.

Luckily, with modern equipment, the science of archaeology has been able to prove the truth of the Vedic culture as being totally indigenous, having existed in an unbroken line from the ancient Indus Valley Civilization to the present day. Sri Rajaram records a continuous and original development of the great Vedic civilization going right back to 5000 BC at sites like Mehrgarh and Koldi. He gives a chronological account of this ancient civilization as beginning with the Mehrgarh site in the northwest around 6500 BC. This is the largest urban site of that period known in the world. There is evidence of the domestication of animals and the existence of agriculture and arts and crafts. Mehrgarh, Harappa, and Mohenjodaro bordered the great Saraswati River and made up what is now known as the Indus Valley Civilization. The river had more than five hundred sites along its banks. By the time of the Mahabharata, the Saraswati had lost its chief tributary, the Yamuna, because of a tectonic plate shift. This was the beginning of the Kali Yuga^{*3}, in 3000 BC.

In 1900 BC another tectonic plate shift made the Saraswati lose its next big tributary, the Sutlej. This dried up the river that was the artery of the civilization and caused a massive exodus of the people to the Gangetic plain in the east, whence arose the classical period of Indian civilization. There was another exodus toward the west. These people carried their knowledge of Sanskrit and mathematics and other sciences with them, and that is why so many Sanskrit words are found in the European languages. It is said that the first Egyptian king was from India. That is why they worshipped the sun and declared that their kings come from the sun (Surya Vamsa).

So much of our history has been buried by the sands of time that even now it is doubtful whether we know even a fraction of our ancient culture. Detailed factual data has been given in our ancient texts and Sanskrit manuscripts, which have been totally ignored by Western scholars. It is only now that Indian scholars have woken up to the fact that all the proof that they would ever need is to be found in our scriptures themselves. The Mahabharata mentions the names of countless kings and warriors who had come to Kurukshetra to participate in the war. All of them were born and brought up on Indian soil and came from kingdoms that had experienced thousands of years of prosperous and advanced civilization.

Modern scientific techniques like computers with planetarium software, advancements in archaeological and marine-archaeological techniques, earth-sensing satellite photography, and thermoluminescent dating methods all have made it possible to establish the authenticity of all that has been said in our Puranas and also helped to date many events narrated in the Mahabharata. One

of the great advantages of discovering Dwaraka was that the city had not been built upon over and over again, as had been done to the temples and cities on land. It still lies in its pristine beauty, as it was when Lord Krishna built it, except for the ravages caused by the water itself and not through desecration by human hands, as we find in Mathura, Vrindavana, and even on the mainland near the present temple of Dwarakadhish.

The onshore and offshore explorations carried out in and around Dwaraka during the past fifty years have revealed that Dwaraka was a prosperous city in ancient times. The work of great excavators like Sri Z. D. Ansari and Sri M. S. Mate and the chance discovery of temples of the ninth and first century AD, which were excavated near the present Dwarakadhish Temple in present-day Dwaraka, prompted the Marine Archaeology Centre of the National Institute of Oceanography to work jointly with the Archaeological Survey of India to unearth further material. A project for marine archaeological explorations in Dwaraka was initiated under the dynamic leadership of the great marine archaeologist Dr. S. R. Rao, who has the distinction of being given the World Ship Trust Award for outstanding research done in this field.

Dr. Rao's team consisted of expert underwater explorers, trained diver-photographers, and experienced archaeologists. Geophysical surveying was combined with the use of echo sounders, mud penetrators, sub-bottom profilers, and underwater metal detectors. This team carried out twelve marine archaeological expeditions from 1983 to 1992 and discovered many articles and antiquities, which were sent to the Physical Research Laboratory for dating. By using thermoluminescence, carbon dating, and other modern scientific techniques, the team found that these artifacts belonged to the period between the fifteenth century and the eighteenth century BC.

In his great work *The Lost City of Dwaraka*, Dr. Rao gives graphic and scientific details of these discoveries and artifacts. He concludes that the land for building the city of Dwaraka had been reclaimed from the sea between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries BC, and a fortified city had been built using the technique known as "boulder packing." The city had an outer gateway to the sea and an inner gateway to the Gomati River. This corroborates the references in the Mahabharata that the city of Dwaraka was built by Lord Krishna after he reclaimed the land from the sea.

The importance of the discovery of Dwaraka lies not merely in providing the archaeological evidence needed for corroborating the traditional account of the submergence of Dwaraka but also in indirectly fixing the date of the life of Lord Krishna and that of the Mahabharata. Pottery found at the archaeological site

bears resemblance to pottery found at another site (Bet Dwaraka) off the coast of present-day Dwaraka, which dates to around 3500 BC.

It has been found that around 2500 BC, the whole western coast of India disappeared, along with Lord Krishna's capital city of Dwaraka. In fact Krishna had prophesied that the sea would reclaim the city seven days after his departure from this planet. Vyasa describes this terrifying tsunami in the Mahabharata through the mouth of Arjuna, who witnessed it: "The sea, which had been beating against the shore, suddenly broke the boundary that was imposed on it by human hands. It rushed into the City of Dwaraka. It coursed through the streets of the beautiful city. The waters covered up everything in the city. I saw the beautiful buildings becoming submerged one by one. In a matter of a few moments it was all over. The sea had now become as placid as a lake. There was no trace of the city. Dwaraka became just a name—a beautiful memory!"

ASTRONOMICAL EVIDENCE

The Mahabharata refers to three sequential solar and lunar eclipses, which have been corroborated by modern planetarium software and found to be consistent with contemporary research conducted at the planetarium. Reference to the first solar eclipse comes in the Sabha Parva (79.29) of the Mahabharata, graphically described by the great sage Vidura. It took place just before the Pandavas started on their journey to the forest after having been banished to twelve years of exile and one year of remaining incognito in a known city. The exile was imposed on them after they had lost everything in the game of dice that had been forced upon them by Duryodhana. After having successfully completed their exile, the Pandavas came back to Hastinapura and demanded their kingdom back, but Duryodhana refused. Several efforts at reconciliation failed, and Duryodhana declared war.

The reference to the second solar eclipse is in the Bhishma Parva (3.29) of the Mahabharata. It followed a lunar eclipse that happened within the same fortnight and occurred just before the commencement of the Mahabharata War, fifteen years after the solar eclipse mentioned by Vidura, after the Pandavas had returned from their exile. The epic also refers to some unfavorable planetary positions occurring between the second solar eclipse and Kartika Purnima (full moon of the month of Kartika, November/December) when the war began (Bhishma Parva 3.14 to 3.19).

On Kartika Krishna Ashtami (eighth day of the dark half of the lunar month

of Kartika Nov/Dec), Saturn was near Rohini and Mars was between Jyesta and Anuradha. Twenty-two days later, on Kartika Purnima, Saturn was near Rohini, Mars was near Jyesta, and a rough planet (probably Uranus) was between Chitra and Swati. Another white planet (possibly Jupiter) had moved from Purva-bhadra to Uttara-bhadra.^{*4} All these pointed to some great calamity that would soon occur, in this case the Mahabharata War.

The final reference to the third solar eclipse comes in the Mausala Parva (2.19 to 2.20) and took place thirty-six years after the great Mahabharata War. This was visible from the city of Dwaraka and was felt to be a premonition of some dire disaster. For these observations to be consistent there should have been three solar eclipses within a period of fifty years. The first one and the second one after a gap of fourteen to fifteen years should have been visible from Kurukshetra, whereas the third solar eclipse should have been visible from Dwaraka, thirty-six years after the second one.

The planetarium software showed that all these predictions were absolutely true and all of these eclipses were forebodings of some dreadful disasters that were to take place. These are the actual words used in the Mahabharata (16.2): “Day by day strong winds blew. Earthen pots showed cracks or broke for no apparent cause. Society became corrupt. The day of the new moon coincided with the thirteenth (and the fourteenth) lunation. The fourteenth lunation has been made the fifteenth by the planet Rahu once more. Such a day had happened at the time of the great battle of the Bharatas [Mahabharata War]. It has once more appeared. After that war thirty-six years had passed. The messengers proclaimed at the command of Vaasudeva Krishna that the Vrishnis [another tribe of the Yadavas] should make a journey to the seacoast for bathing in the sacred waters of the ocean.”

KRISHNA—MAN OR GOD?

Now that we have a fairly clear picture of the city of Dwaraka, let us have a look at the personality of the Lord of Dwaraka—Dwarakanatha. For thousands of years, Indians have believed in the divinity of Sri Krishna. But questions have constantly haunted us as to whether Sri Krishna was a historical character or a mythical one and whether the history of India and the story of Krishna and the Pandavas as given in the Mahabharata actually took place or were only figments of Vyasa’s fertile imagination. Of course, the British took pains to show us that the latter was indeed so and that the Indians had no history of their own, and all our Puranas were only myths. Unfortunately the intelligentsia of our country

were happy to believe this, and all the history taught in Indian schools even today is meant to put down our ancient culture. The finding of the great city of Dwaraka, however, is a great breakthrough and has conclusively proved the historicity of Krishna.

The multifaceted personality of Krishna Vaasudeva defies all attempts at cutting him down to fit our particular idea of how a human being should look and behave. He is a unique figure, and therefore he can never be made to fit into any of the niches in which the human mind loves to categorize people. The wonder is that such a mighty being lived centuries before modern civilization as we know it existed. Actually he belongs to the future and not to the past. We still have not reached the heights of his intelligence or powers even though he lived long before us. Of course, it is true to say that all those who have made a mark in this world are ahead of their time, but Krishna was too far ahead. That is why he was not fully understood in his own time or even in these times. We hope there will come a time when he will be fully understood and appreciated.

Krishna is a unique personality. His life accepts no limitations. He was not bound by any rules of conduct. If anyone can be said to have been totally free, it is only Krishna. There was no ground he did not tread, no point where his steps faltered, and no limits he did not transcend. This freedom is the ultimate fruit of enlightenment. A truly spiritual person, a *sthitha prajna*, as he calls such a person in the Bhagavad Gita, should be above the dualities of existence and accept all the facets of life: love and hate, sex and abstinence, violence and nonviolence, action and meditation, and asceticism and indulgence. Krishna lived in this world of dualities as the lotus leaf in water, absolutely untouched and unaffected by the environment, like an actor who participates in everything with enthusiasm but always knows that he is only playing a part. When we look at the life of all the great religious leaders of the world, we find that this type of acceptance is not found in any of them. If you want to ascend to the heights, you have to descend to the abyss first. The tallest tree is the one whose roots go deepest into the earth. The entire structure of our lives is held together by the tension of opposites, and war is a part of the tension of life. An unbiased examination of the development of our civilization will lead us to admit that war has played the largest share in its growth. All our scientific technology and inventions owe their existence to the fact that we are always preparing for war. We can afford to be lazy and lethargic in times of peace but not so during war. It is an unfortunate fact of life that when confronted with the challenge of war, man's mind begins to function at its highest level. It is only Krishna who accepts all of these opposites. He alone can be whole who is prepared to accept the

whole that includes all contradictions.

It is not true to say that Krishna supports war, but he does accept it as part of the game of life. He says it is good to avoid war, but if it becomes unavoidable, then it is better to accept it bravely and joyfully rather than run away from it. War and peace are two sides of the coin of life. Warmongers like Genghis Khan, Hitler, and Alexander the Great accepted only one side of the coin and believed that war was the only way of life. Pacifists like Mahavira, Buddha, Christ, and Gandhiji, on the other hand, chose the other side of the coin of truth. Both of these types are easy enough to understand, but Krishna is different from both of them. He says that life has to pass through the door of peace as well as through the door of war. If a person wants to maintain peace, he needs to have the strength and ability to fight a war. Whether he wins or loses is immaterial, but he should have the strength to face it, if called upon to do so.

Karma yoga, or the technique of action, which Krishna gives to his friend Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita, tells us how to face every situation in such a way that we are not bound by the effects of the action. Actually this technique is based on the simple law of motion in physics, which declares that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. In the human being, it's not the action as such that determines the reaction, but the motivation. A thief may cut off the hand of a person in order to steal the bangles or rings the person is wearing, and a surgeon may amputate a gangrenous hand in order to save the life of the patient. Both are violent actions, but we can easily see what reactions will be created by each action: one will bind and the other release!

Goodness suffers from a basic weakness: it wants to avoid any type of conflict regardless of the consequences. This type of personality is portrayed in the Mahabharata by Yudhishtira, who was such a good man that he wanted to avoid war at all cost. For the past couple of centuries India has been ruled by such "good men," who were responsible for weakening us to such an extent that we were continuously battered and bruised by powerful enemies who preyed upon our weakness and plundered and looted and tore us apart. Of course, it is true that some countries invade others, but it is also true that some people invite invasion. You are not only responsible when you hit others but also when others hit you. If you hit someone, only 50 percent of the responsibility is yours, the other 50 percent goes to the person who invited your slap and took it passively by turning the other cheek! Bullies are created by the meek and the mild! It is indeed ironic that the Christian ideals of meekness and mildness have always been practiced by the Hindus. The Christians, on the other hand, except for a handful of martyrs, have never practiced it. In fact they have no concept of such

a life. The greatest proof of this is that all the world wars starting from the Crusades have been started and fought by the great Christian nations. Actually India is the only country that has never invaded any country or started a provocative war with the intent of capturing another country as her own!

The world is facing a situation similar to that which occurred during the Mahabharata War. At that time there were two camps: one was totally materialistic and did not accept anything beyond the body or matter. They had no idea of yoga or spiritual discipline. The other side was totally against all killing and anxious to find a peaceful solution. The scenario now is a bit different. On one side are arrayed the forces that stand for the advance of civilization, taking into account all the known moral standards as given by most religions. On the other side is a force that thinks itself to be totally right and thinks of God as being full of compassion, yet is willing to kill those who do not believe in that God. They will stop at nothing to enforce their beliefs on the whole world. Their beliefs are colored by some other standard of intellectual integrity totally at variance with modern norms.

Krishna was of an entirely different type. Nobody and nothing could get the better of him. He was always the master of every situation and never the victim. History has always shown that if we cannot understand someone who tries to change us, we either kill him or deify him. In Krishna's case it was impossible to kill him, so he was deified even in his lifetime. In the galaxy of spiritual luminaries that the world has produced, Krishna is the only one who fully accepted life in its totality and did not believe that we are living here for the sake of another world. Most religions ask us to abstain from all pleasures, telling us that God and nature are two totally different things, and therefore anyone who wants to find God has to shun nature. The nature that they knew in those times was harsh and cruel. Life was very hard in the olden days and riddled with fear—fear of nature and fear of a God whose designs we could not gauge. Religions preyed on this human weakness and made people believe that they would go to a heaven, which had all the good things they did not have in this life, if they were good and moral. Otherwise they would be damned to eternal hell. The only way to get to that heaven was to shun this world, which was filled with snares for the morally incompetent. In this age of advanced technology, science has already eliminated most of the hardships of life, and people have more money than they know what to do with, so the reason to be good has to be something other than the hope of a heaven after death! More and more people are scoffing at religions that promise us heavenly delights if we behave in ways considered socially and morally good on this earth. We live in a scientific age, and one would think that

religions believing in renunciation would have no relevance. Unfortunately we find an insidious growth in some sections of our society that have brainwashed their flock into believing that if they die in the propagation of their faith, they will certainly be rewarded in heaven in a most delightful manner. The wonder is that in this day and age there are people who are prepared to sacrifice their very lives for the uncertain bait of a glorious hereafter!

Five thousand years ago Krishna had already discarded such a view of life. He insisted that heaven, if there was such a thing, should be here and now. He never offered the uncertain bait of a wonderful life after death in order to entice us to become good and pure in this life. He offered a life here and now that should be filled with joy. *Ihaiva tairjita sarga* is what he says. "Heaven is here and now!" He is the only god who is always laughing, playing the flute, and joyously accepting every situation. He looked at life as a drama in which he played every part to perfection. He was a staunch friend, dutiful son, exciting lover, and model husband to not just one but to all women who desired him. There was none so poor who called to him with intensity to whom he did not go with speed! There was no one who approached him, whether saint or sinner, in hatred or fear or love who did not attain liberation. The difference between Kamsa, who tried to kill him, and Kuchela, who worshipped him, may seem enormous. One approached him with hatred and the other with love, but both thought of him constantly and were thus rewarded with *moksha*, or liberation. The Pandavas attained him through friendship, and Kamsa through fear.

Mortal dread and fear can cause the mind to be as focused on an object as love can. And if this object of dread happens to be God, concentration on him, even though motivated by antagonism, must purify the person, just as potent medicine consumed even with dislike must necessarily effect a cure. Krishna is indeed a great mystery, and everyone has tried to understand him in his own way, according to his own spiritual light or vision. Yogis consider him to be the absolute truth; the *gopis*, the highest object of love; the warriors, an ideal hero; Kamsa, an object of fear; and Shishupala, an object of hate. But whether one thinks of him as an object of love or hate, one attains him. This is the greatness of Krishna's incarnation.

From 180 to 165 BCE, the Greek ruler Agathocles issued coins with images of Krishna Vaasudeva holding a chakra. The figures of Krishna and Balarama are shown on the coins he made, which were found recently in the excavations at Al-Khanuram in Afghanistan.

Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador in the court of Chandragupta Maurya (fourth century BC), makes the first reference to the deification of Vaasudeva.

He says that Heracles (who is closest to Krishna Vaasudeva) was held in high regard by the Souraseni (Surasena) who possessed two large cities, namely Methora (Mathura) and Cleisobora (Krishnapura; that is, Vraja and Vrindavana). Apart from references by Megasthenes to the deification of Krishna Vaasudeva, Buddhist texts mention the existence of shrines dedicated to Vaasudeva and Baladeva (Balarama).

Heliodorus, the son of Dia (Dion), a resident of Taxila, had come to Besnagar as an envoy of the Greek king Antalkata (Antialkidas) to the court of Kasiputra Bhagabhadra during his fourteenth regal year. He was the Greek ambassador to India and became a great devotee of Krishna Vaasudeva. He erected a *stambha*, or column, at Videsha in 113 BC. Heliodorus's column publicly acknowledged in the most conspicuous way that Vaasudeva, or Krishna, was the "God of Gods."

Nothing else has influenced the course of India's religion, philosophy, art, and literature as much as the life and personality of Krishna. As a child he was wonderful; as a youth he was physically perfect and beautiful; as a friend, never failing; as a householder, the most ideal; as an intellectual, the very embodiment of Vedic scholarship. As a fighter he was without rival; as a statesman he was extremely shrewd; as a social thinker he was exceptionally liberal; and as a teacher, he was beyond parallel. His teachings in the Gita embody the immortal message of perfect knowledge, desireless action, and single-pointed devotion. He is the divine charioteer seated in the heart of everyone, the Supreme Guru. His story retains its breathtaking beauty in and through the redundant details that have woven themselves around it through the centuries because it is dominated by the brilliance of his enchanting personality, in which the wisdom of the seer is mingled with the charm and simplicity of the child and the glory of God that gushes forth in an inexhaustible fountain of divine love and wisdom.

Needless to say, my life from birth has been dominated by his presence, even though I might not have known it at a tender age. Now I know that there was never a second when he was not with me, guiding and leading me through the checkerboard of my life to this pinpoint of time and space in which I am existing. I am never tired of writing and relating his stories. They have always provided an inexhaustible fount of inspiration for me. Strangely enough there is no complete account of his life in any Purana. His life in Gokula and Vrindavana has been related in the Srimad Bhagavatam and the latter part of his life in the Mahabharata, but even that is only in connection with the story of the Pandavas. He blessed me by allowing me to write a full and complete account of his life in the book *The Complete Life of Krishna*.^{*5} I feel truly sanctified that after all the

thousands of years in which he did not choose to reveal his full play, he chose me, poor and ignorant as I was, to write it in this age and time. Of course, I was only an instrument in his divine hands. He chose to reveal himself, and he chose me as his “ordinary pen.”

Now he has prompted me to write another book about him that is even more intimate than the previous one. Perhaps this is the last story I will write about him, not because there is nothing more to be said about his infinite incarnations, but because I feel I might have exhausted my capacity for storytelling. But I don’t really know—everything is left in his hands. This book was a revelation even for me. I had always wondered what role I had played in his life. I was pretty certain that I had been there during his sojourn on earth. In the course of writing this book he chose to tell me who I was and what role I had played in his life. This esoteric secret I have openly declared in this book. Of all the characters I would have chosen to be, this was certainly the strangest and the most unexpected. Yet since I have it from his own mouth, I cannot but believe it to be the truth.

My love affair with him has been a long and turbulent one. It has waxed and waned from life to life, but I know that he was always there, always preventing me from giving myself totally to any other human being. My feelings were reflected in Rukmini’s dialogue to him: “Which is the woman who has known thee once, who will be able to love an ordinary human being filled with frailties?” When I first read that in the Bhagavatam, my heart skipped a beat, and I knew she was only reiterating what I had always felt in the depths of my being. Indeed the Paramatma is the only fitting mate for the *jivatma* (individual embodied soul). This applies to every one of us, both male and female. He is the only Purusha, the supreme male. All the rest of us are females. Through the strange convolutions of my lives from the time of the Krishnavatara, when we both existed at the same time on this planet, I have realized that we have always been inseparably connected with each other, life after life after life until the last moment of this life in which I hope this river will drown itself in the ocean of bliss.

Aum Namō Bhagavate Vaasudevaaya

Twelve-syllable mantra for Krishna





Aum Yashodavatsalaaya Namaha!
Aum I bow to the darling of Yashoda!

9

Krishna's Wives

Seeing my Lord in a pensive mood, I asked him what the matter was. “You know the king of Avanti is married to another of my father’s sisters called Rajadhidevi. He has a daughter called Mitravinda, whom I have met at some weddings. She is a very beautiful girl, but the important fact is that her brothers Vinda and Anuvinda have arranged a *swayamvara* for her. Even though they are my cousins, they are in league with Duryodhana and want him to marry her. Now to come to the point. Before she left, my sister Subhadra told me a very interesting fact. She told me that Mitravinda had confided in her that she was very anxious to marry me, but she didn’t know how to broach the matter to her brothers, who would certainly have refused their consent.”

“So what will you do now?”

“I will go to the *swayamvara* and take her away, as I did Rukmini. This is a common thing in these parts, as you must have seen.”

I was thrilled at the prospect of another abduction. What exciting lives these princesses had, I thought to myself. Off we went in his chariot to Avanti (Ujjain).

My Lord told me, “This is the place of the *gurukula* of Guru Sandipani, where Balarama and I did our studies. In fact, Uddhava was also there with us. I wish we had the time to go and visit him. Anyway, let us go as fast as possible to the *swayamvara* even though we have not been invited!”

The procedure here was almost exactly like the one in Vidharbha when he abducted Rukmini. He swooped down on Mitravinda as she came out of the temple and carried her away right under the astounded gaze of all the kings who

had been invited to the *swayamvara*. Of course, the Kauravas were there in full force, and as predicted by the Lord, Duryodhana found another source for frustration!

The wedding was celebrated after we got back to Dwaraka. Every time my Lord got married, there was a lot of festivity with food and music and dancing, and, of course, the citizens got presents! This made him really popular, and no doubt all of them hoped he would marry many times!

“Would you marry someone you liked even if they did not solicit you?” I asked.

“Of course not!” he said. “Why should I go after anyone? I am here for all those who need me and want me, but I won’t approach anyone if they don’t approach me. I would never interfere with their free will.”

I thought for a while. “If a thousand women asked you to marry them, would you do it?”

“Just wait and see,” he said with another of his infectious laughs.

“Will this code of yours apply for all times?”

“What do you think? You are a perfect example of your own question. What time do you think you belong to?”

I looked at him gratefully and snuggled up closer to him. After thinking a while I came up with another question: “What about Balarama? Why doesn’t he marry again?”

“He’s already got two wives.”

“What do you mean? Does he have a secret wife?”

“No! No! She’s pretty well known. He’s got Revati, and he is also wedded to his wine bottle. I’ve still to figure out which of the two he prefers!”

Arjuna returned with Subhadra for a short stay and was welcomed by all the Yadavas, with whom he was very popular. He said that a *swayamvara* had been arranged for Lakshmana, the daughter of Brihatsena, king of Madra. She was also known as Madri, or the princess of Madra.^{*20} The Lord already knew that she had set her heart on marrying him.

“Shall we go for the *swayamvara*?” Arjuna asked. “King Brihatsena has arranged an archery competition, and all the kings have been invited, including the Kauravas. I have a keen desire to forestall Duryodhana in this as I have done twice before.”

“No doubt this is a noble aim,” said my Lord, “but this time I must tell you

to miss your aim since she has already given her heart to me, so I am honor bound to marry her.”

“By all means,” laughed Arjuna. “Always at your service, but we will all go together. She is known as Charuhasini (one with a beautiful smile), and I want to see that smile.”

“You are most welcome,” my Lord said, giving one of his own most charming smiles. “Haven’t you heard that her father plays exquisitely on the *veena*, even better than Narada? So there is one more reason for us to go.”

Thus we set out, all but Subhadra, who opted to stay back with her parents and the queens.

The country of Madra was well beyond Indraprastha. We had to go along the Sindhu as usual. The Kauravas, headed by Duryodhana and Jarasandha, the old king of Magadha, as well as many other princes from many states were already there. The king had arranged a shooting competition very similar to the one at the Draupadi *swayamvara*. All the kings, including Duryodhana and Jarasandha, lost, as indeed they had lost at Draupadi’s *swayamvara*. At that contest my Lord had refrained from taking part and had told Satyaki also not to take part, since he wanted Arjuna to win. This time Bhima refused to take part, and Arjuna deliberately missed since he knew that Lakshmana had given her heart to his friend. As soon as Lakshmana placed the wedding garland around my Lord’s neck, all the Yadavas as well as Arjuna got into their chariots and rode off fast. The Kauravas and the other kings followed in hot pursuit, but Arjuna kept them at bay, allowing Krishna to take the bride away.

I found it rather interesting that all these princesses had to be won in this way after a show of prowess by the bridegroom. “Is this the general rule?” I asked my Lord after we reached home and the wedding was over.

“Not always,” he said. “Wait and see. Today someone will come with a proposal for me.”

Santardana was the crown prince of the Kekaya kingdom. He had a beautiful sister called Bhadra, who was also known as Kaikeyi since she was the princess of Kekaya. He came to Dwaraka in order to offer his sister’s hand in marriage to Krishna, since she had set her heart on him since she was a child.

“How is this possible?” I asked. “Did she know you as a child?”

“I have met her many times. She is the daughter of King Drishtaketu, and her mother is Shrutakirti, another of my father’s sisters, which makes her Kunti’s sister. So she is my first cousin like the Pandavas.”

All of us accompanied Santardana back to Kekaya, where the wedding was celebrated on a grand scale by Bhadra's five brothers. So my question as to there being only abductions of princesses was answered. This was my Lord's normal way of answering things. Even though he knew everything, he allowed events to run their course without interference, thus unfolding the sequence of life naturally.

"Where are we going next?" I asked him when we got back from the wedding.

"There is one more princess left," he said with a laugh.

"Who is she?"

"She is the daughter of King Nagnajit of Kosala, and her name is Satya, even though she is known as Nagnajiti after her father. She is supposed to be brilliant, and again I have come to know of her wish to be my wife. I heard her mental request. She said, 'O Lord! If you think that I have constantly cherished you in my heart as the goal of all my vows, then may you come and accept me as your wife!' There will be no fighting or abducting since her father is a very pious man who has great respect for me."

We went to Ayodhya, capital of Kosala, and I was surprised at the way the king greeted my Lord. Obviously both he and his daughter knew of his divinity, and he was made to sit on a golden throne while attention was lavished upon him. My Lord, however, was as equally indifferent to the adulation as he had been to the harsh treatment that had been meted out to him at the other places.

When he heard the reason for my Lord's visit, Nagnajit said, "Alas, I have made a foolish vow that only the person who can subdue my seven vicious bulls at the same time will be able to marry my daughter. How can I go against my own vow? Many kings and princes have come and departed with broken legs and arms after entering the arena."

Krishna laughed with great joy when he heard this and said, "Majesty! Have no fear, I will accomplish this feat and win the hand of your precious daughter."

So saying, he girded up his *pitambaram* (yellow *dhoti*) and entered the arena like a wrestler. I was anxiously watching from the balcony, as indeed was Satya and her father and friends. He had ordered me not to disturb him while he was in the arena. The bulls came charging at him with lowered horns, snorting and digging the ground with their hooves. Suddenly to our surprise, he seemed to have taken on seven forms, and in a trice he threw seven nooses around the necks of the bulls and led them easily around the arena to the amazement of all

the spectators. Satya nearly swooned with delight. Her father too was extremely happy, since all the suitors who had come for her hand had failed miserably, and he had been wondering if his daughter would ever get married at all.

I wondered at the foolish vows made by the fathers of so many princesses. I supposed it just added zest to life! And certainly I knew my Lord was always anxious for a bit of excitement.

This time the wedding was in the bride's country, as had been Bhadra's, and the king presented the groom with the bride price of ten thousand cows, nine thousand elephants, nine hundred thousand chariots and double the number of horses, three thousand maids-in-waiting, and thousands of male servants. We returned to Dwaraka in one of the chariots given by the king, accompanied by his army. Some of the kings who had failed to subdue the bulls now decided to pursue the marriage party, but they were easily defeated by the king's soldiers.

Each of my Lord's queens was given a separate palace. Now there were eight in number. I counted them one by one and spent quite a bit of my spare time going from palace to palace, watching what they were doing. By now, of course, Rukmini had six more sons, but I think she still pined for her eldest, Pradyumna, who had been abducted by Sambara. The others also had a few sons each. I don't know how my Lord remembered their names. I used to wonder how he kept them all happy. It was only when I made a tour of the palaces that I understood the secret. Every palace I went to had a Krishna sitting and talking to his wife or playing dice with her or playing the flute for her or listening to her singing or lying on her lap on the swing bed or discussing the state of the country (this was only with Satyabhama) or playing with her children and so on. I would run back to our own palace and find him relaxing.

"Well, are you satisfied?" he asked. "Have you finished your inspection of all the eight palaces?"

I ran and clutched his feet. "How can anyone ever understand you, my Lord?"

"I have told you that I am beyond understanding. All you have to do is to love me!"

One day I was resting at my Lord's feet in Satyabhama's palace where she was playing *chaturanga* with him when Indra, king of gods, came to see him. Krishna got up and made Indra sit on the throne that was normally reserved for my Vanamali.

"To what do I owe the honor of this visit? What can I do for you, my Lord?"

asked Krishna.

“I have come to complain about the inequities of the son of Bhumi Devi (earth deity) called Bhauma (son of Bhumi), or Naraka. Once, long ago, Bhumi Devi was snatched away by the *asura* Hiranyaksha, who took her to his abode in the nether regions. She prayed to Vishnu to save her, and Vishnu took the form of a boar (Varaha) and rescued her from the Garbhodaka Ocean. He lifted her on his snout and kept her in her proper place with the power of gravity. She has never fallen since. But she was pregnant at that time, and though the child is said to be Vishnu’s, it is actually Hiranyaksha’s child and is a proper *asura*. Due to the many boons he procured from Brahma, Bhauma has become insufferable and has been harassing us. He stole my mother Aditi’s earrings and Varuna’s valuable umbrellas and has threatened to kick us out of the heavens. He has also plundered the capitals of sixteen thousand kings and stolen their daughters and clapped them in jail as a kindly precaution against abductors like you, my Lord! He also has a boon from his mother that he would only die at her hands!”

My Lord was highly delighted to hear all of this and assured Indra that he would settle the matter. Satyabhama was a bit peeved that he was going off before they had finished their game. “Please take me with you,” she pleaded. “You never take me anywhere, and I am sick of the company of these women who have nothing to talk about but their clothes and their children! Moreover, don’t you know that I am supposed to be the incarnation of Bhumi Devi? Indra has just told you that Naraka can only be killed by Bhumi Devi, so perhaps I am the one who has to do it. You know that I am quite proficient in archery, as well as in driving a chariot and riding a horse, so you need not be afraid that I will be a hindrance.”

I’d noticed that the Lord really enjoyed Satyabhama’s tantrums. Perhaps it was a pleasant change from the subservient attitude of the rest of his wives!

“All right. Get ready, and I’ll bring our vehicle.” Turning to me he said, “You have never seen my Garuda *vimana*, have you?”

“No! What’s that?”

“It’s a flying machine with the face of Garuda, the eagle, that is Lord Vishnu’s vehicle. Come, I’ll show you.”

He took me to a large shed that I had never seen before, and I gasped with delight to see the vehicle. It was like a chariot built for two, but the front was shaped like a huge eagle. It had wheels and two wings, which I saw only when we took off from the ground. I peered inside to see the mechanism and saw only a huge number of the arrows with different heads that I had seen in the artillery a

long time ago. It seemed to be well equipped with weapons of all types.

“How does it fly?” I asked.

“Get in, and I will show you.” He jumped in, and so did I. He took it to the front of Satyabhama’s palace, and I was surprised to see that she was ready and waiting without her numerous maids. In fact, she had draped her clothes in a special way by which she would be able to sit astride a horse comfortably.

Krishna smiled at her and said, “We are not riding a horse but a *vimana*.” Obviously she had not seen it either, for she looked rather surprised. She jumped in, and we were off before she could make any comment.

“What is the mode of power for this?” I asked, and he answered without words as he always does.

“It’s a mentally driven vehicle. It is programmed to obey my commands.”

“You mean it will not obey anyone else’s commands?”

“Of course not! I told you it is programmed to obey only the tone of my voice, as well as certain secret commands that I have given it.”

“Do other people have these vehicles?”

“They are not common but quite a few people have one. The most famous of them is called the Pushpaka owned by Kubera, king of the Yakshas. Salva, king of Matrikavarta, also has one called the Shaubha, which is even more extraordinary. I don’t use this often, but it will be of great use in the fight with Naraka, whose capital Pragjyotisha is an impregnable fortress. It is surrounded by a moat that we will find very difficult to cross, so the *vimana* will come in handy.”

“What is Naraka’s story?”

“You heard a part of it from Indra. I will try to tell the rest. Naraka established the kingdom known as Kamarupa, after overthrowing the last of the *asura* kings, called Ghatakasura, and has been terrifying all the kingdoms around him ever since.”

Since we were flying, we covered the long distance to Kamarupa in a short time. The fortress of Pragjyotisha was surrounded by an impenetrable barrier of magic mountains. The Lord was unperturbed and hurled his mace at the mountain with an incantation, which broke the magic and shattered the mountain in one single throw. As soon as the mountain barricade was broken, magical weapons poured down on our heads.

“Bhama!” he yelled to his wife. “Cover your head!” he shouted as he shot

multiple arrows from his bow and destroyed all the weapons. Now we came to the actual fortress, which was surrounded by a moat, as my Lord had told me. The five-headed demon called Mura lived in the moat and would catch anyone who tried to cross with his huge tentacles. In fact, he looked like a five-headed octopus. As our *vimana* flew across the moat, the demon stretched out his tentacles and tried to drag us down. Krishna chopped off his five heads with his chakra (discus) and penetrated the fortress, which no one had ever been able to do so far.

Naraka came charging out on his four-tusked elephant, followed by his elephant brigade. He had never seen a *vimana* before, so he was a bit flabbergasted. However, my Lord flew at him, keeping to the same level as the elephant's head so that it was a fair fight. They fought for quite a while, and Naraka used many forms of magic since he was an expert in this type of warfare, but my Lord countered all his tricks with his own magic.

At last he told Satyabhama, "Bhama! His time has come. Take the arrow and shoot him since only you can do it." She took over but was no match for Naraka. The *asura* now took his famous javelin, called the Sataghni, and hurled it at my Lord, who feigned a fall and sank to the bottom of the *vimana*. When she saw him fall, Satyabhama was charged with fear and anger and grabbed the bow and arrow from my Lord and shot the fatal arrow with unerring precision, neatly cutting off the *asura*'s head, which rolled about the ground in a weird fashion. The head now spoke and asked Satyabhama to see that his name would ever be remembered. The man who had thought he was invincible was now lying dead on the ground—killed by the incarnation of the earth that had given birth to him and that alone had the power to kill him!

Of course, my Lord rose up and said, "O Bhama! It was only a trick to energize you!" She was so happy that she hugged him right before the eyes of Naraka's mother and son, who came out of the palace. She begged Krishna to spare her grandson, Bhagadatta, and take him under his protection.

The Lord promised to do so and thus acquired an invaluable ally for the Pandavas. We then went and freed all Narakasura's prisoners. There were sixteen thousand one hundred princesses who had been incarcerated in his dungeon. Krishna promised to send them all back with escorts to their own countries. When they heard this all of them started to wail and said, "O Lord! Who will acknowledge us if we go back? Not even our parents will accept us, and certainly no man will agree to marry a woman who has been in the palace of a lecherous person like this for so many months. We beg of you therefore to accept us and take us back to your country. We are prepared to do anything for

you.” My Lord gave me a sidelong glance filled with humor. “What did I tell you? I will have to marry all sixteen thousand one hundred of them!” Satyabhama was not at all happy when she heard this. Bad enough that she had to have seven other rivals for his affection, but this was too much. She pouted.

“What did Naraka tell you as his head rolled on the ground?” my Lord asked.

Satyabhama replied, “He asked me to see that his name was always remembered. Today is *chathurdasi*,^{*21} and it shall henceforth be known as Naraka *chathurdasi*. Tomorrow, when we reach Dwaraka, will be *amavasya*. It will be a dark night. Let us celebrate this victory in which I have helped you, along with the release of these princesses, by lighting lamps all over the city.”

“So be it,” said Krishna. So this is the origin of Diwali (the festival of lights), I thought to myself.

When we reached Dwaraka, it was midnight, and the whole city seemed to be in flames. My Lord spurred his horse forward. The citizens were in a state of panic. Uddhava, Satyaki, Kritavarma, and many other nobles were there, and they had made a living river to fight the fire with barrels of water brought in a line of people stretching all the way to the sea. The barrels were filled in the sea and passed on by the people so that there was never a break and very soon the fire was under control. Luckily the cavalcade with the princesses was not expected to arrive before the next evening. We went into the palace, and my Lord asked Kritavarma to tell him what had happened.

“My Lord!” he said. “That wretch Shishupala knew you were away, and like a coward, he took this opportunity to come with an army and set fire to the city. His Majesty Ugrasena was on Raivata hill for some festival, and Shishupala took the king’s soldiers captive and fled before we knew what was happening. Of course, we gave chase, but he had already gone far ahead of us, and it didn’t seem worthwhile to go right up to Chedi. When he knew that he was being chased, he released the Yadava soldiers, and we have just returned with them. There didn’t seem any point in chasing them farther. The news of your victory had already reached us, and the city had been lit with innumerable oil lamps to welcome you. This made it very easy for that evil prince to set fire to it.”

Krishna did not make any comments, but I knew that one more mark had been chalked up to Shishupala’s credit!

The princesses arrived the next evening, and the day after that, arrangements were made, and my Lord married all sixteen thousand one hundred princesses in as many halls at the same time! Nobody seemed to be amazed by this

extraordinary display of his powers. All of them knew that he was the Supreme incarnate.

All the princesses were given separate palaces so that there would be no cause for rivalry and conflict. I had already experienced how he paid equal attention to all and was not going to test him again!

Satyabhama, however, insisted that she wanted a private palace all to herself away from the others. My Lord made her a beautiful palace in Bet Dwaraka, where she was quite happy. Jambavati was a great friend of hers since she was simple and had no relations, so she took her along for company.

I used to love to go with my Vanamali to Bet Dwaraka and bathe in the sea and play on the beach with Satyabhama and Jambavati. Sometimes my Lord would go riding along the beach with Satyabhama. That was really thrilling, since the waves would come and beat on the sides of the horses, wetting their clothes. Satyabhama was as wild and uncontrollable as some of the horses, and I think my Lord liked verbal jousting with her.

Aum Namō Bhagavate Vāsudevaaya



Glossary of Sanskrit Terms

abhaya: Without fear

abhicharya: Black magic rites

acharya: Teacher or guru

adharma: Unrighteousness

Agneyastra: Weapon that invokes the fire god and rains fire on the opponents

agrapuja: Worship of the foremost or noblest person **ajna chakra:** Psychic center at the middle of the forehead just between the eyes **akshara:** Nonperishable

akshauhini: Battalion or division in an army **akshaya patra:** The bowl from which food is never exhausted **amavasya:** Night of the new moon

amrita: The nectar of immortality

amsa: Fraction; portion

anaadi: Without a beginning

anahata: Soundless sound

anahata chakra: Psychic center at the heart **ananta:** Without an end

Anjalika: The missile that Arjuna used to kill Karna **anjana:** Black stone

antaryami: Inner dweller

apsaras: Celestial dancers

arghya: Water given in the hand for cleansing **artha:** Wealth; worldly prosperity

Artharathas: Chariot warriors who needed to be helped by foot soldiers

Aryavrata: Ancient name of India

ashrama: Retreat for spiritual aspirants **Ashwamedha Yaga:** Vedic horse sacrifice conducted by a king in order to proclaim himself as emperor **astra:** Weapon

asura: Demonic being; opposite of deva

asvattha: Peepul tree; sacred to Hindus

atman: Individualized expression of the Brahman or Supreme Force **aum:** Mystic sound denoting the Supreme

avabhritha snana: Ceremonial bath taken in a river after the conclusion of a yajna **avadhuta:** Enlightened ascetic who wanders about naked, expressing total freedom **avatara:** Incarnation of God

ayudhapuja: Worship of weapons before commencement of war **Badarikashrama:** Holy place in the Himalayas **bethua:** Type of edible greens loved by Krishna **Bhagavata Dharma:** Spiritual gospel taught by Krishna **bhakta:** Devotee

bhakti: Devotion; love of god

bhara: Measurement of weight roughly equal to 176 pounds **Bharatavarsha:** Ancient name of India

bhava: Mood or attitude

bhavana: Subjective state of feeling; concept **Brahma:** The creator in the Hindu trinity **Brahmadanda:** Type of weapon like a missile **Brahman:** The supreme transcendent force that is immanent in all creation **Brahmanas;** **Brahmins:** The first or priest caste in the Hindu social hierarchy **brahmarandra:** The fontanelle or soft part on top of the head **Brahmasiras:** A deadly weapon that can annihilate whole countries, cause terrible destruction that lasts for generations, and bring about severe environmental changes; analogous in power to a modern day nuclear weapon **Brahmastra:** Another weapon like the Brahmasiras capable of annihilating whole countries and causing severe environmental changes **brahmavidya:** Science of life

buddhi: Intellect

chakora: Bird that is supposed to drink the nectar from the moon **chakra:** Wheel; often used as a term for Krishna's discus weapon; one of seven psychic energy centers in the body **chakra vyuha:** Battle formation in the shape of a wheel **champaka; champa:** Type of sweet-smelling flower **chandrakala:** Crescent moon; spark of the moon **chathurdasi:** Fourteenth day of the lunar month **chaturanga:** Ancient game played by kings (forerunner of chess) **chaturmasya:** Four months; normally refers to the four monsoon months **chiranjivi:** One who would remain alive for the whole of this yuga or age **daivam:** Divinity existing in everything **daivic:** Pertaining to a deva or god

dakshina: Monetary gift to a holy person or teacher **Dakshinayanam:** Winter solstice; six months of the year from July to December when the sun goes toward the south **dana:** Charity

darbha: Type of grass used in pujas

darshana: Divine vision

desha: Space; place

deva: A god

devadasis: Women who used to dance in temples and were considered to be of a low order **Devadatta:** Name of Arjuna's conch shell

devataru: Tree of the gods; a type of cypress found in the Himalayas **dhanurveda:** Martial arts

dharma: Righteousness; duty; cosmic law

dharma yuddha: A righteous war

dhoti: Type of unstitched cloth worn by men **digvijaya:** Conquest of enemy territories by a king who wants to proclaim his suzerainty over them **divyastras:** Divine weapons; usually given by some god **durva:** Type of grass like darbha

Dwapara Yuga: Third of four cosmic ages; the yuga in which Krishna lived, which ended with his death **Ekadasi:** Eleventh day of the lunar fortnight; a day of fasting for devotees of Vishnu **errata:** Type of grass with sharp tips like swords **gada:** Mace

ganas: Lord Shiva's attendants

Gandhara: Old name for Afghanistan

gandharvas: Celestial musicians

Gandiva: Name of Arjuna's bow

Garga muni: Sage who was called for the naming ceremony of Krishna and Rama **Garuda:** Eagle vehicle of Vishnu

garuda vyuha: Battle formation in the shape of an eagle **ghatika:** An ancient type of water clock

ghats: Steps made on river banks for easy bathing **ghora:** Terrible; very strict

gopals: Cowherd boys

gopis: Girls belonging to the cowherd community of Vrindavana **gotra:** Brahminical clan into which one is born **Govardhana:** Name of Vidura's

bow

gunas: Three qualities or modes of nature—sattva (harmony), rajas (kinesis or action), tamas (inertia, dullness) **gunatita:** Enlightened soul who has gone beyond the three gunas; a realized sage **gunja:** Type of grass

guru: Spiritual preceptor

guru dakshina: Fee given to guru at the end of the course of study **gurukula:** Hermitage of the guru

hala: Plowshare

hing: Spice also known as asafoetida

homa: Fire ceremony; *see also* yajna **Indra:** King of the gods

Indraloka: The world of Indra

jai: Hail

janapadas: Small republics

jiva; jivatma: The individual embodied soul **jivan mukta:** Liberated sage

jnana: Wisdom; spiritual insight

jnanabhakta: Devotee who has spiritual knowledge **jnani:** Wise sage with spiritual insight

kaala: Time

Kaalaswarupa: The fierce form of the Lord as all-consuming Time **Kali Yuga:** Fourth of four cosmic ages; the one we are living in now **kama:** Lust; desire; passion

kamandalu: Water pot made of a double coconut shell carried by sages

Kapidwaja: Name for Arjuna that means “one with a monkey on his flag”

karma: Action; also refers to the cosmic law of moral cause and effect

karmaphaladata: The giver of the fruits of action that is God alone **karma-**

sannyasi: One who acts without desire for the fruits of his actions, who gives all his wealth to charity, and who performs his daily rituals **karma**

yoga: The yoga of action without expectation of personal benefits

Kaumodaki: Name of Krishna’s mace

Kauravas: One hundred sons of Dritarashtra and Gandhari **Kaustubha:** Ruby worn by Vishnu and his incarnations **kavacha:** Armor

kaya kalpa: That which gives immortality to the body **krauncha:** Crane

krtya: An evil spirit

Kshatriyas: Second caste in the Hindu social hierarchy; the warrior caste

Kubja: Three-humped woman; a hunchback

kula guru: The preceptor of the clan

kundalas: Earrings

Kurukshetra: Battlefield of the Kurus

kusa: Type of grass used in rituals

lac: A flammable material used in seals; sealing wax **lagna:** Planetary configuration

law of karma: Every action must have its equal and opposite reaction **laya:** Dissolution

lila: Play or game of God

lingam: Elliptical stone symbol of Lord Shiva **linga sarira:** Causal body; subtle body

madhuparka: Concoction of honey and milk offered to special guests

madhurya: Sweetness (like honey)

madhyama: Middle

magadha: Chronicler

Mahajanapadas: The great kings who carved out huge countries for themselves

Mahakalpas: The lifetime of Brahma, the creator **mahapadma:** Great warrior

Maharathi: First category of chariot warriors who needed no help from foot soldiers **Mahatma:** Great soul

mahayuga: One cycle of four yugas

makara vyuha: Battle formation in the shape of a crocodile **mala:** Necklace

Mandara: The mythical mountain that was used for churning the ocean **mane:** Ancestor

manipura chakra: The psychic center around the navel **mantra:** Sacred formula to be used in uplifting consciousness **Margashirsha:** Name of a month (November/December) **Matsya Purana:** The purana given by the

Lord in his incarnation as the cosmic fish **maya**: Delusory power of the Lord that conceals reality **Maya Sabha**: Hall of illusions built in Indraprastha **mlecchas**: Those who did not believe in the Vedas **Mohanastra**: The weapon that caused confusion in the enemy ranks **moksha** : Liberation from the chain of births and deaths **mridangam**: Type of percussion instrument similar to a drum **mudra**: Seal; chop

muhurta: Period of time equaling a little over an hour **muladhara chakra**: Psychic center at the bottom of the spine **muni**: Sage

Nagas: A tribe that worshipped snakes

nagas: Snakes

Nagastra: Powerful weapon of the cobra

Nandaki: Name of Lord Krishna's sword

Narayana Sena: Yadava battalion given to the Kauravas **naus**: Boats

Navachandra: Ghatotkacha's bow

nimitta: Cause; instrument

niranjana: Purificatory rite

padma: Lotus

padma vyuha: Battle formation in the shape of a lotus **padukas**: Wooden footwear

pala: Measurement of weight

pana: Measurement of weight

pancha: Five

Panchajanya: Name of Lord Krishna's conch **Pandavas**: The five sons of Pandu who were Lord Krishna's chosen instruments in the cause of the establishment of dharma **parakiya dharma**: The duty of a lover

paramahansa: Enlightened soul

Paramatma(n): The Supreme Soul

Parijata: Celestial tree from Indra's garden **Pasupatastra**: Lord Shiva's weapon

Paundra: Name of Bhima's conch

payasam: Milk pudding with rice

peepul tree: Sacred tree; *Ficus religiosa*, or sacred fig **pitambaram:** Yellow cloth that Krishna always wore **pournami:** Full moon

Prakriti: Nature

prana: Vital breath, which is the same in all beings **prarabdha karma:** The karma acquired from a previous life or lives **prasada:** Remains of food offerings to God **pravara:** Excellent; lineage taken from the rishis **prema:** Highest form of love; unconditional love **puja:** Ritualistic worship

punya: Spiritual merit

Puranas: Eighteen sacred treatises written by Vyasa **purnavatara:** Supreme incarnation; Krishna **Purusha:** The unmanifested, actionless aspect of the world as opposed to Prakriti, which is the active aspect **Purushottama:** Supreme person

Pushpaka: Flying vehicle of King Kubera

raga: Melody

raja: King

rajas: One of the three modes of nature that instigates action **Rajasuya yajna:** Vedic ceremony conducted by kings to prove their supremacy **rakshasa:** Cannibalistic tribe that existed in ancient India **rakshasi:** Female of rakshasa

rishis: Sages

rudraksha: A type of berry sacred to Shiva **sabha:** Hall; assembly

sadhana: Spiritual practice

sadhu: Holy man; renunciate

sahasrara chakra: Psychic center on the top of the head **Samadhi:** Superconscious state of bliss achieved in meditation **Samarathas:** Less skilled chariot warriors **Samkhya Yoga:** One of the systems of Indian philosophy **samsaptakas:** Five brothers who were part of the Trigartas who had sworn to kill Arjuna **samsara:** This world; transmigratory existence **samsara chakra:** Wheel of life, which keeps us rotating from life to life **samsara sagara:** Ocean of existence

Sanatana Dharma: Real name for Hinduism; the eternal law or religion **sandal:** Sandalwood tree or paste

sannyasa: Fourth stage in Hinduism in which we renounce the world **sannyasi:** One who has renounced everything **saptarishis:** Seven sages

Sarnga: Name of Lord Krishna's bow

sarpa: Snake (n); also a command to go faster **sat:** Pure existence; goodness; truth

Sataghni: Naraka's javelin

satsang: Company of noble people

sattva: One of the modes of nature; harmony; intelligence; clarity **sattvic:** Pertaining to sattva; pure

Satvata Tantra: One of the books on Tantra **satya:** Truth

Satyameva jayati: A statement from the Upanishads: "Truth alone will win."

Satya Yuga: First of four cosmic ages in which all people follow truth **sena:** Army; battalion

shakata: Cart

shakata vyuha: Battle formation in the shape of a cartwheel **Shakti:** The name of a weapon given by Indra to Karna **Shastras:** Spiritual texts

shikara: Turret; dome; peak

shrivatsa: Imprint on the chest of Vishnu and his avatars **Shudras:** Fourth caste in the Hindu social hierarchy **siddha:** One who has siddhis

siddhi: Supernormal power achieved through spiritual disciplines **sindoor:** Red powder applied to the forehead of women **soma:** Herb with medicinal and spiritual properties used in Vedic yagas **soochi vyuha:** Battle formation in the shape of a needle **srimad:** Auspicious

stambha: Pillar

sthitha prajna: Enlightened soul; one of firmly established intellect

Sudarshana: Name of Lord Krishna's discus **Sudharma:** Name of the assembly hall in Dwaraka **sumangalis:** Married women

Sundari: Beautiful woman

Surya: Sun god

Surya Putra: Son of the sun god; name given to Karna **suta:** Charioteer; professional poet

Suta Putra: Son of a charioteer; name given to Karna **swadharma:** Law of action pertaining to one's own station in life **swadhisthana chakra:** Psychic center found just above the genitals in the lower abdomen **swayamvara:** Marriage by choice of the bride **Syamanta-panchaka:** Name of a place by a lake **tadastu:** So be it

tamas: One of the modes of nature; inertia; laziness; darkness; ignorance
tambulam: Mixture of betel leaves and other ingredients given after food to help digestion **tandava:** Cosmic dance of Shiva

tantric: Pertaining to a type of discipline known as tantra **tapas; tapasya:** Spiritual discipline like meditation; austerity **tilaka:** Auspicious mark on the forehead made with sandal paste **Treta Yuga:** Second of four cosmic ages

Tripura: Three asuras possessing three flying cities **Trivakra:** Another name of Kubja; the three-humped one **tula:** A measurement of weight

tulsi: The holy basil; essential for Vishnu pujas and his avatars **Upanishad:** The last portion in each Veda that deals with Advaita or monism **Uttama:** Supreme; highest

Uttarayanam: Summer solstice; six months of the year from January 14 to July 14

uttareeyam: Upper garment worn by men

vaidya: Ayurvedic physician

Vaishnava: Devotee of Lord Vishnu or his avatars **Vaishnava Yajna:** Fire ceremony honoring Lord Vishnu **Vaishnavastra:** The weapon given to Bhagadatta by Lord Vishnu **Vaishyas:** The third or economic caste in the Hindu social hierarchy **Vajra:** Weapon of Indra

vajra: Thunderbolt

vajra vyuha: Battle formation in the shape of a thunderbolt **vanamala:** Garland made of five wildflowers worn by Vishnu and his avatars **vandinah:** Eulogist

varnas: Colors; different castes in Vedic civilization **vasanas:** Desires carried along with the genes that give rise to our present life; inherent tendencies **Vasus:** Attendant deities of Indra

Vedas: The most ancient scriptures of the world found in Hinduism **veena:** A stringed instrument like a lute always carried by the sage Narada **vibhuti(s):** Sacred ash; extraordinary manifestations of god **Vijaya:** Name of Karna's bow

Vijayadasami: The tenth day of the yearly worship of goddess Durga **vijnana:** Scientific knowledge

vimana: Ancient airplane

viraha: Separation

Vishnu Sahasranama: One thousand and eight names of Lord Vishnu **vishudhi chakra:** Psychic center at the base of the throat **Vishwakarma:** Divine architect

Viswaroopa: Krishna's cosmic form shown to Arjuna and the court of the Kurus in Hastinapura **Vrishni:** One of the tribes of the Yadavas **vyuha:** Formation, generally in battle

Yadavas: Lord Krishna's clan

yajamana: Master; one conducting the yajna **yajna:** Sacrificial ceremony using fire

yajna purusha: Presiding deity of the yajna **yajnashala:** Hall where the yajna is conducted **yaksha:** A type of celestial being

yantra: Sacred geometric pattern

yoga: Spiritual discipline that will enable you to attain union with God **yogi:** One who practices yoga

yogic kriyas: Yogic practices

yojana: Measurement of distance (about eight miles) **yuddha:** War

yuga: Epoch or era within a four-age cycle **yuvaraja:** Heir apparent; crown prince

Footnotes

- [*1.](#) For more information on this subject see Sir Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom* (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1975) or David Frawley, *The Myth of the Aryan Invasion of India* (New Delhi: Voice of India, 2005). For astronomical facts dating the Mahabharata War see Ramesh Panchwagh, “Astronomical Proof of the Mahabharata War and Shri Krishna” at www.patheos.com/blogs/drishtikone/2010/09/astronomical-proof-mahabharata-war-and-shri-krishna-part-ii/; Dr. S. Balakrishna, “Dating Mahabharata—Two Eclipses in Thirteen Days” at www.boloji.com/index.cfm?md=Content&sd=Articles&ArticleID=1052; and Swati Shrivastava, “Did the War of the Mahabharat Really Happened [sic]?” at www.speakingtree.in/blog/dating-the-war-of-mahabharat.
- [†2.](#) Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom*.
- [*3.](#) The fourth cosmic age in which we are now living [*4.](#) There are twenty-eight nakshatras or asterisms in the Hindu calendar; the names in this paragraph are all names of these asterisms or stars.
- [*5.](#) Vanamali, *The Complete Life of Krishna: Based on the Earliest Oral Traditions and Sacred Scriptures* (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 2012); originally published in India as *Sri Krishna Lila*.
- [*6.](#) Yavana was a foreign king called Kalayavana who had helped Jarasandha; Krishna had just slain him.
- [†7.](#) Parasurama was a great Brahmin warrior who was said to be an incarnation of Vishnu.
- [†8.](#) Each *mahayuga* is a cycle of four yugas.
- [*9.](#) One who has gone beyond the three *gunas*
- [*10.](#) A little over an hour
- [*11.](#) Perfumed water for washing the hands and mouth [†12.](#) A delicious concoction of milk and honey
- [*13.](#) Indians don’t normally kiss one another, but parents will put their lips to the

foreheads of children and smell instead of kissing.

[*14.](#) Mount Meru is a sacred mountain with five peaks, which in Hindu cosmology is said to be the center of the metaphysical universe.

[*15.](#) Water pot made of a double coconut shell

[*16.](#) Another name and title for Draupadi

[*17.](#) Partha is another name for Arjuna.

[*18.](#) The suffix *-asura* at the end of a name denotes that the person is a demon, so the demon Samabara is often referred to as Sambarasura.

[*19.](#) One bhara is approximately 176 pounds.

[*20.](#) A little clarity on names and titles: The name Lakshmana is normally a man's name, as in the name of Rama's brother and Duryodhana's son. But it can also become a woman's name by ending with two "a"s. Duryodhana also had a daughter named Lakshmanaa. Krishna's wife Lakshmanaa was also known as Madri since she was a princess of Madra. Of course, Madri was also the name of Pandu's wife, another princess of Madra and the mother of Nakula and Sahadeva. Her brother Shalya was a king of Madra.

[*21.](#) *Chathurdasi* is the fourteenth day of the dark phase of the moon. *Amavasya* is the fifteenth day—the day of the new moon.

[*22.](#) Bharata is another name for Arjuna, as well as all the Kurus.

[*23.](#) Meals were generally served on large leaves.

[*24.](#) Three airborne cities held by three *asuras*

[*25.](#) One *yojana* is about eight miles.

[*26.](#) Dritarashtra's second son and Duryodhana's brother [*27.](#) Vedic astrology is sidereal or based on stellar positions. It determines the positions of the signs of the zodiac relative to the observable fixed stars. The old Western method employed a topical zodiac, which determined the signs of the zodiac relative to the equinoxes and solstices. The sidereal zodiac takes the point of precession into consideration, whereas the topical ignores it. This is because it hardly matters in young civilizations, as in the West, but in very ancient civilizations, which calculate time in millennia, it makes a great difference. A sidereal month is not calculated from one full moon to another but

according to the moon's return to the same place among the fixed stars. Hence a sidereal month has 27 days. A sidereal year is marked by the time the sun returns to the same position in the fixed stars. A sidereal day is four minutes shorter than a regular day, so there are 366 of them in a normal year. This causes the calendar to gradually slip back with the precession of the zodiac. In the Vedic calendar we will find that the position of the solstices will move back a week or so every 500 years. That is why the Hindus celebrate the sun entering the sign of Capricorn on January 14 when Uttarayanam starts, which marks the movement of the sun toward the north, thus bringing the beginning of spring in the Northern Hemisphere. The same thing applies to Dakshinayanam, which marks the movement of the sun toward the south. The Western topical calendar uses December 21 as the date of the winter solstice, but this date is now actually in the sign of Sagittarius.

[*28](#). The supreme good from which all others are derived [*29](#). Suyodhana is another name for Duryodhana.

[*30](#). Vedic astrology asserts that our lives are ruled by the planets that are in ascendancy at particular times. Some planets confer positive aspects and others negative. Yudhishtira was passing through a period of negative planetary influence at the time of the dice match.

[*31](#). Narayana and Nara are sages who were incarnations of Vishnu.

[*32](#). Yuyudhana is another name for Satyaki.

[*33](#). There are seven chakras or astral energy points, which lie along the spine. They have been said to be connected to the endocrine glands. However, they are not physical but purely astral, and they control all the inner workings of the human being. At the time of death the spirit is said to exit out of one of these chakras. A yogi's spirit is normally able to exit through the highest chakra, which is at the top of the skull.

[*34](#). Those who live for the whole of this age

[*35](#). Jumping as high as possible to avoid a blow [*36](#). Truth alone will triumph.

[*37](#). One thousand eight names of Lord Vishnu

[§38](#). One who has *siddhis*, or supernormal powers achieved through spiritual disciplines

About the Author

[MATAJI DEVI VANAMALI](#) has written several books on the gods of the Hindu pantheon, including *Shakti*, *Hanuman*, *Shiva*, *The Complete Life of Krishna*, and *The Complete Life of Rama*, as well as translating the Bhagavad Gita. She is the founder and president of Vanamali Gita Yoga Ashram Trust, dedicated to sharing the wisdom of Sanatana Dharma and charitable service to children. She lives at the Vanamali ashram in Rishikesh, northern India.

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