

Krishna Leela

Adapted from Ramkrishna Math



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Chapter 1 LORD VISHNU PROMISES TO BE BORN ON EARTH

Lord Narayana



Once upon a time Mother Earth was burdened with innumerable Asuras disguised as violent and haughty kings. Unable to bear the burden, the Earth took the form of a cow and appeared before Lord Brahma. Crying piteously, she narrated to him her tale of woe. Brahma felt sorry at her distress. He said, "My dear child, there is only One Being who can help you. That is Narayana. We shall take refuge in Him." Accordingly, accompanied by Lord Shiva, they proceeded to Narayana, or Lord Vishnu, who dwelt on snake Adisesha in the milk ocean. Reaching the shore of the ocean, they all prayed to Lord Vishnu with the utmost devotion. Brahma stood there in deep meditation. He heard a ringing voice within him. It was the voice of Lord Vishnu. Brahma woke up from his meditation and addressed the other gods:

'Listen to the words of Narayana which I heard in my meditation,' Brahma said to others, "The Lord Vishnu is already aware of the distress of Mother Earth. He has decided to born on earth as the son of Devaki and Vasudeva. You are all to be born on earth in the Yadu clan to be His helpers as long as He remains there."

Hearing the words of Brahma, Mother Earth and all the gods were fully satisfied. The assurance of Lord Vishnu delighted them. All returned to their respective places.

Chapter 2 MARRIAGE OF VASUDEVA AND DEVAKI



Lord Vishnu promised that He would be born as the son of Vasudeva and Devaki. Who were they? At that time there was a clan called Yadavas, who were the descendants of King Yadu. Sura was the Lord of the Yadus. His kingdom was divided into two parts, Mathura and Surasena. There were two brothers Ugrasena and Devaka. Ugrasena was the king of Mathura. He had a son called Kamsa. Devaka had a daughter named Devaki. Kamsa was very fond of his cousin Devaki since he had no sister of his own. Sura had a son called Vasudeva. A marriage was arranged between Vasudeva and Devaki. After the marriage celebrations were over, Vasudeva was getting ready to take his bride home. Elaborate arrangements had been made for the journey, by Kamsa. A hundred golden chariots, four hundred elephants and a huge army were to escort the bride and bridegroom. Kamsa was feeling very sad at the prospect of the separation from his sister. He came near the chariot and asked the charioteer to get down and he himself took his place. He took up the reins in his hand and started driving the chariot himself as a gesture of his affection for her. As he was driving, all on a sudden he heard a celestial voice.

The mysterious voice said, "You fool, the eighth child of the woman you are now taking in your chariot will kill you."

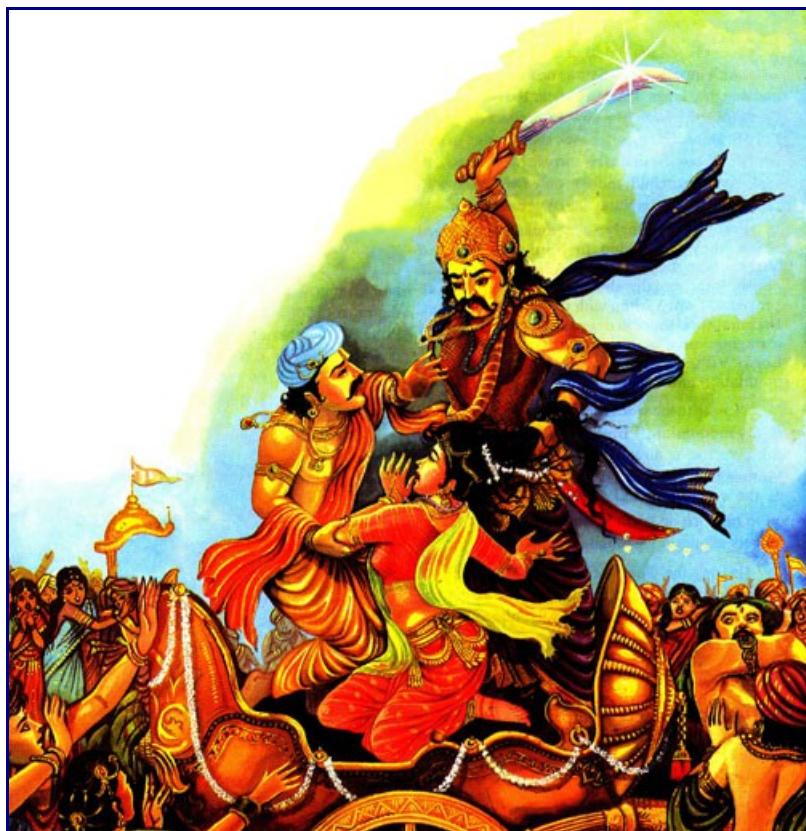
Kamsa was startled and seized with fear. As soon as he heard the warning, he dropped the reins, caught hold of his sister's hair and with his right hand drew his sword to kill her. Only a few minutes earlier he had been so affectionate that he desired to be his sister's charioteer. But as soon as he heard that his life was in danger, all his affection for her evaporated and he wanted to kill her.

Kamsa thundered at Devaki. "You wretch, on whom I showered so much affection! You are going to be the mother of my killer. Let me see how it happens. I will, this moment, kill you.

Then I shall have nothing to fear."

Vasudeva tried to pacify Kamsa and save Devaki. He said to Kamsa, "How can you think of killing your own sister and that too at the time of her wedding? As your younger sister, she deserves all kindness from you. Please take pity on her and spare her life."

But these words of Vasudeva failed to change the mind of Kamsa. When Vasudeva saw that Kamsa could not be persuaded in this manner, he thought of another plan to restrain Kamsa.



He said to Kamsa, "Look, dear Sir, you have nothing to fear from your sister Devaki despite what you have heard from the unseen voice. You are afraid that her son will kill you. I promise that I shall hand over to you every one of her children as soon as they are born."

On hearing this liberal proposition of Vasudeva, Kamsa was much relieved. He was confident that Vasudeva would keep his word. So he refrained from killing his sister. He let her go. Vasudeva, happy at the success of his plan, praised Kamsa and returned home with his bride.

In due courses, a son was born to Devaki. Vasudeva invited learned Brahmanas for the naming ceremony. They examined the child's horoscope and named it Kirtiman, the famous one. The happiness of the parents however was short-lived. According to the promise given by him, Vasudeva had to deliver the child to Kamsa. He was a man of his word. So he carried the child to Kamsa and said, "Here is my child. I have brought it to you as I have promised. Do whatever you like with the child."

Kamsa was pleased with the-truthfulness of Vasudeva. With a smiling face he took the child

and replacing it in the hands of Vasudeva said, “I do not want to kill this tender child. After all, I have been told that your eighth child only will kill me. Since it is your first born, I have no fear from it.” Vasudeva was pleased with Kamsa and took his child back home. But he was also aware that he could not rely on the words of a wicked man like Kamsa. Any moment he might change his mind and kill the child. And that was exactly what happened.

Chapter 3 KAMSA'S PERSECUTION OF THE YADAVAS



Once narada, the divine sage, visited Kamsa. He spoke to Kamsa about many things. He also said that most of the inhabitants of Gokula, with Nanda as their head, were all Devas born on the earth at the command of Lord Vishnu to destroy all the Asuras living on earth. Kamsa was taken aback. Once again fear seized him. As soon as Narada left the place, he chained Vasudeva and Devaki and imprisoned them in a cell. He thought that it was his mistake to have spared the life of their first child. He went to Devaki, snatched the child from her hand and killed it mercilessly. He began to hate the Yadavas and started harassing them. He imprisoned his father Ugrasena also, since he was the leader of the Yadavas. He began persecuting the Yadavas, who had therefore to run here and there to save their lives.

Chapter 4 YOGAMAYA'S MISSION

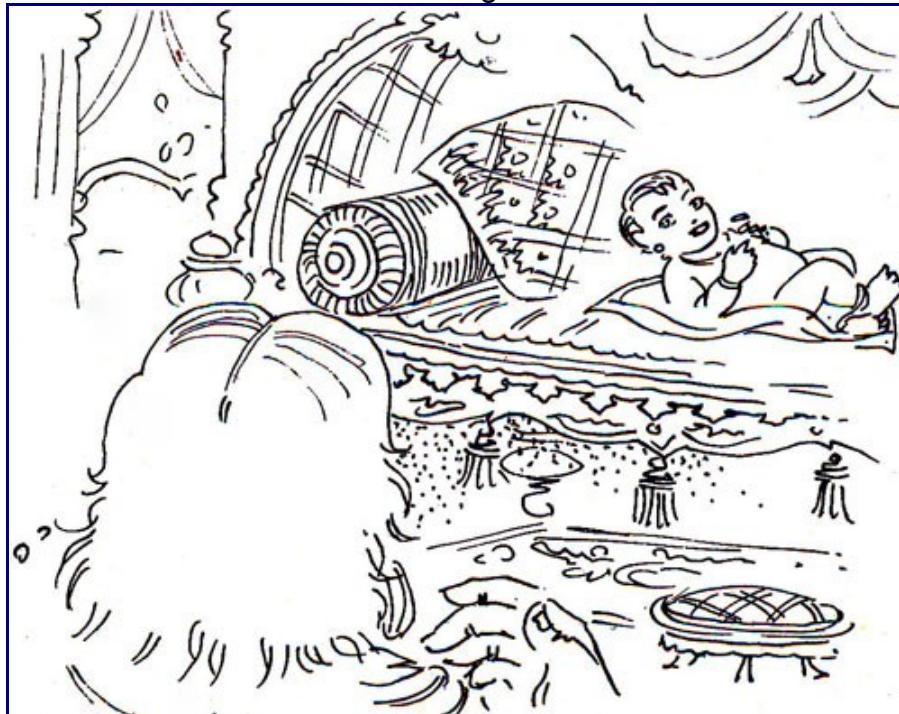


As years rolled on, Kamsa killed six of Devaki's children. The seventh child was growing in the womb of Devaki. Adisesha, one of the aspects of Narayana, was the seventh child. Lord Narayana felt that the time had come for Him to appear in the world. He called Yoga Maya, his supreme power and commanded Her. "Devi, go at once to Gokula where live many cowherd men and women. Vasudeva's second wife Rohini is also there. My spiritual power Adisesha is within the womb of Devaki. You go to Gokula, extract the child from the womb of Devaki and place it inside Rohini. That child, when born, will be known as Balarama. I myself will be born as the eighth son of Devaki under the name of Krishna. You will, at the same time, be born as the daughter of Nanda and Yasoda.

Yoga Maya accordingly descended to the earth to carry out the order of the Lord. Devaki fell into a trance and Yoga Maya transferred the child from her womb to Rohini's. So it appeared as if Devaki had a miscarriage. All the inhabitants of the place loudly lamented, "Alas, Devaki has lost her child." On hearing this gossip Kamsa felt relieved thinking that Devaki would not give birth to an eighth child.

Chapter 05 DEVAKI ESCAPES DEATH

Lord Narayana, having decided to be born as the son of Vasudeva and Devaki, first entered into the heart of Vasudeva. Vasudeva's face began to shine like the sun. People were amazed to see the glow that emanated from him.



After sometime, Lord

Narayana entered the womb of Devaki. Her form became radiant. Was she not to be the mother of the Lord of Lords? Kamsa saw her resplendent and smiling. She was illuminating the whole prison by her lustre. He was amazed to see her beautiful form. He said to himself, "Surely, my greatest enemy Narayana must be within her. For never before have I seen her with such divine lustre. What shall I do now? Shall I kill her? But then she is a woman; she is my sister; she is now pregnant too. If she is killed now, the world will condemn me. All my fame, all my wealth and even my life-span will suffer because of this sin."

Pondering thus, ultimately he desisted from killing Devaki and awaited the birth of the child with utmost restlessness. The thought of the coming child was haunting him. While sitting down on a seat, he would suddenly stop and look at the seat since he thought he saw a child

on the seat. He would tell himself; “There was a child on the seat and I was about to sit on it. Terrible!” He would then go to bed. But there he would see the child again on the bed. At every step the child would haunt him.

Chapter 06 BRAHMA AND SIVA APPEAR BEFORE DEVAKI



NOW lord brahma and Lord Siva accompanied by great sages like Narada, and Vyasa invisibly approached the cell of Devaki, and stood in front of her With folded hands and offered their prayer to welcome the advent of Lord Narayana in the form of baby Krishna.

They prayed, “O Lord! You appeared in the past in different forms as Matsya, Kurma, Narasimha, Yaraha, Parasurama, Rama, Vamana, etc., to protect us and the world at large. Even so protect us now and the earth from the great suffering we are undergoing. We respectfully offer our salutations unto you.”

They then spoke to Devaki and said, “O mother, by your good fortune and ours, God Himself is now in your womb. Therefore you need not fear Kamsa anymore. He will be killed by your son, who is the protector of the entire world.” Having pacified Devaki thus, all the gods departed to their heavenly abodes.

Chapter 07 SRI KRISHNA IS BORN

God is beauty, God is joy, God brings peace. How pleasant and happy the atmosphere of the surroundings would be where the Lord is born! It was about midnight. Calm and peace reigned everywhere. The sky was clear and the stars were glowing bright. The star Rohini was in the ascendant, denoting auspiciousness to the earth. The lotus flowers in lakes were in full bloom, expressing, as it were, their happiness in the coming of Lord Krishna to the earth. The breeze was blowing very gently lest it should cause pain to Devaki who was carrying the Lord of the universe in her womb.

The forests were full of beautiful birds. They began to sing sweetly. The peacocks began to dance with their consorts. There was peace in everyone's mind. In the heavens the gods beat drums to announce the Lord's advent on the earth. They showered flowers from the sky to express their joy.

At such a time, in the pitch darkness of midnight, Mahavishnu, was born to Devaki in the form of child Krishna. Vasudeva was intently looking at the lovely child. Then a great miracle happened. As he looked at the new born child, Vasudeva was amazed. It was not an ordinary child. The great God Vishnu had appeared in his real form. Vasudeva saw that it was not a child, but Narayana Himself who was lying there. What was the form he saw? The child had lotus eyes, four arms, holding conch, discus,



mace and lotus. The child was wearing a yellow cloth. He had a pair of ear rings set with precious stones. His body glistened with a brilliant girdle, armlets, bangles and other ornaments. When Vasudeva saw the extraordinary form, his eyes glowed in wonder. He understood that the child was none other than Narayana Himself.

He said to himself, "Such a beautiful child has been born, but what a pity! Presently Kamsa will come and kill him." The next moment he realized that this was not an ordinary child but God Himself in human form. So he lost all fear of Kamsa.

Bowing down with folded palms, he began to offer prayers to the child, 'In Your infinite kindness You have incarnated in my house for the protection of the world. How can I express the thrill in my heart? I am the most fortunate among men and my wife has the honour of being the mother of the Lord Himself. Great is Your mercy towards us. O Lord! The evil-minded Kamsa, frightened by the prospect of Your birth in our family, has killed all the children born to me so far. Now when he comes to learn about Your birth, he will certainly come here weapon in hand to slaughter You also.'

Even though Vasudeva knew on the one hand that Krishna could not be killed by Kamsa, yet on the other hand, his father's heart grew anxious about the danger from Kamsa.

Devaki too was in constant fear of Kamsa. But now seeing her son with all signs and symbols of Divinity, she smiled and began to praise the Lord as follows:"O Lord, I am convinced that You are Lord Vishnu Himself. Please be pleased to destroy Kamsa who is oppressing all good people. Unlike other mothers, 1 cannot keep You as my own. You have to be handed over to Kamsa. Being God, You know how Kamsa has killed all my children. Even now, as soon as the word reaches him, that I have given birth to another child, he will rush here to snatch You and kill You mercilessly. Please do not reveal Yourself to

him in this divine form. It is only meant for devotees who worship You with devotion." Devaki was so afraid of Kamsa that she could not believe that Kamsa would be unable to kill Lord Vishnu. Out of motherly affection she requested the Lord to assume the form of an ordinary child.

Lord Vishnu was supremely pleased with the simplicity of Devaki. He said to her affectionately, "Devaki, you are the purest of women. In your previous life you did penance for a long time. You worshipped Me with utmost devotion. Pleased with your devotion, I appeared before you and asked you to seek a boon. You begged that I should be born as your son. I had accepted you as My mother in My previous incarnations and so this time also I am born as your son. I have shown you this form of Vishnu just to remind you of My previous births as your son Otherwise, if I appeared like an ordinary human child, you would not believe that God has indeed been born to you." So saying, even as they were looking on, He turned Himself into an ordinary child.

Chapter 08 TRANSFER OF LORD KRISHNA TO GOKULA



Lord Vishnu had asked Vasudeva to take the new born child and leave it in the house of Nanda at Gokula. Vasudeva and Devaki were wondering how it could be done. The doors of the cell were all locked and heavily armed guards were stationed at every doorway. Vasudeva tenderly took the child in his arms, placed Him in a wicker basket on his head and looked at the door helplessly. Lo! Miracle of miracles! The massive prison doors, fastened with locks and chains, opened noiselessly. Vasudeva walked out in wonder. His wonder increased when he found all the guards sunk in deep sleep. He came out of the prison without any trouble and reached the banks of the Yamuna. All on a sudden, the sky became overcast. Dense black clouds gathered in the sky. It started raining heavily. Adisesha, the thousand-headed serpent, the couch of Sri Mahavishnu, appeared suddenly. How could it allow his master Krishna to get drenched in rain? He raised his hoods to form an umbrella that protected father and child from the rain. The torrential rain had flooded the river. Vasudeva was gazing at it, not knowing what

to do. Another miracle happened. The river parted its waters providing a dry path for Vasudeva. He walked along the path, reached the other shore and went straight to Nanda's house. He entered the apartment of Yasoda, Nanda's queen. The entire family was in deep sleep. None noticed Vasudeva. He saw a new born girl lying by the side of Yasoda. He placed his own son on the bed of Yasoda, picked up her daughter and carried her in the basket back to Mathura. As soon as he reached the prison, and entered his cell, the doors got locked by themselves. None knew what had happened.

Chapter 09 KAMSA ATTEMPTS TO KILL THE CHILD

THE LITTLE BABY began to cry. The guards, hearing the baby's cry, rushed to Kamsa and reported, "My Lord, Devaki has given birth to a child. We have hurried here at once to inform you about it."

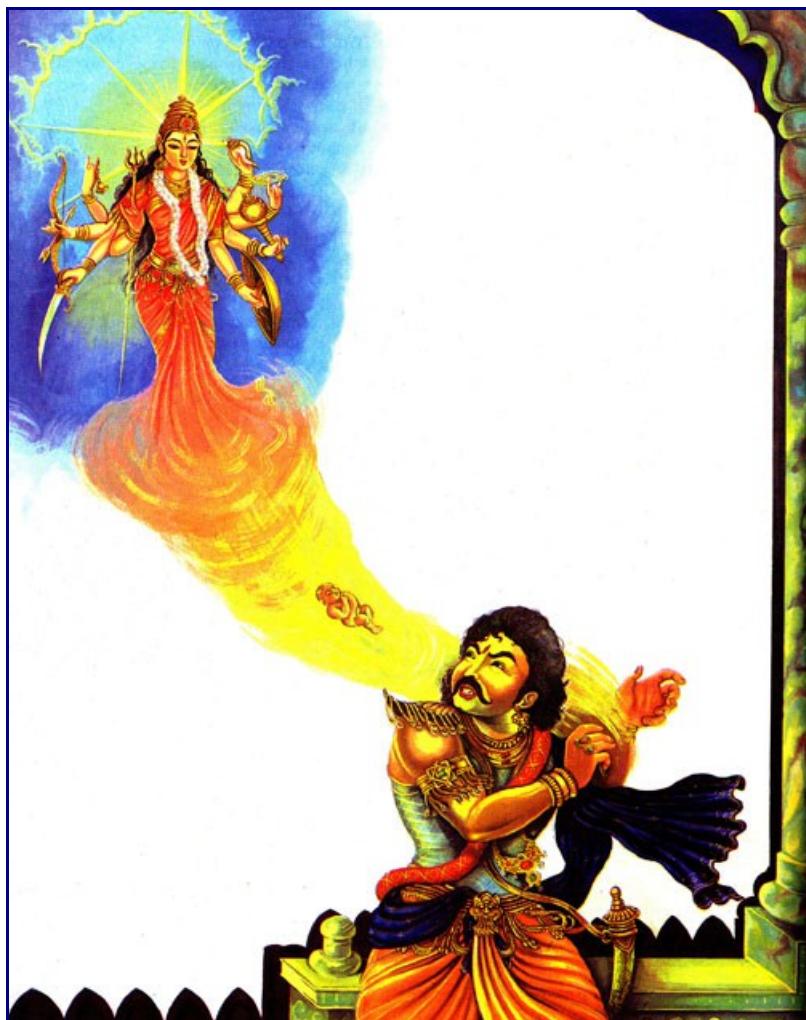
Kamsa was lying on his bed, trying to sleep. Sleep had forsaken him for many days. The coming of the eighth child was haunting his mind day and night. He knew no peace, and he could not sleep. When he heard that the child was born, he snatched a sword and rushed to the prison to kill it. Devaki saw him coming with that dire intent. She thought it was Yama himself coming in the form of Kamsa. She at once fell at his feet and said, "O dear brother, this is your daughter-in-law, as it were. Do not kill her. It is only a girl. What can a poor girl do? I am sure, being a girl she will be incapable of fulfilling the prophecy which has frightened you. Spare her. You have already killed so many of my children. Spare for me at least this one daughter."



She held the child to her bosom crying piteously. Her tears bathed the child. But Kamsa's ears were deaf to the implorings of Devaki. Like one Devi, the Goddess Durga with eight arms, sporting a variety of weapons. Literally looking down on Kamsa She said, "O Fool! Why this vain effort to kill me? The child destined to kill you has already been born and is growing somewhere else. Do not kill innocent children unnecessarily. Search for your real enemy." Having said so she disappeared.

possessed, he snatched the child away from the hands of Devaki. He seized the child by its tender legs and tried to dash it against a hard stone slab. But the child, which was really Yoga

Maya, slipped from his hands and rose into the sky. It appeared there as Kamsa was a devotee of the Goddess Durga.



The appearance of Durga, in Her eight-armed form, holding various weapons, had an immediate effect on his mind. He told himself that if Devaki had given birth to Goddess Durga, she could not be an ordinary woman. He was suddenly ashamed of himself for his cruelty against Vasudeva and Devaki. He immediately removed with his own hands the handcuffs and chains which had bound their hands and feet. He then said to them with humility, "O my dear sister! O Brother! Alas, I am a veritable sinner. I feel extremely sorry for my cruel deeds. I have been guilty of child murder. I dread to think of the hell that will be waiting for me when I die. Pardon my heartless action."

With tears in his eyes, he touched the feet of his sister and her husband, seeking their pardon. Devaki and Vasudeva being very noble, accepted Kamsa's words and became free from their ill-feeling towards him. They returned to their home. When Kamsa found how noble and forgiving they were, he felt even more humble and returned to his palace with a lighter heart.

Chapter 10 EVIL ADVISERS OF KAMSA



Kamsa had a great weakness. As long he was in the company of noble men, he would behave like a good man. But once he left their company he forgot himself and evil nature took possession of him. The next morning he called the assembly of ministers and told them about the strange happenings in the prison and about the words of Goddess Durga. His ministers were all demons in the shape of men and had natural hatred towards Devas.

They said, "You say that your enemy has taken birth somewhere else. Then it is obvious that the child is guarded very carefully. Most probably it will be somewhere away from Mathura. May be in another city or village, in the suburbs, perhaps where the cowherds live. We shall immediately start killing all babies born in the past ten day. Further, the holy men are dear to the gods. The Devas will hide in the houses of the Brahmanas only when they come on earth. So let us also persecute all holy men." By the evil advice of his friends Kamsa lost the little of goodness that he had evinced earlier. He gave his consent to the evil plans of his advisers. The Asuras went about happily killing the new-born babies and harassing the men. Of course, they were least aware. that death was fast approaching every one of them for their evil acts.

Chapter 11 REJOICING AT GOKULA

HEN YOGAMAYA WAS bom to Yasoda, everyone in Gokula was in a trance and nobody was aware of the exchange of children by Vasudeva. When they woke up from deep sleep, news spread from Yasoda's house that a son had been born to her. Nanda, Yasoda's husband was the chief of Gokula. So the entire Gokula rushed there to greet the child. There the Lord of the Universe, Vishnu, lay in the form of a child by the side of his mother. The holy men recited the sacred mantras to avert all evil. Nanda distributed rich gifts to everyone.



The entire Gokula wore a festive look. Musicians sang and drums, kettle-drums and other instruments sounded again and again. Every house was decorated and the streets were all sprinkled with perfumed water. A little earlier, Rohini, another wife of Vasudeva, had also given birth to a son. She was hiding in Gokula to escape the tyranny of Kamsa. So Yasoda and Rohini were glowing like queens in the midst of the Gopis with their sons. Rohini's son was fair and Yasoda's son was dark.

Chapter 12 NANDA VISITS MATHURA

nanda was one of the vassals of Kamsa. Every year he had to pay annual tribute to Kamsa. Now it was the time for the payment. So he went to Mathura. Hearing that Nanda had come to Mathura, Vasudeva went to meet him at his residence. Nanda and Vasudeva were great



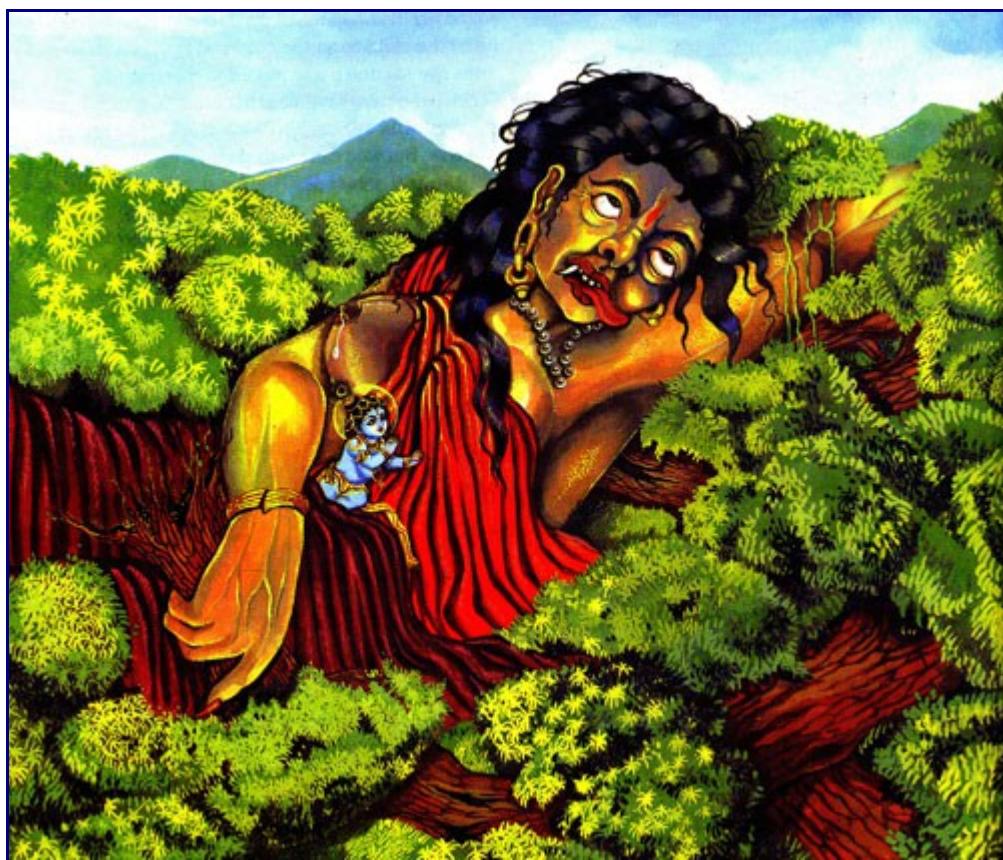
friends.

Vasudeva was

overwhelmed with love and affection to see Nanda. He embraced him with both arms. They spent a long time enquiring about each other's welfare. Vasudeva was grateful to Nanda for giving shelter to Rohini and his son. He made enquiries of Nanda about the welfare of Nanda's child, without disclosing that Krishna was really his own son. Nanda informed him all about Gokula and Vasudeva was very much pleased. But as Vasudeva was expecting troubles at Gokula, he advised Nanda to return to Gokula as early as possible. Nanda took leave of Vasudeva and returned to his place Vrindavan with other cowherds in their bullock carts. While travelling, Nanda was constantly praying to the Lord. He feared that Vasudeva would not have spoken thus unless some danger was really threatening them.

Chapter 13 DEATH OF PUTANA

Kamsa wanted to kill all the newborn children. He thought of many methods to do it. He summoned to his presence one Asura woman by name Putana. He told her his plan in detail. She readily agreed to help him. She took the form of a beautiful woman and wandered in the cities looking out for children. She had a miraculous power to change herself to any form she liked. One day she was flying in the air observing all the cities. She saw Gokula. She had never been there earlier. She decided to get down. Changing her form into that of a beautiful woman, she entered the house of Nanda. Yasoda, seeing her loveliness, thought that she must be Goddess Lakshmi Herself in human form. Putana won the hearts of everyone in Gokula. The baby Krishna was lying in the cradle. Putana looked all round her. It so happened that none was nearby. She lifted the child from the cradle. Taking him in her arms she sat down and placed him on her lap. She suckled the baby Krishna at her breasts, which were smeared with poison. She wanted to kill the child in this way. But who can kill the Lord who has come to kill the evil-minded? The Lord held her breast firmly in his two little hands and began to suck. After a few seconds she realised that he was sucking her very life. Putana was in great pain. She cried out, "Enough, enough. Leave me! Leave me!"



She kept on shouting.

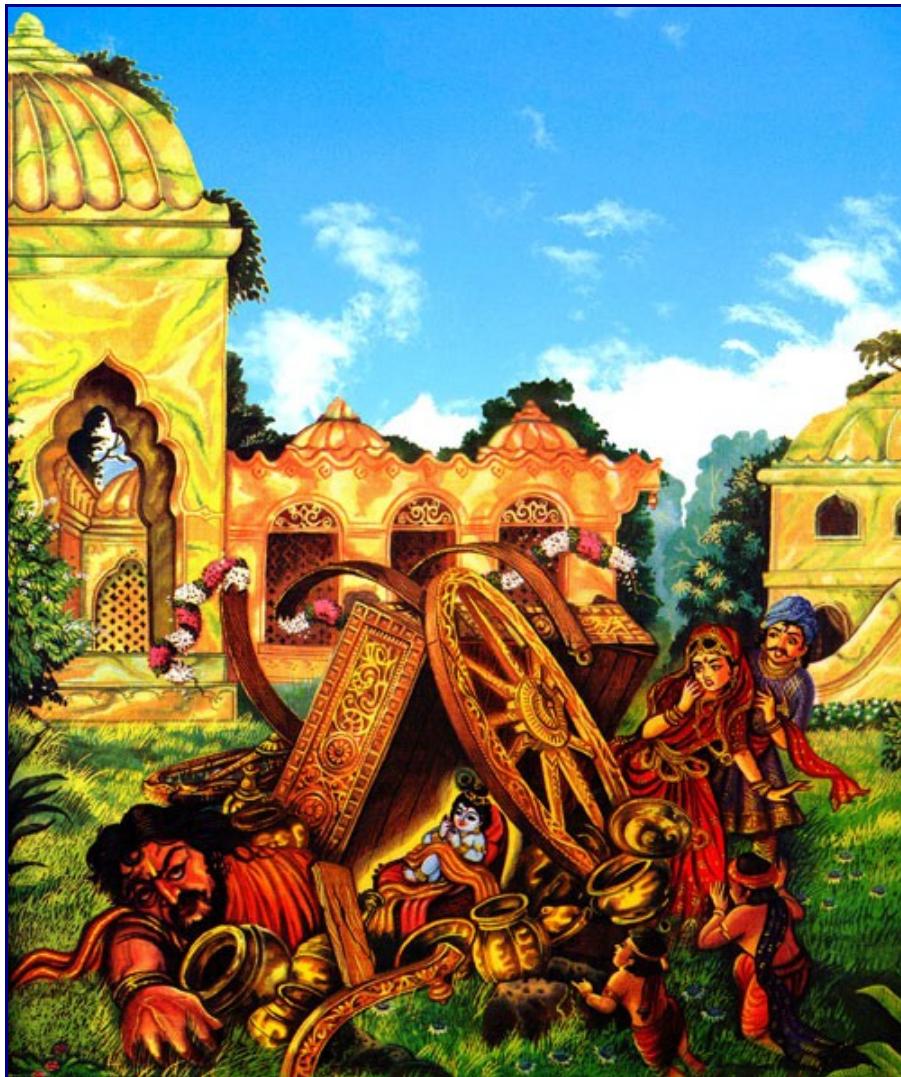
She tried by force to disengage the child from her breast. But Krishna was not to be cheated of his feed. He sucked on with redoubled vigour and joy. The terrific cry of hers caused tremors on earth. Putana fell down dead, in her original form of a demoness. The fearless child started playing on her body running from one end to another. Yasoda who heard the cry of the dying demoness came running there. She took the child in her arms and removed him away from there. She fed him and put him to sleep covering him with a piece of silk cloth. The baby slept happily as if nothing had happened. Just then Nanda returned from Mathura.

He was taken aback at the sight of the demoness lying dead. He called together a number of Gopas and with their help and with great difficulty carried the huge carcass of the demoness to the outskirts of the city and cremated it on a pyre.

Nanda was then told how the Rakshasi came in the guise of a beautiful woman and cheated them all. They offered their prayer to the Lord for saving the child from great calamity. How could they know that the child was none other than God Himself, who came on earth to kill all the evil-minded demons?

Chapter TWO MORE DEMONS

THE CHILD KRISHA was fast growing up. He was now three months old. He was trying to turn over on his belly. He even attempted to crawl. There was great joy in the heart of Yasoda when she saw her son lying on his stomach and smiling at her. She wanted to celebrate the occasion of the first taking out of the child from the house. She invited all the ladies of Gokula. In a large group, they all went to the banks of the Yamuna. In the midst of the sound of drums, music and chanting of Mantras the child was given a ceremonial bath.



Yasoda found her son too tried and sleepy after the bath. It was very hot. There was a big unyoked cart standing nearby. Yasoda placed the cradle under the cart and gently laid the baby in the cradle. She busied herself in serving the large number of guests who had come to her residence. The child got

up after a while and started crying. But in the noise of the crowd, mother Yasoda did not hear the cry. The child became very angry and began to kick with his tiny legs. What a surprise! At the kickings of those tiny legs, the cart shook and collapsed with a great sound. The wheels separated from the axle. On the cart there were many utensils containing milk, curd and other dairy products. They all got scattered and spilt. Some of the little children who were watching it got scared and ran to Yasoda and informed her of the baby's feat. Yasoda and the others got scared and came running to the cart. Everyone was surprised and frightened. Apparently the cart had got upset and was destroyed by itself. All the boys who witnessed the feat said with absolute certainty that the cart was upset by the kick of the baby. But the elders could not believe their words. Yasoda thought that probably the child might have been possessed by a ghost which in turn had broken the cart. Immediately she called some priests to chant Mantras to exorcise the ghost. But the baby was least affected by these things. He was once again playing merrily looking with his bewitching smile at everyone. The fact was that an Asura had taken the form of a cart on the advice of Kamsa. He had come to Gokula with the intention of running away with the child. But the Lord, in the form of a baby, knew everything and with a kick of his foot destroyed the cart and the Asura. The name of the Asura was Sakatasura.

One day Yasoda was fondling her son on her lap. All of a sudden she felt that the child had become too heavy. She could not bear the weight of the child, so she gently placed him on the floor. She meditated on the Lord and prayed for protection. Then she engaged herself again in her household duties.

Another day while the child was sitting on the ground, a demon named Trinavarta appeared there. He was sent by Kamsa on a mission of killing the child. Trinavarta came looking this way and that way and noticed that no one was near the child. He now quickly seized the child and rose into the sky. His intention was to carry the child as high as possible and then to dash it to the ground. He took the form of a whirlwind and engulfed the whole Gokula in dust. The eyes of all the people were blinded with dust. People rushed here and there in great panic. Yasoda ran to the courtyard to protect the child. But the child was not to be seen there. She searched but could find no trace of her son, nor

could she understand why. She fell down on the ground and began to lament very piteously. A large number of Gopis rushed to her house to console her.

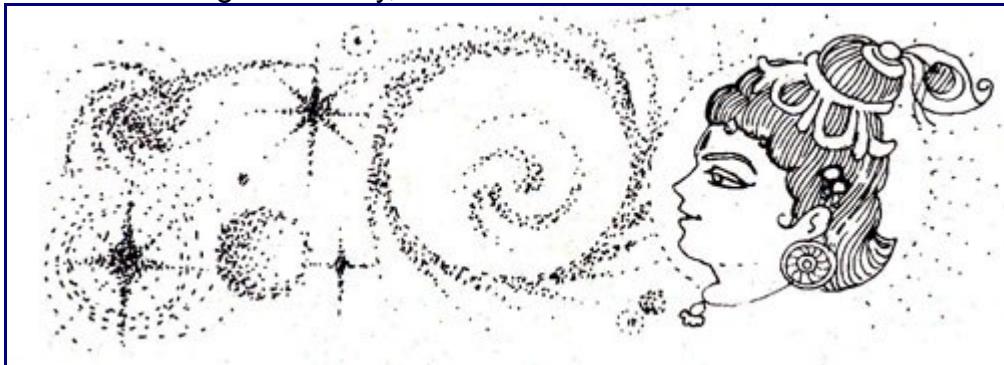


As Trinavarta rose very high in the sky, he felt the child becoming heavier and heavier. The demon felt as if he was carrying a heavy mountain. Unable to bear his weight, he wanted to drop him down. But the child had caught the demon's neck tightly. Trinavarta now could neither bear the weight of the child nor throw him down. The baby squeezed the neck of the demon and choked him to death. Unable to make a sound or even move his hands and legs, the demon with eyes bulging out, fell down dead. The Gopis saw the huge body of the demon stretched on the ground, with the baby playing on his chest as if nothing had happened. They took away the child immediately. On getting the child back unhurt, Yasoda's joy knew no bounds.

Another day Mother Yasoda was feeding her son. When the child had almost finished drinking milk, feeling sleepy, he yawned. Yasoda was looking at him with a tender smile. She was taken aback at what she saw in the open mouth of the sleepy child. She saw in it the whole universe. She saw the sky, the three worlds, sun, moon, stars, mountains, forests, rivers, etc. She trembled and wondered what it was all about. She closed her eyes for while with fear, but when she opened her eyes, everything was normal and the baby was laughing. How blessed must have been Yasoda to have had this vision!

Chapter 15 THE NAMING CEREMONY OF THE CHILDREN

he family priest of the Yadus was sage Garga. Vasudeva felt that his children should be named by Ganga. So he requested Ganga to visit Gokula and name the children. Accordingly Garga arrived in Gokula. Nanda and Yasoda received him with great joy and reverence. All the people of Gokula came and prostrated before him. Nanda requested him to perform the naming ceremony for his two sons. Garga also had a purpose in coming to this place. So he immediately agreed. But he suggested that the ceremony should be performed without much pomp. Otherwise, it might draw the attention of Kamsa. If Kamsa came to know that Garga had performed the naming ceremony, he would think that the children must be of some

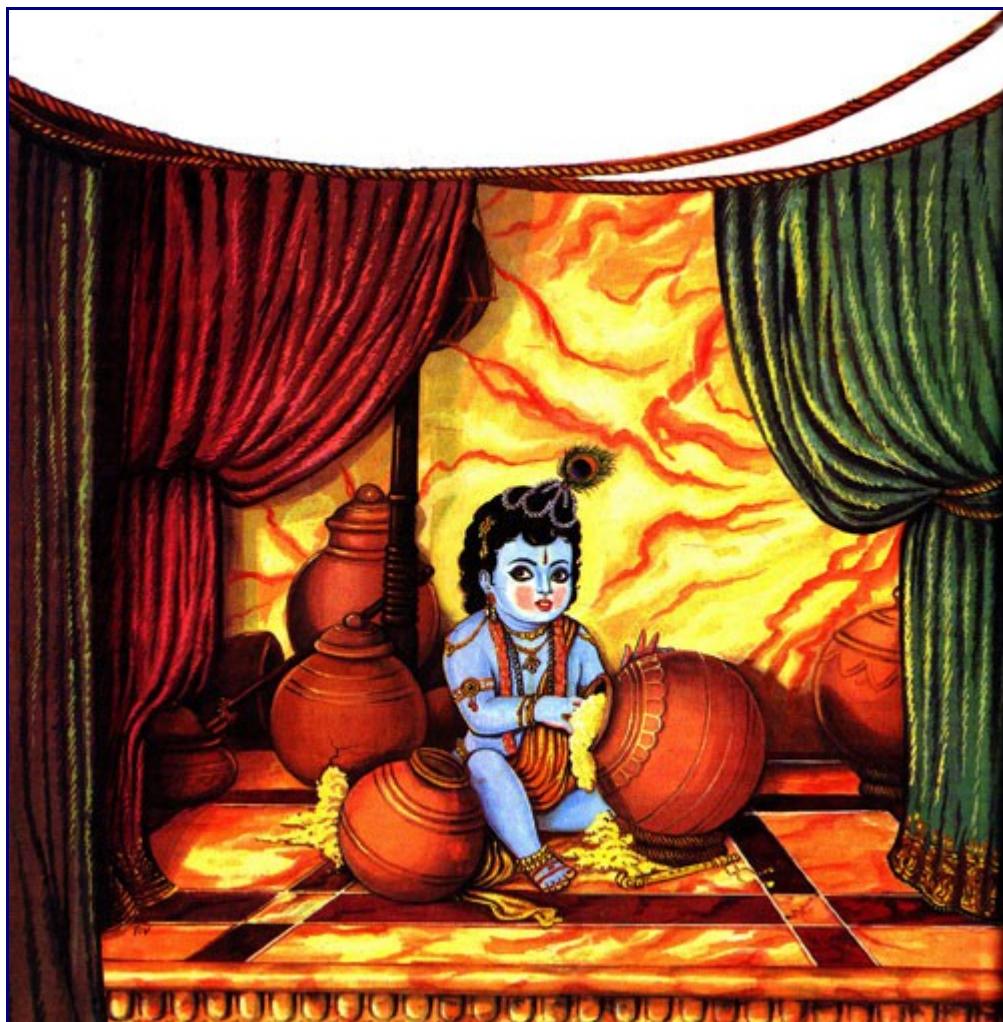


importance. He would try to kill them. Nanda agreed with Garga's suggestion. Garga performed all the rites in a simple way and told Nanda in private, "This Rohini's child charms everyone with his beauty. He will delight his friends and relatives by his virtues. So we shall name him 'Rama'. And because he will manifest extraordinary bodily strength, he will also be known as 'Bala'. So he will be called Balarama. Moreover, because he unites two families—Vasudeva's family and Nanda's family — he will be known also as 'Sankarshana'.

"The younger boy is God incarnate. As he has a dark complexion, we shall name him Krishna. Since his father's name is Vasudeva, he will be known as Vasudeva. This child, who is a source of joy to you and all others in Gokula, will bring you great good fortune. Look after him with all attention." After completing the ceremony and blessing all of them, Garga departed for his own home. Nanda and Yasoda were highly pleased and felt blessed.

Chapter 16 BOYHOOD PRANKS OF SRI KRISHNA

in course of time Balarama and Krishna began to move about. Playfully, they crawled together everywhere on their knees and arms. The sound of their ankle bells was very delightful. These children used to mistake women passers-by for their mother and crawl behind them. The women used to enjoy the sight of the charming crawlers and exclaim, "Oh, see how Krishna and Balarama are crawling!" In their curiosity, the tiny tots would sometimes catch the ends of the tails of the calves. The calves, frightened by the touch would begin to flee here and there. The babies would hold on very tightly to them, as if afraid. The calves, still more frightened, would run all the more. Then the ladies would rescue the children. And all would laugh and enjoy the fun.



Thus days passed merrily in Gokula. Rama and Krishna were growing up. Now they began to run about on their

feet. Joining with other boys the two kids began their pranks. But their very mischief delighted the hearts of the Gopis. To this day Krishna's pranks are dear to devotees. Yasoda had to listen often to the complaints about her son's mischief in the houses of the Gopis. One of them would tell her, "Yesterday Krishna came to my house early in the morning. I was busy getting ready to milk the cows. I went to the cowshed and what did I find? Krishna had long back untied the calf which had drunk all the milk. When I turned back, I saw him standing at a distance with a mischievous look on his face. I tried to chase him, but he took to his heels and disappeared into another house." Another Gopi would now start her tale saying, "Your son is an expert thief! He devises a hundred ways to steal butter and curds from my house. He eats up some of it and the rest he gives to the monkeys which eagerly wait on the trees. If he cannot reach the pots which are kept high, he throws stones and breaks the pots. He stands below with his friends, mouths wide open. They drink the curd falling from the pot." Another Gopi would say, "I was careful and Krishna could not find anything to eat in my home. So he pinched my sleeping child. It began to cry. Laughing merrily Krishna ran away."

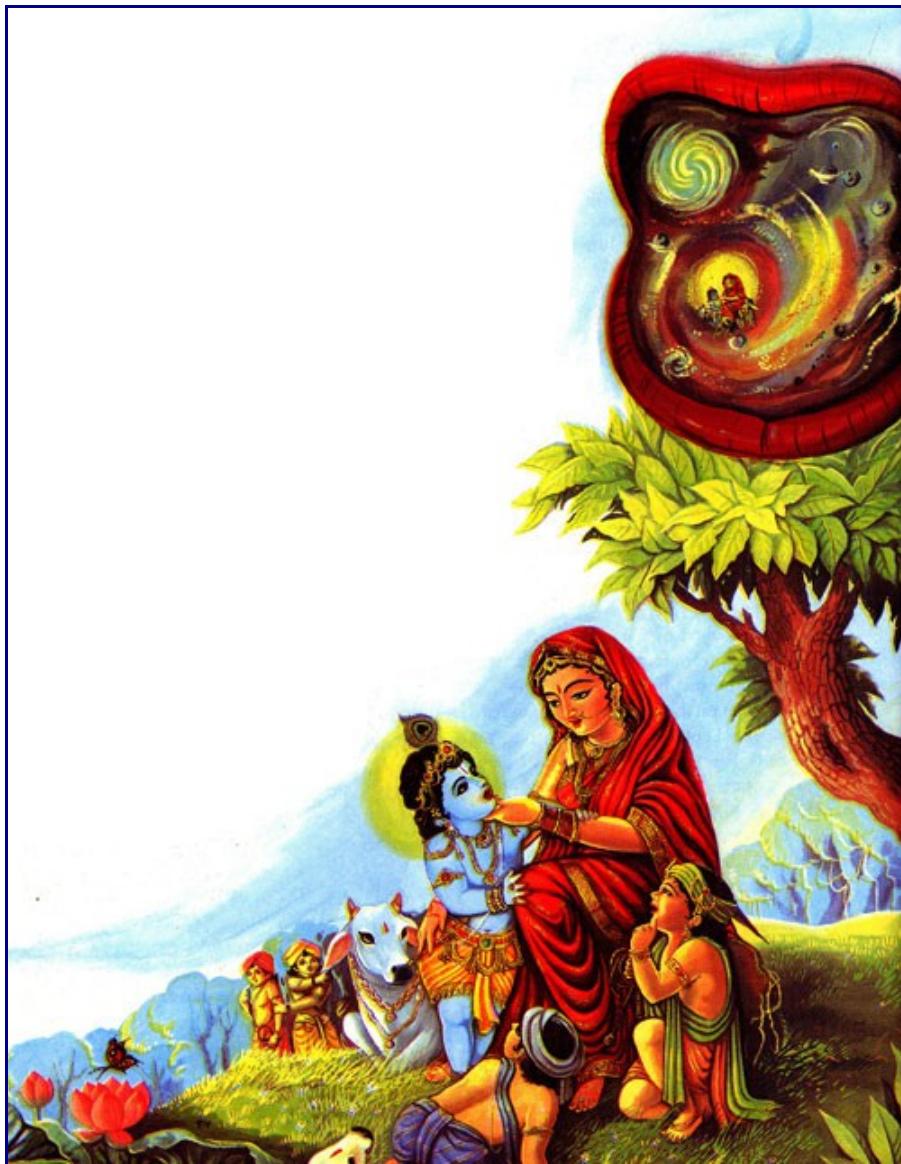
Yet another complained, "I kept the milk and curd high on a swing hanging from the ceiling. Krishna and Balarama came there, but could not reach it. So they devised a strategy. They piled up various planks. Above them they placed the tripod I use for churning the butter. On that Balarama climbed. Still they could not reach. Then Krishna climbed on the back of Balarama. All the butter was swallowed. Just then I entered the room and caught hold of Krishna. But he was undaunted. And what a look he had! Silently he said as it were, 'I am the owner of this house and you are the thief.'

"I had just washed my house" said another, ' 'Krishna came and demanded butter. I said, 'I have nothing to give'. Then in retaliation, when I was busy with the household work, he brought all sorts of mud from outside, threw it all into the house and ran away". Each Gopi thus narrated her own tale of woe. But all the while none was angry with Krishna Rather they all enjoyed his pranks. Krishna was all the while listening to the tales about Himself standing in a corner with a mischievous look. Yasoda turned towards him with angry eyes. At this tears filled his eyes. Who could bear to see Krishna in tears! Mother Yasoda took him on her lap at once. The beautiful face of Krishna, his innocent eyes and his sweet smile always haunted the minds of the Gopis.

Chapter 17 KRISHNA SHOWS THE COSMIC FORM TO YASODA

one day krishna was playing with his friends in the courtyard of the house. Yasoda was busy cooking in the kitchen. Suddenly Balarama rushed to her and said, "Mother, Mother, Krishna has eaten mud." Yasoda did not believe him. But the other friends also said, "Yes, mother, he ate in front of all of us even though we forbade him". Yasoda was irritated by Krishna's new prank. Her house had every kind of sweets. Why then should the restless boy eat mud? She rushed to Krishna, caught hold of him with her left hand and raised her right hand as though to slap him. She said: "You mischievous fellow! Why did you eat mud? Your friends and even Balarama say so." But child Krishna protested. "Mother" he said, "I have not eaten any mud. They are all liars. If you want, look into my mouth."

"All right, open your mouth. Let me look into it," said Yasoda. Challenged by his mother thus Krishna, who was God come in human form to teach and delight His devotees, opened his mouth. Ah! What did mother Yasoda see in his mouth!



Inside the narrow space of her son's mouth she saw the whole universe. There was the whole earth, heaven, sun, moon, stars and all else! All the gods and goddesses were there. There was also a strange light in the mouth. She saw the whole Gokula too inside the mouth. She saw also herself sitting inside his mouth and examining the open mouth of her darling boy. She could not believe that within the mouth of her son such things could appear. Yet she was seeing them! She was struck with fear and wonder. She began to argue within herself; "Is this a dream? Or the Lord's ways? Or the imagination of my heated brain? Or can this be due to some extraordinary power possessed by my boy?"

And then she pondered, "I am not dreaming, my eyes are open. I am actually seeing what is happening before. So this vision must be due to some divine power of my son, as predicted by Gargamuni." Tossed by many such thoughts, she took the best course.

She surrendered herself to the Lord and prayed to Him to protect her child. When we are

beset by some problems for which we can find no solution, there is no alternative except to surrender to the Supreme Lord and offer Him our respectful obeisance. This was the means adopted by the intelligent Yasoda. Lord Krishna cast the spell of his Maya again on her and once more appeared like a small child to her eyes. As one forgets everything after a dream, Mother Yasoda too forgot the entire incident. As her natural feeling of affection was again roused, she took the child on her lap and fondled him.

Chapter 18 YASODA TIES KRISHNA TO A MORTAR

One Day Yasoda was busy churning curd. While doing so, she remembered the playful activities of Krishna. She composed songs about him and enjoyed singing them to herself. Krishna was sleeping within the room. After a time when he woke up he felt hungry. He caught hold of the churning rod to prevent the mother from churning, as if to say, "Mother, stop that churning and look at me. I am very hungry."

Yasoda smiled at him and took him on her lap and began to feed him. But she had kept the milk pan on the fire in the kitchen. She smelt the boiling milk overflowing from the vessel and getting burnt. She immediately dropped her son on the floor and ran towards the kitchen. Krishna was only half fed. So he felt irritated. His eyes became red and his lips trembled in anger. He began to bite his lips. He took a piece of stone and threw it angrily at the churning pot. The pot broke and he took a large quantity of the butter in his tiny hands. With false tears in his eyes he entered a room. Hiding himself in a corner he went on eating the butter, seated on a mortar.

Yasoda returned after a while only to find the broken pot with the curds flowing all over the place. Krishna, however was not to be seen anywhere near. She had no doubt that the breaking of the pot was the work of her son. She slowly followed his butter smeared footprints. Krishna was sitting on an upturned wooden mortar, sharing the butter with the monkeys which had come down from the trees. Since he knew that his mother would be angry, he was looking all around with great anxiety watching for her. Yasoda, with a little stick in her hand cautiously approached him from behind. Catching sight of her, Krishna quickly got down from the mortar and began to run as if very much afraid. Yasoda too followed to catch hold of him, still with the stick in her hand. After running a little distance, Krishna allowed himself to be caught by Yasoda. He looked very uneasy, as if admitting his guilt. As she looked at him she saw that he was weeping, his tears mixing with the black collyrium applied to his eyes.

The tender-hearted mother that she was, Yasoda did not have the heart to strike her son. So she immediately threw the stick away and merely rebuked him saying, "Your mischief has passed all bounds. I gave you too much freedom. Now I shall tie you up so that you cannot commit any further mischief. Nor will you be able to play with your friends." So saying, she brought a short piece of rope and placing Krishna by the side of the mortar tried to tie him to it. But she found the rope was a little short. She got another piece and joined both the ropes.

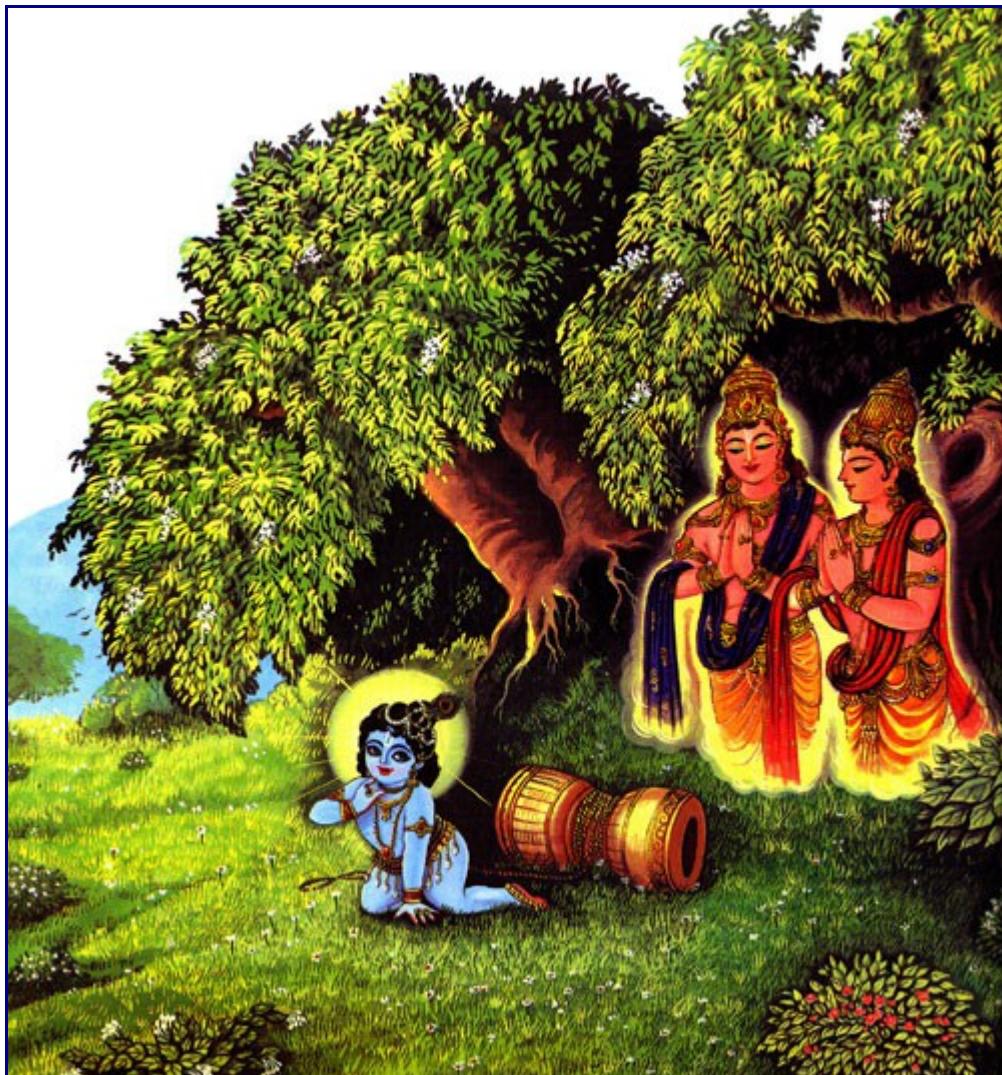
What a miracle! Still the rope proved to be not long enough. She found that the rope was short by two inches to make a knot. So she attached one more piece of rope to it. But even this was short by the same two inches. Frustrated, she went on joining more and more lengths of rope but all in vain. The shortage of two inches remained constant. Yasoda had used up all the ropes in her house, and yet the tying up of Krishna was not complete. The Gopis who were standing all around and watching this fantastic rope-trick, began to laugh at

Yasoda's discomfiture.

What could poor Yasoda do but join in their laughter! When Krishna saw his mother perspiring and tired, he allowed himself to be tied up out of compassion for her. Then Yasoda, leaving Krishna tied up there, went inside to resume her household duties.

Chapter 19 BREAKING THE TWIN TREES

Krtshna sat there quietly. Being tied to the mortar he could not move about here and there. It bored him very much. When he tried to crawl slowly, he found the mortar too was coming behind him. He moved towards the door, silently dragging with him the mortar. Slowly he came out of the house. He saw some boys playing there. He felt that they might make fun of him, tied as he was to a big mortar. He moved slowly towards the vacant land. There was a path leading to the forest. He had now a brain-wave. If he dragged the mortar a long distance, the mother would have to bring it back all that way. He knew that the mortar was very heavy and Yasoda would find it quite difficult to drag it back. As if feeling tired, he sat down on the mortar to rest. At a distance he saw a pair of trees. Yamal and Arjuna were the names of those trees. There was only a little gap in between the two. He hit upon a plan to free himself from the mortar. He thought "If I squeeze myself through the trees to the other side the mortar will not pass through the gap, it is too big for that. I shall use all my strength to pull the mortar. The rope will then snap and I can free myself." Setting his face in grim determination, he pulled at the mortar. But the rope did not snap as he expected. Again he tried with all his strength. But instead of the rope snapping, the two trees fell to the ground with a great crash. And lo! A miracle followed. Two celestial beings came out from these trees. They bowed down to Krishna and said that they were the sons of Kubera. Narada had cursed them once to become trees for their misdeeds. He also had told them that the touch of Krishna would deliver them from the curse. They prostrated themselves before Krishna, sang his glory and departed to their divine abode.



From a distance some boys were looking at this feat of Krishna with great astonishment. Hearing the loud crashing sound, Yasoda and others rushed to the spot. Yasoda was astonished to see how her child had dragged that big mortar to such a long distance. She also saw that her son had just escaped being crushed by the two huge trees. She could never believe that it was the act of Krishna. She untied the knots of the rope, took Krishna on her lap and fondled him with increased love.

Chapter 20 FRUIT SELLER'S EXPERIENCE

Another day Krishna was playing in the courtyard with Balarama and others. He heard the voice of a woman in the street crying out, "Fruits! Jambu fruits!" Jambu fruits!" Immediately Krishna wanted to buy some of them. But he had no money. His eager eyes noticed, however, a huge heap of grains stocked nearby. He collected a handful of grains in his tiny fists and ran to the street. On the way most of the grains fell down to the ground from his hands. He came to the fruit seller and holding out his hands said, "O dear lady, take these grains and give me fruits in exchange." The woman was carried away by the beauty and charm of the boy. The tinkling of the anklets of his feet was sweet music to her ears. She was never to forget it in her life. She said, "O my child! You have come to purchase fruits in exchange of grains. All the grains have fallen down on the way, but still you may take whatever quantity of fruits you like."

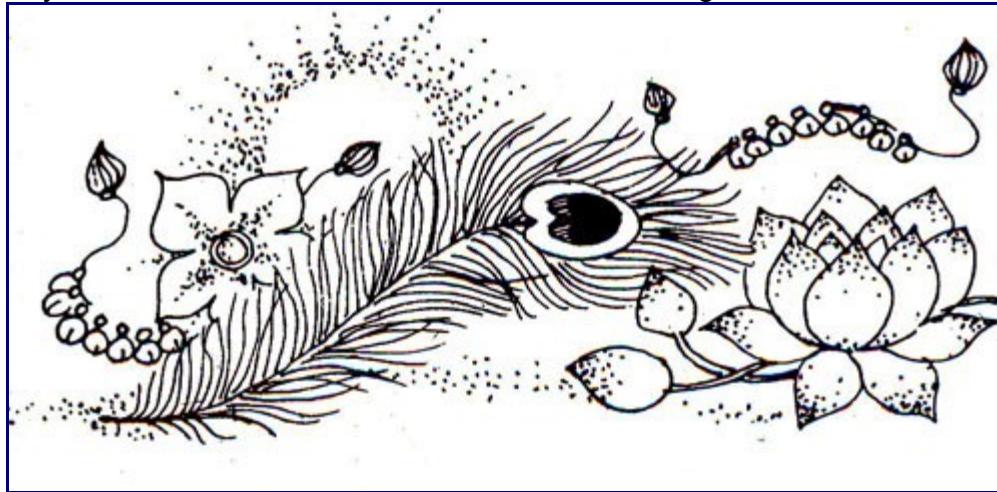


So saying, she filled his small hands with as much of those fruits as he could hold after he had dropped into her basket the few grains. When the woman went home and looked into her basket she could not believe her eyes. All the grains had turned into jewels and gold. By performing this miracle Krishna showed that anything offered to Krishna with love and affection returns to the devotees increased a thousand fold.

Chapter 21 FROM BRIHADVANA TO VRINDAVAN

Once Nanda called a meeting of all the Yadavas. It was to discuss the safety of Krishna. Nanda and other elders were very much alarmed by the extraordinary happenings in their Gokula at Brihadvana. The frequent visits of the demons and their mysterious death caused them great concern. After a prolonged discussion the eldest among them, Upananda by name, gave the following suggestion. "My dear friends, day by day calamities are increasing in our place. It is only by the grace of God that Krishna has been saved again and again from so many dangerous incidents. There is no guarantee that the dangers are over. So it is better that we migrate to some other place. I understand that there is a beautiful place called Vrindavan at the foot of the hill Govardhana. The forest lands surrounding the mountain are abundant in grass.

Getting this advice from Upananda, who was respected by the whole community, Nanda and the other Gopas welcomed the suggestion. They all decided to move to Vrindavan the next day with all their wagons and cattle wealth.



They sorted out their belongings and loaded them in carts. All the old men and women sat in the carts. The young men walked guarding these carts. All the children and ladies also were seated in carts. Rohini, Yasoda, Krishna and Rama got into one cart. Men blew trumpets and other instruments. All were wearing new clothes. The party looked as if they were on their way to attend a festival. After a long journey they reached Vrindavan. Rama and Krishna were delighted to see the beautiful scenes of Vrindavan, the Govardhana mountain and the sand dunes on the Yamuna banks. By their boyish pranks they continued to delight the Gopis and Gopas.

When the two boys had grown a little older, they were entrusted with the grazing of the calves and later of the cows. They welcomed the assignment, since now they could move about in the outskirts with the other boys. In the company of other cowherd boys they took the small

calves out. They carried with them numerous playthings also. Vrindavan was full of peacocks. Krishna would play on his flute and it was a sight to see the peacocks dancing to his music. Krishna and Balarama too would dance. The dance and the tinkling of the anklet bells would delight the hearts of their playmates. Sometimes they would cover themselves with blankets and imitate cows and bulls fighting with one another. They would mimic the cries of the animals. Thus they played about like ordinary boys delighting everyone.

Chapter 22 KILLING OF VATSASURA & BAKASURA



One Day Rama and Krishna were grazing the calves on the bank of the Yamuna with the other boys. There arrived a demon by name Vatsasura who came there with the intention of killing Krishna. The demon assumed the form of the calf.

He mingled with the other cows. But he could not escape the eyes of Krishna, who pointed him out to Balarama by a sign. Then Krishna approached that calf as if casually. He caught hold of his hind legs and whirling him round and round, hurled him towards a big tree. Struck against that big tree, the demon fell dead assuming his huge real form. The boys were astounded to see such a dead body. They praised Krishna for his timely and wonderful act.

Another day, Krishna and Balarama started early in the morning with food packets in their kit to graze the calves as usual. When it was mid-day, they took the calves to a lake for drinking water.



After the calves had drunk, the boys too quenched their thirst by drinking that sweet water. When they got up from the lake they were terrified to see a huge crane standing there with a terrible look.

They thought it might kill them all. It had a long sharp beak. As soon as it saw Krishna, it rushed towards him and swallowed him in a trice. When Balarama and other boys saw that Krishna had been devoured by the gigantic crane, they became almost unconscious.

Krishna turned himself into a ball of fire and started to burn the throat of the crane. Unable to bear the burning sensation the crane vomited Krishna, who came out with a smiling face as if nothing had happened. The crane now ran after Krishna to attack and kill him with its beak. As the boys were watching with palpitating hearts, Krishna killed the attacking monster by tearing apart its beak. The boys were overwhelmed with wonder. On their return home, they reported everything to Yasoda. But she would not believe their words. With her heart melting in affection, she embraced Krishna and fondled him.

Chapter 23 DEATH OF AGHA

One Day Krishna decided to go deep into the forest and enjoy a picnic lunch there. So getting up early in the morning he woke up all his friends by loudly blowing his cowherd's horn. When all of them had assembled, he put before them his suggestion regarding the picnic. The boys were delighted to hear his plans. They all started in great glee with the calves herded in front. They carried with them slings, sticks, horns, flutes and pots of curd and rice. They merrily played many games with Krishna as their leader.

At this time a demon named Aghasura, the brother of Putana and Baka appeared there. He could not bear the sight of the delightful sports of the children. He thought within himself: 'Oh! The boy in the middle of these children, with a flute in his hand is the killer of my sister and brother. I shall revenge them by killing him.'

Thinking thus, that evil-minded Aghasura assumed the form of a huge python. It is said that it was eight miles long and in girth it resembled a big mountain. Having assumed this gigantic and terrific form, he opened his mouth which presented the appearance of a big cave and he laid himself down on the road, expecting Krishna and other children to enter his mouth mistaking it for a cave. His lower lip touched the earth and the upper lip the sky. In the cavity of his mouth, where everything was dark, his tongue resembled a broad road. His breath came out like a piercing wind and his eyes blazed like fire.



All the boys looked at it from a distance. None could understand that it was a living python. To them it looked a beautiful cave having the shape of a python. They discussed amongst themselves. One of them said, 'Look here friends! What is it that we see before us. Is it a living creature or not? Is it a living python or a cave of the mountain side?"

They were very much tempted to enter the cave-like mouth of the python to examine it. And they were sure that even if it was a python, their dear Krishna would kill it and save them. So one of them said again, "Has this python come to swallow us? If it be so, he will immediately be killed by Krishna". They looked lovingly at the charming face of Krishna, and laughing loudly and clapping hands, they entered the cave-like mouth of-the python.

Krishna knew that it was a live python and that it was sure death to enter the mouth of the creature. Anxious to save them he wanted to stop them from proceeding further. Before he could do so, however, the boys had already entered. Everyone of them had entered except Krishna. The python had not closed its mouth. He was waiting for Krishna to enter it. Krishna, the protector of the world, thought for a moment. How could both the killing of the demon and saving of his friends be performed at one stroke? He came to a decision. He too entered the python's mouth. He walked straight upto the air passage of the python and started enlarging his body. The air passage was blocked and the python started gasping for breath. It began to

roll this way and that way with his eyes protruding. Ultimately it died. Krishna looked at his friends. They had all fainted because of the poisonous fumes coming from inside the snake. But a single glance of Krishna revived them and they all came out of the mouth of the dead python.

After rescuing the boys from death, Krishna brought them all to the banks of the river Yamuna. He was feeling very hungry. He said "Look friends! It is late-in the noon, and we are all hungry. Let us therefore sit here and have our lunch."

There was no second opinion in reference to Krishna's suggestion. The boys joyfully agreed. They made the calves drink water to their fill and allowed them to graze in regions where there was plenty of grass. Then they all took out their lunch packets and sat in a circle with Krishna in the centre. They ate with relish, making fun of one another. How nice to imagine this scene! We make offerings to Lord Krishna in pictures and images. But here were boys who were blessed enough to have him in their midst in flesh and blood. How did he look? He had stuck his flute in the tiny fold between his waist cloth and the belly. The garment he wore was of yellow silk. His blowhorn was tucked in the left armpit while a small staff dangled from the left hand. His right hand held balls of curd rice, gleaming white. And all along he was cracking jokes and making all his friends roll with laughter.

Chapter 24 BRAHMA'S MISCHIEF

the boys were busy with eating and listening to the jokes of Krishna. They forgot all about their calves. The calves, which had been grazing nearby, slowly moved far away from them. They entered the deep forest. One of the boys suddenly noticed that the calves were not in sight. He shouted, ‘‘Where are the calves? They might have entered the deep forest. Some wild animals may devour them.’’ All the boys were alerted. Krishna however, consoled them and said, ‘‘Do not worry. Let not our fun be disturbed by this trifles. Carry on with your lunch. I shall go and fetch them in no time! ’’

Krishna then started in search of the calves with the ball of rice still in hand.

Brahma, the Creator, had heard a lot about the wonder-boy of Vrindavan. He wanted to play a trick on Krishna and test his powers. So he had hidden the calves. Krishna searched everywhere and returned to his companions unsuccessful in finding the calves. What was his surprise when he found that the boys also had disappeared! Again he went out to search for the boys. Even after a long search, he could find neither the boys nor the calves. Now he reflected and realised that it must be the mischief of someone. He closed his eyes and meditated for a while. After all he was God. He understood everything in a trice. He smiled to himself and said, ‘‘So this is Brahma’s game. I can play an even better game.’’

At once he created boys and calves to replace the missing ones. He himself had turned into the form of the boys and the calves. So no one could find any difference between the boys and calves created by Brahma and the ones newly created by himself.



It was great fun, Krishna was himself the calves, himself the cowherd boys directing the calves, himself enacting various plays with himself and himself also the toys and other sport

materials. This multi-formed Krishna, returned to Vrindavan. The women, hearing the sounds of anklets and flutes rushed to receive their children. They too failed to discover that the children were new ones and not the ones they had given birth to. They found more joy than before in feeding these children and fondling them. How could they know that they were feeding and fondling the Lord Himself?

One year passed in this way. Brahma came to Vrindavan again to see how his trick had worked. He was taken aback to see all the boys and calves moving about as usual. He thought within himself, "All the boys and calves I removed are even now sleeping in the cave where I have hidden them. How is it then they are all here with Krishna?"

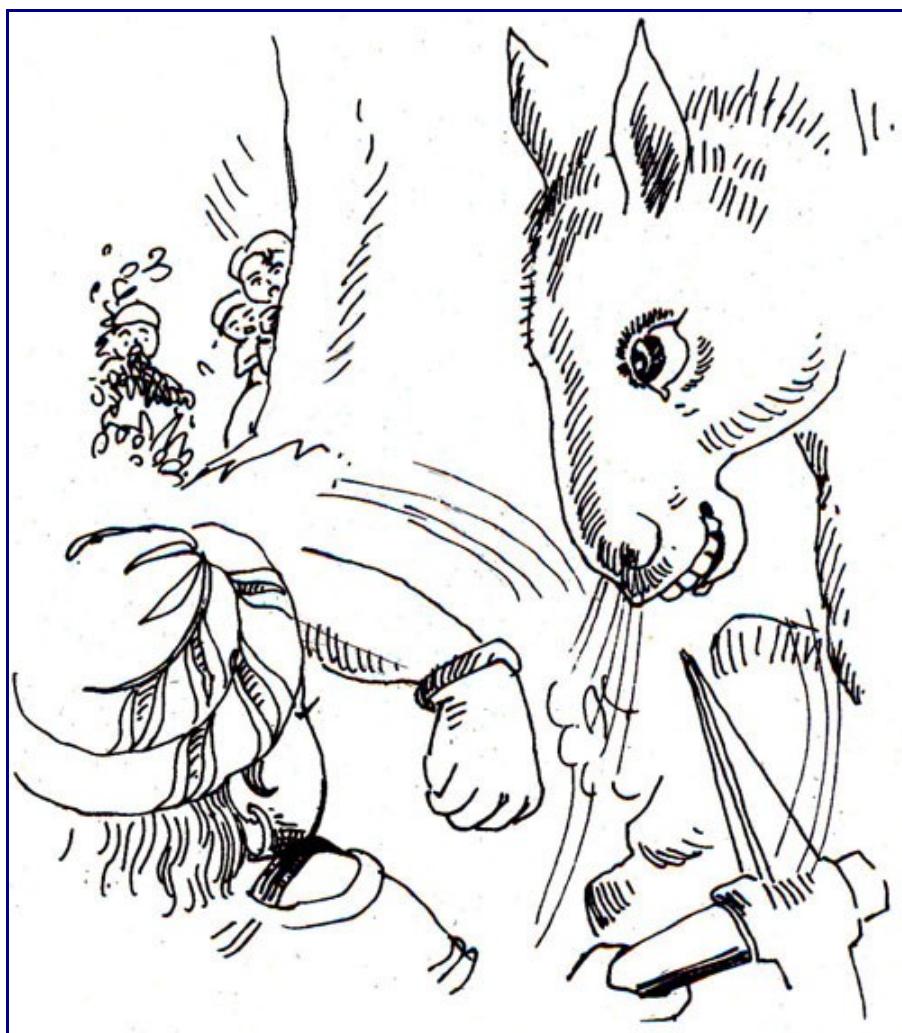
He rushed to the cave to see if they had been discovered and released by Krishna. But lo! They were all there in deep sleep. Again and again he tried to solve the mystery but he could not. He was very much confused. All the time Krishna was observing the discomfiture of Brahma. At last he took pity on him and made him understand the mystery. Now when Brahma looked at the calves and boys which were moving about with Krishna, he saw several Krishnas. There were neither boys nor calves but only Krishna. Brahma then ran to Krishna and fell at his feet. Krishna blessed him Brahma circumambulated him thrice and departed to his heavenly abode.

Krishna brought back all the calves that were hidden by Brahma. The magical boys and calves disappeared and the real ones came back to the scene. The boys just sitting as they were doing before this episode, on the banks of the Yamuna with their food packets half eaten, waiting for the return of Krishna who had gone in search of the calves. They never realised that one year had passed and many events had taken place meanwhile. They felt that Krishna had returned with calves just in half-an-hour.

They said to Krishna, "Oh, you have returned so soon. We have not eaten even a single ball of rice after you left. Come', now sit and eat comfortably." Krishna smiled at their words and started sharing the lunch with them.

Chapter 25 DEATH OF DHENUKA

KRISHNA AND BALARAMA were now six years old and they were entrusted with the grazing of cows too. One day one of Krishna's friends, Sridama, said to him with great affection, "O Krishna! I have heard of an extensive palm grove not far from here. The palm trees bear wonderful fruits. They are very tasty. But we cannot get them because a wicked demon by name Dhenuka guards the grove and lives there. He even eats human flesh. So whoever goes there is swallowed up by him. Even cows and birds avoid that place. But the palm fruits are very sweet. Even from here we get their fragrance. All our friends are craving to taste those fruits. Only you will be able to fulfil our wish. Will you get the fruits for us?"



Hearing the words of his

friend, Krishna laughed and ever ready to oblige them, started for the forest of palms accompanied by the other boys. As soon as they entered the grove, the mighty Balarama

shook the palm trees with great strength like an elephant and the fruits fell down in clusters. Hearing the sound Dhenukasura came running in the guise of a big ass. He rushed towards Balarama in great anger and kicked him on his chest. And then he started frightening all the boys by running around braying loudly. Again he went to attack Balarama. But now Balarama was ready for the fight. He caught hold of his two hind legs and whirled him round and round above his head and dashed him against the trees. The terrific impact killed the Asura. With his head and body crushed, the Asura crashed to the ground bringing down some palm trees too. But there were living a group of ass-demons, the relatives and friends of Dhenukasura. They all came furiously charging Krishna and Balarama. But Balarama and Krishna killed everyone of them effortlessly. Thus the whole grove was freed from these demons. The boys ate the fruits to their heart's content.

Chapter 26 KRISHNA DANCES ON THE HOOD OF SERPENT KALIYA

It was a fine morning. Krishna as usual went towards the river Yamuna with his friends to graze the cows. They spent a lot of time, laughing and playing. At noon the heat was intense. The cows had wandered on their own with some of the boys towards the river Yamuna. In that lake lived a deadly poisonous serpent called Kaliya. He had poisoned the whole water of the lake. Being extremely thirsty, the boys got down to the lake and drank that poisonous water. At once they all fell down dead.



After a while Krishna noticed that some of his companions were missing from the group. He also with the others went in search of them. After much search they reached the lake. Seeing the boys lying dead the other boys started weeping loudly. Krishna consoled them and by a mere look revived the dead boys. They all got up wondering and looking at each other. Slowly they remembered what had happened. They all felt convinced that their revival was only due to the grace of Krishna.



Krishna was very intently looking at

the lake. The blue waters of the Yamuna which had flown into the lake had turned black because of the poison of the snake. Krishna decided to purify the river by getting rid of the black serpent. The water of the lake was radiating heat due to the poison. Birds flying over the lake would fall down dead. All plants, birds and trees of that region had perished by the contact of the poisonous air of the lake. Krishna, girding up his loins and clapping his biceps with his palms in challenge, plunged into the poisonous lake from the top of a Kadamba tree. The tumultuous sound of the water lashed by the strokes of the mighty arms of Krishna swimming across the lake was heard everywhere. It woke up the sleeping serpent in the lake. He felt that somebody was invading his home. He looked up and found a beautiful-looking boy with yellow cloth, lotus-hued feet and smiling face. The boy was himself sporting fearlessly in the water.

The children who were watching from the banks of the river saw the tremendous hood of the serpent and were terrified. Some of them ran home to inform Yasoda. Hearing the news all the Gopas were frightened. They came running to the spot. In the pool within the river they saw Krishna motionless, with the serpent coiled round his whole body. Like a cat playing with a mouse, Krishna had allowed the serpent to entwine itself around him, Kaliya now tried to crush the boy to death. But Krishna started growing in size. Kaliya tried his best to tighten his hold but it was of no avail. Kaliya was becoming more and more angry. He started attacking Krishna by spreading out his hood and hissing and blowing out his poison through the nostrils. He pounced on Krishna to bite him with all his fangs. But Krishna eluded the fangs. He started moving swiftly in the water. Here, there, everywhere was Krishna to be seen. The dreaded Kaliya chased him with his hood upraised. His fangs were poised to strike. But just when the serpent was sure he had got Krishna, the boy would slip out and the game continued. The serpent became frustrated. It was too tired even to chase the boy. Krishna felt that he had teased him enough. He forcibly made the serpent bend his huge head. Krishna leaped up and then dived again landing right on the hoods of the snake. Kaliya tried his best

to jerk him off. But Krishna was too clever. He stood on one of the hoods and the serpent tried to attack him with the fangs of the others. At once Krishna's feet would be on another hood. He kept jumping from hood to hood.



He felt it was a fine place for dancing, and so began to dance on the hoods of the serpent. Every time a hood of Kaliya tried to rise up he stamped on it and brought it down. By the vigorous dance of Krishna, the umbrella-shaped hoods of the serpent were all bruised. Kaliya, wounded all over his body and vomitting blood in profusion finally surrendered to Krishna. From the bottom of the lake the wives of Kaliya were looking helplessly at Krishna. They too came up and surrendered themselves to him. Krishna took pity on Kaliya and his family. He said to them, "Well, I shall not kill any of you. But do not stay any longer in this lake. Men and cattle come here to drink water. It is not right that you should poison the waters and kill them. So all of you proceed to the sea and make it your abode."

Accordingly saluting Krishna they all streaked away towards the sea. Yasoda and all others were happy to see Krishna back on the bank of the lake unhurt. He was taken in a procession surrounded by cattle, with his friends singing and dancing.

Chapter 27 DESTRUCTION OF DEMON PRALAMBA



Balarama and Krishna were thus entertaining all the Gopas. After some days summer set in. One day Krishna with Balarama and other friends went to the forest to graze the cows. Krishna was in a dancing mood that day. They all assembled in the shade of a bigtree. As Krishna danced, some sang for him, some provided accompaniments and kept time with flutes and cowhorns. Some others clapped their hands. The melodious sound of his tiny anklets was heard from a long distance. It attracted peacocks from different places. Gazing at Krishna dancing, they too started dancing, spreading their feathers wide. It was as if heaven itself was brought on earth.

When the dance was over they started a number of games. At that time a demon by name Pralamba came there with the intention of killing Krishna. He disguised himself as a Gopa and joined the other Gopa boys. But he could not escape the notice of Krishna. Thinking of a strategy to kill the demon, Krishna, went near him and made friends with him. Krishna, who was entertaining his friends with different games, now called for a new game. He divided all the boys into two teams equal in strength and age. Balarama led one group and Krishna the other. Whichever team lost the game was to carry the winners on their backs.

Krishna's group lost the game and so they had to carry each and everyone of the players of Balarama's team. Balarama and his team-mates had a nice ride on the back of Krishna and others. They reached a big Aswattha tree. The demon Pralamba, who was in the guise of a Gopa boy, was carrying Balarama and Krishna was carrying a boy by name Sridama. Now the demon Pralamba thought that since Balarama was Krishna's brother, first he would kill him. When he saw that no one was observing him too carefully, he ran away with



Balarama on his back to a

distant place. After reaching a secluded place he resumed his demon's form. Seeing him grow to that size, Balarama was taken aback. Immediately he understood that the demon was trying to kill him. Balarama folded his fist tight, and delivered punches on the head of Pralamba. It was too much for the demon to bear. His head started reeling. Blood gushed from his mouth profusely. He fell down dead giving out a horrible yell and bleeding from his cracked head. Hearing that loud cry, Krishna with all his friends came to that spot. All the boys embraced Balarama and said, "Well done! Well done! Fortunately you have killed the demon. Glory unto you! "Then they all returned home.

Chapter 28 THE FIRE IN THE FOREST



Another day Krishna and his friends were playing as usual under a tree. Their cows and calves were grazing nearby. Slowly they had moved out of sight and entered a deep forest in search of green grass. While they were busy eating in the midst of the forest, they found that a forest fire had begun to eat up the trees and plants. Huge flames were seen all around. The animals were caught in the fire. The fire was nearing them from all sides. In the meantime the boys noticed that the cows were missing. They started searching everywhere but could not find them. Krishna took his magic flute and played on it to attract the cows. The cows were overjoyed to hear their master's notes and lowered back loudly unable to move from their place due to fire on all sides. There was agony in their voice. Krishna immediately understood that the cows were in danger. He went with his friends in the direction from where the mooing sound came. The fire in the meantime had spread. Tongues of flame were soaring to the skies and hot air filled the surrounding atmosphere. The cows and boys were panic-stricken and they took shelter at the feet of Krishna and said, "O Krishna, please do something to protect us from this forest fire that is threatening to consume us. The fire is eating up everything and if you delay we will all perish."

Hearing this pathetic appeal of his friends, the all-powerful Krishna consoled them and said, "Be not afraid. So long as I am here there is no need for anyone to be afraid. Close your eyes, everyone of you and do not open them until I tell you."

The friends obeyed him. They all stood closing their eyes tightly. Krishna used his Yogic power and consumed that fire with his mouth. The whole fire entered his stomach. But

nothing happened to him.

Then he said to his friends, "Now open your eyes."

When they opened their eyes, no fire was visible. Everything was cool. There was no end to their joy. They returned home again praising Krishna all the while.

Chapter 29 THE DEVOTION OF THE BRAHMANA WOMEN

once, as usual, Krishna with his friends went to the forest to graze the cows. That day the heat was unbearable. So they got down into the river and bathed joyfully, playing all manner of games. But now it was noon and they began to feel very hungry. They told Krishna, "Krishna, we are all very hungry. You and Balarama should provide us with something to eat."

The all-compassionate Krishna thought for a while and said, "Look! Nearby some holy men are performing a sacrifice. Go there, and tell them that Rama and Krishna have sent you there for getting some food."

Accordingly the boys went to the spot and said, "O Holy men! We belong to Vrindavan. We have come to this forest to graze cows. Balarama and Krishna also have come with us. We are all feeling very hungry. Please give us some food."

But the holy men had no mind to give the sacred food to these cowherd boys. They listened but did not answer. The boys silently waited for sometime and then returned disappointed. They said to Krishna, "Obeying you, we went there. But it was of no use. They were all silent. We got tired of standing there and came away. Now tell us what we should do."

Krishna however, was not disappointed. He said, "Do not worry. You go again and approach their wives and tell them that I am here with my brother Balarama. They will definitely give you food."

Accordingly, the boys again went there and this time approached the ladies. They said, "We have been sent by Krishna who is tending cattle nearby. He and all his friends are very hungry. He requests you to give us some food."



The very news that

Krishna had come near to their place gladdened the hearts of the women. They all had heard much about Krishna, but never had an opportunity to meet him. So they started at once to meet him with plenty of food to feed him and his friends. What a beautiful sight was in store for them! There, Krishna was standing under a tree with Balarama and other friends. His one hand was resting on the shoulder of a friend by the side while with the other he was twirling a lotus flower. He was blue in complexion. He was wearing a golden-coloured cloth. He was decorated in the fashion of a dancer with garlands of flowers and peacock feathers. There were two blue lilies in his ears and his frontal locks were dangling about his smiling cheeks. The women stood there looking at him unconscious of the outer surroundings. They were not aware of anything except the fact that Krishna, of whom they had been dreaming all these years, now stood before them with a smile on his face and warm affection in his eyes. Krishna welcomed them heartily, gave them seats and expressed his great pleasure at meeting them.

No words came from the mouths of those women. They sat for a long time simply gazing at the smiling face of Krishna.

At last Krishna said to them, "Oh dear ones! You all please go back to the sacrificial campus. Your husbands will be waiting for you. They need your help in the sacrifice. You should assist them."

One of the women then said, "O Krishna! Do not be so merciless to us. First of all, we can never live without looking at your divine face. Separation from you will kill us. Secondly, we have come away from there against the will of our husbands. So they will never allow us to enter that place again. We want shelter at your feet to remain eternally with you."

Krishna consoled them and said, "I understand your love and devotion for me. But it is not proper for you to abandon your husbands and relatives. I assure you that no one will find fault with you when you return. They will all welcome you. And I am always in your hearts. Constantly think of me and you will derive the same joy as in seeing me in person. And if you think of me intently, I shall appear in front of you also."

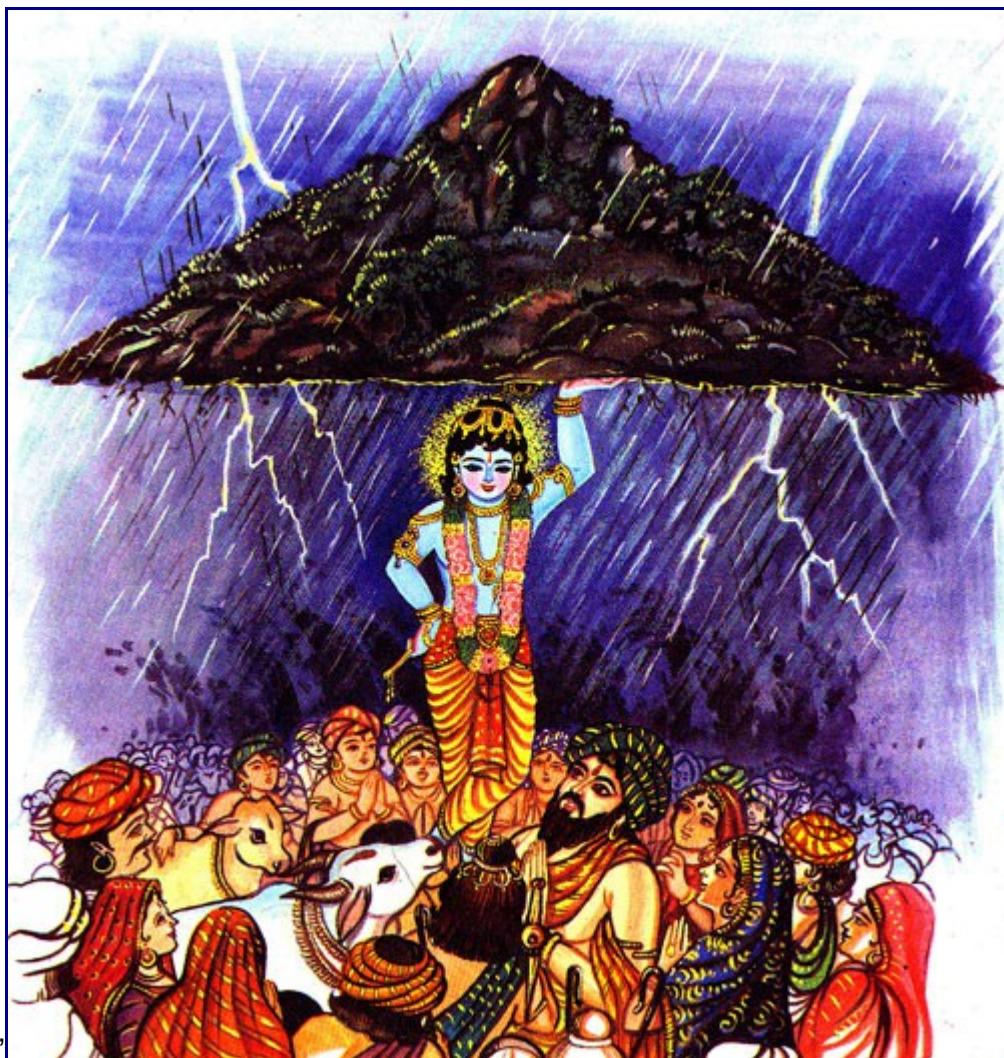
Thus instructed, the women departed very reluctantly. Their husbands welcomed them as if they had committed no fault, but only had gone to a temple.

Krishna distributed the different varieties of food brought by those ladies amongst his friends and himself partook of them.

Chapter 30 LIFTING OF GOVARDHANA HILL

Every year there used to be a sacrifice performed by the inhabitants of Vrindavan. Everyone used to be very busy preparing for this great event. Even in Krishna's house all were very busy. Krishna approached Nanda, who was busy discussing with the elders of the village the details of the sacrifice. Krishna said to him, 'O Father! You all seem to be busy for some great event. Please tell me what it is all about.'

Nanda took his son on his lap and fondling him said, 'You are right. We are getting ready for a great sacrifice. Indra is the Lord of rains. Our wealth, as you know, is cattle. They thrive because of plentiful grass. So for timely rain we offer our prayers to Indra. Pleased by it, he will bless us with seasonal rains.' But Krishna did not find any meaning in his father's words. He said, "Dear father, what has Indra got to do with rains? Rain is but a natural event and why should Indra meddle with it? As for us, we have no land on which we rule. We are simple wandering folk who live in these forests and on the slope of these hills. This hill, Govardhana nourishes our cows with green grass. So it is but proper that we worship the hill, the holy men



and cows."

Whenever Krishna said anything it was accepted without any argument. They all accepted Krishna's suggestion of worshipping holy men, cows and the Govardhana hill.

Krishna took the lead. He said, 'Let a variety of preparations from Payasa to soups be prepared. Collect all available milk for the offering. Get holy men well versed in Vedas to perform the sacrifice. Arrange for the feeding of all poor people. Feed the cows with green grass to their fill.'

All obeyed Krishna. They circumambulated the Govardhana hill. Krishna wanted to generate faith in the minds of the people. So he assumed a huge form declaring himself to be the spirit of the mountain and consumed large quantities of the offerings. The people were thrilled that their worship was accepted. In the evening they all returned to their homes.

But that was only the beginning of the drama. In the Devaloka, Indra was furious at the deprivation of the sacrifice that was due to him. He summoned a group of clouds who pour down torrential rain at the time of a deluge, and said, "Look at the audacity of this cowherd clan. They have ignored me, paying attention to the words of an urchin. I shall punish them for

their audacity. You all go and rain heavily over Vrindavan. You should deluge the whole Vrindavan and destroy the cowherd settlement. I shall also mount my elephant Iravata and follow you shortly."

Thus ordered by Indra, the clouds immediately proceeded towards Vrindavan. All of a sudden it began to rain heavily in Vrindavan. It was followed by heavy thunder and lightning. Furious winds blew off all the houses. Hailstones began to fall in masses. The whole cowherd settlement got submerged in water. The cows, panic-stricken, were moving about here and there. All the people got frightened. The dumb animals, without knowing what to do, at last came and stood at the feet of Krishna. The women were weeping and wailing unable to protect their children. They all cried in one voice to Krishna, "O Krishna! Save us from this danger. Save us from the anger of Indra."

Krishna was calm as usual. He recognised the hand of Indra behind this mischief. He thought to himself, "Indra considers himself to be the Lord of the three worlds. It does not befit anyone to be proud of his position. I shall show him how I can protect my people from his harassment."

Krishna then went to the foot of the Govardhana hill and effortlessly lifted it up. Then he said, "O Mother! O Father! And the rest of you, the inhabitants of Vrindavan! Enter with all your cattle into this space below the uplifted mountain and stay on there comfortably. Do not fear that this mountain may slip from my hand and crush you all. You will not be troubled either by wind or by rain. Here I am, offering protection to you from everything." Assured in this way by Krishna, the Gopas, with their wealth of cattle and other belongings, entered into that space and made it their abode. For seven days Krishna stood holding aloft the mountain in hand without budging an inch from where he stood, and taking neither food nor drink.

Indra was amazed at the Yogic power of Krishna. He abandoned his pride and withdrew all the clouds. Seeing the sky getting cleared of clouds, the sun reappeared and the winds and the rains abated, Krishna called all his people out and said, "Now come out with all your belongings. There is no more cause for fear. The wind and rains have stopped."

All the families came out slowly one after another carrying their belongings. Krishna in the presence of them all reinstalled the mountain in its place. All his friends embraced him and danced around him while the elders blessed him with their arms raised. When Krishna was alone Indra came in secret and touched his feet. Krishna forgave him and said, "I brought about the obstruction of the sacrifice only to humble your pride generated by status and power. You may now go. May you be happy! Abandon your ego and continue to exercise in a proper manner the power with which you are entrusted."

Chapter 31 KRISHNA NAMED GOVINDA

When Krishna was thus advising Indra, a cow entered the place. That cow was not an ordinary cow. It had come from Devaloka. The name of the cow was Kamadhenu. It had a divine power by which it could grant anything to anybody. It could even talk in a human voice. It said to Krishna, "It is our good fortune that you were born in a cowherd family. You are protecting all the cows who are my children. To us you are the Lord of lords. Brahma has directed us to perform the ceremonial bath of crowning you as our Indra."



Saying so, Kamadhenu gave Krishna the coronation bath, pouring the holy waters brought from the heavens and her own milk. Indra too asked Iravata, his elephant to bring water from the Ganga. Iravata carried a golden vessel with its trunk and brought the holy Ganges water. Indra bathed Krishna with that water. Then he said to Krishna, "From now on, you will be known as Govinda." Govinda means the 'Indra of cows. You are Govinda because you protect the cows as also the entire world. I am only Indra the Lord of Devas. But you are Indra for all living beings."

The whole cowherd colony rejoiced at the festival. Indra then took leave of Krishna and returned to Devaloka with Kamadhenu.

Chapter 32 VARUNA CAPTURES NANDA

One Day Nanda went to bathe in the river Yamuna. It was very early in the morning and it was dark everywhere. One of the emissaries of Varuna, the Lord of waters, saw Nanda bathing. He grabbed Nanda and took him to the presence of Varuna. Noticing that Nanda did not return from the river, all in Gokula began to cry aloud. They ran to Krishna. Krishna closed his eyes for a while and understood by his Yogic power that it was the mischief of Varuna. He went straight to the river and jumped into it. He dived and reached the palace of Varuna which was deep under the water. Varuna was overwhelmed with joy to see Krishna in his palace. Varuna prostrated at the feet of Krishna and worshipped him with various ingredients as in



worshipping a deity.

He folded his hands and said, "O Lord! Today I have been blessed. Those who touch your feet once are rid for ever from the bondage of births and deaths. Please forgive me and my ignorant servant who captured your father without knowing who he was. Be gracious as to bless me. Here is your dear father. You are free to take him with you."

Krishna was very much pleased with the humble behaviour of Varuna. He returned with his father to the great joy of his kinsmen.

All these acts of Krishna convinced the Gopas day by day that Krishna was none other than God Himself. They longed within themselves to know Him fully and to see His real abode Vaikuntha where He eternally lives. Krishna understood their innermost desire and decided to fulfil their aspiration. He made them see Vaikuntha. There they saw the Lord Narayana as Krishna. He was being worshipped by the Devas. When they looked the other way, they saw the same Krishna by their side. Now they were back in Vrindavan. They could not believe that with their eyes they had seen the vision of Vaikuntha. Mysterious are the ways of the Lord.

Chapter 33 A PYTHON CATCHES NANDA

Once During a festive season all the Gopas went in great excitement to a place of pilgrimage called Ambikavana. They bathed in the river Saraswati. On the banks of the river was a great Siva temple. After bathing in the river they worshipped Siva and Parvati with flowers, incense sticks, food offerings, etc. Nanda fasted the whole day, taking nothing but water. He slept on the banks of the river. While Nanda was sleeping there at night, a python which was very hungry happened to come that way. It caught hold of Nanda and began to swallow him. Nanda woke up in panic and shouted, "Krishna! Krishna! A huge serpent is swallowing me. Save me who have taken shelter in you." All the Gopas got up and were shocked to see Nanda in the grip of the python. They lighted torches and tried to frighten the creature. But nothing worked. Nanda was slowly disappearing into the body of the python. At that time, hearing the sorrowful cries of the Gopas, Krishna came to that spot. He placed his leg on the serpent. The moment he did so an astonishing thing happened. The python was transformed into a divine being. He prostrated before Krishna. Krishna asked him, "Who are you? Why were you living like a python?"

The Divine being said, "I am one of the Vidyadhara's who dwell in heaven. Endowed with beauty and wealth, I was very arrogant. I could travel anywhere I pleased in my aerial car. Once while passing through some Ashramas on earth, I saw some sages who were ugly looking. I laughed at them. One of the Rishis, Angiras by name, cursed me saying, "May you turn into a python and live on earth!" Accordingly, I lost my beautiful form and was turned into a python. I have been living this reptile life for years. Now by the holy touch of your feet I have got back my real form."

Krishna blessed him and asked him to return to his home.

Chapter 34 DESTRUCTION OF SANKHACHUDA

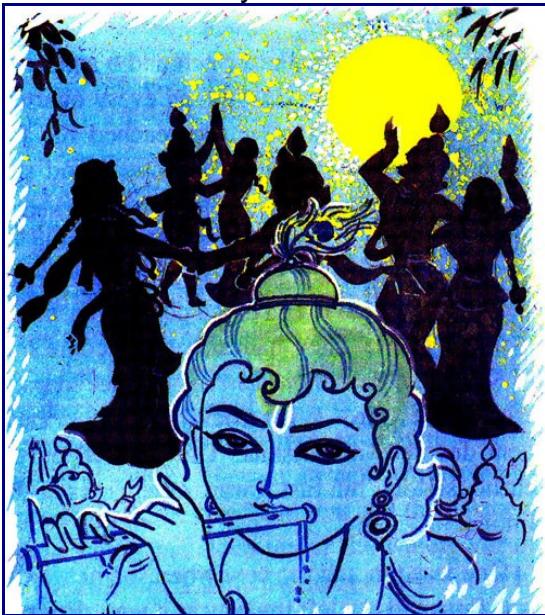
Once in Vremdavan during one of the moonlit nights Krishna and Balarama went to their favourite spot on the banks of the Yamuna. Krishna played the flute. The Gopis, cows and his friends immediately responded. They woke up from their sleep and ran to the banks of the river. They all started playing with Krishna in the centre. Krishna played on the flute in notes high and low providing blissful experience to all ears. When they were thus enjoying, an officer of Kubera by name Sankhachuda, happened to go that way. He was tempted by the beauty of the Gopis. Silently he carried away some of them. The women started wailing. They cried, "Krishna! Save us. We are being carried away."

Hearing their wails, Krishna and Rama chased Sankhachuda. Looking back Sankhachuda found Krishna and Balarama following in great anger. He got frightened and leaving the women behind, fled for his life. Balarama halted there to take care of the frightened women. But Krishna followed Sankhachuda wherever he went and in no time overtook him and delivered a blow on the evil-minded one's head. Sankhachuda died on the spot. He was wearing a crest jewel on his head. Krishna took it out and presented it to Balarama to wear. Then all of them returned home.

Chapter 35 THE MOON LIGHTS THE WORLD AND KRISHNA LIGHTS THE HEARTS

It was the spring season. The nights were fragrant with the perfume of jasmines. The moon flooded the whole landscape with his cool and gentle light. Nature was all smiles. Krishna with flute in hand, went on such a night for a stroll on the banks of his favourite Yamuna.

Krishna stood on the silvery sands and applying his coral lips to the flute played on it gently at a low pitch. But he felt that it was not adequate for that atmosphere. His fingers moved to the panchama Sruti, the highest pitch and a sonorous sound came out of the flute filling every quarter. The enchanting notes of music reached the far away houses of Vrindavan. The cows stood still charmed by the music of flute. Hearing it, the hearts of the Gopis, who were constantly thinking of Krishna, were throbbing. It was irresistible. Each one of them wanted to run to the place from where the sound came. They had already become one with Krishna in their thoughts. The devotee longs to merge in the Lord. What could hold back these ardent devotees of Krishna! They rushed out of their houses and ran fast towards the banks of the



Yamuna.

One was tending the cow when she heard the divine flute and she left the cow as it was, dropped the vessel which was in her hand and rushed out of the house. Some others were warming the milk for their children. Leaving the milk to boil over, they too ran to the river bank. One woman left the pot with the rice boiling on the oven and did not bother about what happened to it. The women forgot their husbands, children and parents. The only desire in their minds was to reach Krishna. The people at home questioned and tried to stop them. But who can stem the Divine tide? However, some were forcefully restrained by the ignorant people at home. But can they stop them from worshipping mentally? These women closed

their eyes and thought of Krishna. They went into deep trance and became one with Krishna. What more blessed thing does a devotee desire? Krishna saw all the Gopis rushing towards him, lost in the music of his magic flute.

Krishna looked at them and spoke sweetly, but chidingly. He said, "Why have you all come to this forest at this time of night? Is it to enjoy the moonlight? There may be wild animals prowling about. Please go back to your homes. Your kinsfolk will be angry with you. Go back before their anger swells up."

It was too much for the Gopis. This was not what they had expected from their beloved Lord. Tears began to flow from their eyes. One of them said, "Krishna, it is not becoming of you that you should talk like this. We gain no happiness from home or husbands or children or anything else. We do not know why but we have great longing for you. It is just impossible to remain separate from you. We prefer drowning ourselves in the Yamuna to going back to our homes and depriving ourselves of your company. People say you are God. We do not understand such things. All we understand is that we love you from the bottom of our hearts. And we love neither our children nor parents or husbands in that way. Our eyes seek only for a sight of you. Our ears hear nothing but the music of your anklets when you walk. This is not love which we have developed only today. Do you not know how we were fondling you right from your birth? Our hearts are aching for a smiling look from your eyes, for your music, for an embrace from you to satisfy our longing. Please have compassion on us and accept our love."

Krishna, the Lord who fulfills the desires of every devotee, did not want to disappoint these simple-minded Gopis. He could assume any form. He was ever ready to do anything for his devotees. Now as Krishna he sang and danced with them. Every Gopi had one Krishna to dance with. There were as many Krishnas as Gopis. But only one Krishna was visible to each Gopi. Krishna played with all the Gopis. Their joy knew no bounds. Each Gopi was feeling that Krishna loved her most and felt proud in her heart. So Krishna wanted to teach them a lesson. He suddenly disappeared from the scene.

The Gopis, noticing that Krishna had suddenly vanished from their midst, became highly distressed. The separation was too much for them. With tears in their eyes and with sobs punctuating their words, they sang the praises of Krishna and prayed to him to come back to them. They prayed and prayed with tears coursing down their cheeks. They felt that without Krishna they would stop breathing. They talked at the top of their voice, singing and raving in their intense longing to meet Krishna.

Then suddenly Krishna reappeared with a smile. He was dressed in his favourite yellow silk, with the garland of wild flowers round his neck, with the fish-shaped ear rings glinting in the moonlight and with the peacock feather dancing amidst his lovely curls. The joy of the Gopis knew no bounds. They fell at his feet and held them tight to their hearts. Again they sang and danced. None of them was aware how the time passed. Krishna took them to the Yamuna and suggested that they should perform the Rasa dance. The Gopis stood in a circle and between every two Gopis was found a Krishna. Each one thought that he was holding only her hand. They all sang and danced together. Why did Krishna encourage them to perform such a dance? He wanted to please the Gopis who were devoted to him. The bliss they got

through the dance was the utmost realisation of Bhakti that could be experienced.

The long, long night came to an end. Krishna persuaded the unwilling Gopis to go home. And when they returned home, with fear in mind, they were surprised that no one blamed them for staying away the whole night. It was because Krishna had by his Yogic power made all people at home unaware of the absence of the Gopis. Glory to Krishna and to his compassion towards the devotees!

Chapter 36 KRISHNA KILLS ARISHTA

Innumerable were the ways tried by the demons to kill Krishna. But every time it was the demons that got killed. There was a demon by name Arishta. He took the form of a wild bull. It had a huge hump and a very big body. The earth trembled when it ran. Its bellowing struck terror in the hearers. It was anger personified. Wildly bellowing, scouring the earth with its legs, lifting the stout tail high, dredging lumps of earth from the mountain side with its horns, it rushed towards Vrindavan to destroy everyone. Its appearance was so forbiddingly frightening that all began to run hither and thither in panic. The bull uprooted many trees with its powerful horns. All ran for protection to Krishna, who was their saviour.



Hearing about the new danger, the fearless Krishna consoled them saying, "Do not be afraid. I shall protect you." He approached the bull and understood that he was only a demon disguised as a bull. He challenged the bull-demon for a fight saying, "O fool! Why do you frighten innocent people? I am here to destroy wicked people like you."

With these taunting words, Krishna clapped his hands to provoke the anger of the bull. In tearing fury the bull rushed towards Krishna. But Krishna was unmoved. He caught hold of the

bull-demon by its horns and hurled it eighteen feet away. The bull however, got up again and made another fierce charge at Krishna, perspiring and exhaling long breaths. Krishna caught hold of its horns again and tossed it to the ground. He trampled on the animal and then pulling out one of its horns killed the bull-demon with a few strokes of it. The demon tossed about for a while in great agony and then spitting blood, lay dead.

The Gopas felt relieved and praised Krishna for saving their lives.

Chapter 37 NARADA VISITS KAMSA AGAIN

Narada, The Divtne sage, who moves about the whole universe, was watching how Krishna was killing one after another all the demons sent by Kamsa. But the destruction of Kamsa had yet to take place. So he went to Kamsa to instigate him to actions that would lead to his doom. He was received with great honour by the Asura King. They talked for a long time about many things. At last Narada came to the point and said, "Kamsa, you are not aware of a great mystery. The girl whom you took to be the eighth child of Devaki is only the daughter of Yasoda. And Krishna about whom you are hearing so much is actually the eighth son of Devaki. And Balarama is really the son of Rohini by Vasudeva.

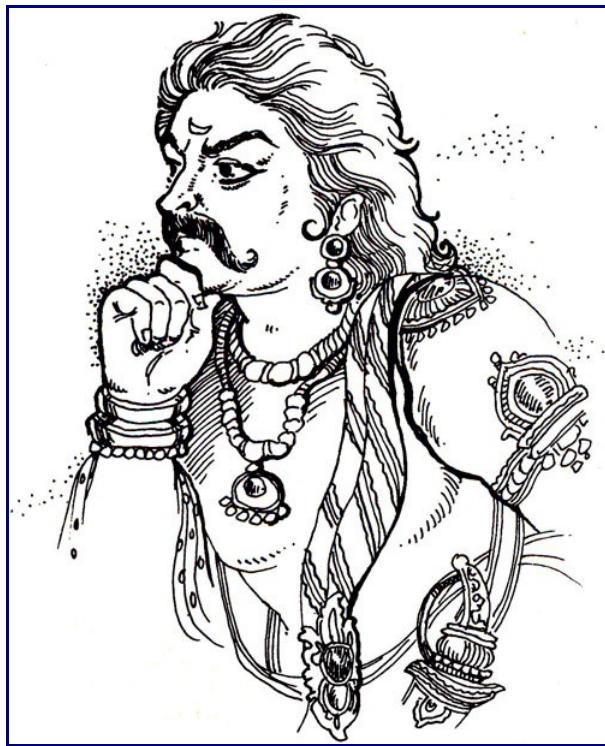
They have only been entrusted to Nanda for fear of you. Of course, now that they have Krishna in their midst, they would not fear you anymore."



Hearing these words of Narada, Kamsa became furious. He decided to kill Vasudeva

immediately for cheating him. But Narada restrained him saying that it would not serve any purpose. He should rather concentrate on killing Krishna. Narada departed uttering 'Narayana, Narayana'.

Kamsa put Vasudeva and Devaki again in the jail, chained with iron fetter. Then he summoned the very powerful demon Kesi and said, "Go immediately to Vrindavan and kill Krishna and Balarama". After sending him he called all the ministers. Amongst them were Mushtika, Chanura, Shala and Toshala; he also summoned his Mahout. He addressed them, "Friends! Warriors! You are all my mighty supporters. I hear the eighth son of Vasudeva is in Vrindavan. I have sent Kesi to destroy him and his brother. I am sure he will succeed in this. If, however, for any reason he cannot accomplish this, I shall invite them here to my capital city Mathurapuri for a wrestling match at a religious festival. You are noted wrestlers who can contend with these youths in a wrestling match. So arrange for a suitable arena for the wrestling match. Arrange the matches in such a way that the entire city will witness it. It should appear to all that these youths have met with a natural death. My dear chief of the elephant stables! You station our mighty elephant, Kuvalayapida at the gate of the theatre and goad the elephant to crush them when they enter the gate. I am going to perform a Yaga and worship Lord Siva for my longevity."



Though Kamsa spoke to his ministers with such bravado, fear lurked in his mind. He called Akrura, a chief of the Yadavas and clasping his hands said to him, "My dear friend, you have to do for me something which only a close friend like you can do. Please go to Vrindavan and bring Rama and Krishna here in our chariot without any delay. I hear that all the Devas, with the support of Mahavishnu, have devised a plan for my death and Rama and Krishna are going to accomplish this. You bring them here along with Nanda and other Gopas carrying

their tributes to me. When they arrive here, our elephant will kill them. If they escape from the elephant, our wrestlers will do the work."

Akrura listened to everything and spoke a few words of advice, "Dear Kamsa, I am pleased that you have confidence in me. Your resolution to save yourself from the coming danger is in perfect order. But then, a man should realise that success or failure lies in the hands of God. So man should be even-minded in success and failure. Men forget it often. When the results are favourable, they rejoice and they are sorrow-stricken when they are unfavourable. Please remember this. For my part I shall carry out your command." Having said this, Akrura got ready to leave for Vrindavan.

Chapter 38 THE DEATH OF KESI AND VYOMASURA

Kesi, commissioned by Kamsa to kill Krishna, came to Vrindavan. He took the form of a huge and fast horse. His eyes were large and red and his mouth breathed fire as it were. He frightened all in Vrindavan with his neighing. It was as if a lion was roaring. He was searching for Krishna everywhere. The news that a mighty horse was galloping everywhere was conveyed to Krishna. Krishna understood that it was but another demon, sent to destroy him! He went up to the horse. With a loud neigh the horse kicked at Krishna with its two hind legs. Evading the kick, Krishna caught hold of it by its raised legs and whirling it round and round threw it to a great distance. The horse fell unconscious. But again after a few minutes, it regained consciousness and attacked Krishna with its wide open mouth. But Krishna was unperturbed. He thrust his left arm into its mouth promptly. The horse's teeth, with which it tried to bite Krishna's arm fell out. It was as if Krishna's hand was a burning torch. It began to grow in size, and the horse found breathing itself difficult. Its huge body started perspiring. Suffocated, it writhed, and striking the ground vomited blood profusely and died. Then only Krishna withdrew his hand.



Narada appeared on the scene and prostrated to Krishna. He recognised Krishna as God incarnate and praised him with great hymns. He also told him all the plans of Kamsa. Krishna only smiled. Narada departed, highly elated at having seen Krishna.

Krishna proceeded to tend the cattle with his friends. That day they decided to play at hide and seek. In that game some acted as cow-keepers and others as cattle-lifters. At that time another demon by name Vyoma, who had great magical powers, came there in the guise of a Gopa. He took them one by one and shut them up in a mountain cave. Only five or six boys were left outside. Krishna understood the mischief. He caught hold of the thief. The powerful demon now assumed his real form, as huge as a mountain, and tried to get out of the clutches of Krishna. But all was in vain. Krishna dashed him to the ground and killed him.

He then released his friends from the cave and resumed playing with them.

Chapter 39 AKRURA MEETS KRISHNA



Now at Mathurapuri, Akrura's heart was hankering to meet Krishna and get his blessings. Though he knew that he was being sent on a treacherous mission, it was for him a blessing in disguise. He had a sleepless night. He was aware that Krishna was none other than God himself. Early in the morning he started in a chariot for Vrindavan. It was evening when he reached Vrindavan. He arrived at the house of Nanda, his mind filled with thoughts of Krishna. He saw Rama and Krishna standing at the milking yard. One was wearing blue silk and another golden yellow silk. One's face was fair like the moon and the other's dark like a rain cloud. Their eyes were like newly bloomed lotuses. Their soft and gentle eyes were full of compassion. Akrura could not contain his joy. He felt that his heart would burst through overwhelming joy. He ran towards the two boys and fell at their feet. His eyes rained tears. Pleased with his devotion Krishna drew him close and embraced him. Both the brothers took his hands in theirs and led him into their dwelling. Great honour was lavished on him and he was treated to a sumptuous repast.

Thus warmly welcomed by Rama and Krishna and seated comfortably on a sofa, Akrura felt his life blessed. Krishna spoke to him sweetly, "O dear friend! I hope your journey was pleasant. Are all my relatives in Mathura well? Alas! Because of us, our respected parents have had to stand a great many trials. They had to witness the death of their children at the

hands of Kamsa, and also suffer imprisonment. And by the way, is there any special mission on which you have come?"

Akrura narrated all about Kamsa's antagonism towards the Yadus and of his attempt to kill Vasudeva. He said, "He is planning to kill both of you. He has arranged a Dhanuryaga, a festival of the bow worship, which is the excuse he has devised to get you to Mathura. He has arranged wrestling matches. In which he hopes to kill you. The invitation to Dhanuryaga has been sent through me. Nanda and you both have also been invited to attend the Yaga. I have been asked to take you in my chariot."

Nanda at once ordered the Gopas to collect milk and other offerings and the tributes to be given to Kamsa. He said, "We shall start tomorrow to the city of Mathura. We shall attend the great bow festival."

He ordered the town crier to announce the trip to Mathura by the beat of drums in the whole colony.

Chapter 40 THE SORROW OF THE GOPIS



This, however, was no welcome news to the women of Gokula. Their minds were always absorbed in thoughts of Krishna and in gazing at his beautiful face. They were sorrow-stricken at the thought of their impending separation from him. They all joined together and with tears in their eyes began to lament as follows, 'O God! Have you no mercy on us? Having shown us the face of Krishna encircled by curly locks, endowed with handsome cheeks and a high nose, and beautified by a sorrow-effacing smile bringing joy and courage to all, now you want to withdraw him from us."

They all decided to go and obstruct Krishna's departure by force. They reached Krishna's house. Just then a stranger came out of the house. His rich dress and manner of walking proclaimed him to be an emissary from the royal court of Mathura. Nanda followed him as also Rama and Krishna. All the three were dressed for a journey. Perhaps they were going out with the visitor. Yasoda and Rohini were standing at the doorway covering their faces with their palms. Their eyes were dry through weeping the whole night. For the first time the Gopis saw Rama and Krishna looking very serious. Balarama and Krishna mounted Akrura's chariot. Nanda and other Gopas followed the chariot in carts laden with pots full of curds and other gift articles. No words came from the mouths of the Gopis. They could not talk. They did not ask Krishna where he was going. They knew that he was going. What did it matter where? From inside the chariot Krishna looked at the Gopis and smiled. He saw they were all disconsolate. So he got down from the chariot, came near them and comforted them telling very lovingly that he would return very soon. He told them about the royal command, and said that if he did

not obey it, the whole of Vrindavan would be destroyed.

One of the Gopis said, "It is better to die with you if Kamsa destroys Vrindavan than to live without you. We shall die lovingly looking at you and uttering your name. Do not make Vrindavan empty by going away from here." Krishna comforted them, assuring them of his quick return. Then he went into the sheds where his beloved cows were standing. They too were shedding tears. He wiped their tears and wiped his own tears. They licked his body from head to foot. With great difficulty he came out suppressing his emotion. The Gopis remained where they were like statues, viewing the departing chariot until the flag of the chariot disappeared from their view. Then giving up all hopes of Krishna's immediate return they went slowly back with heavy hearts.

Chapter 41 AKRURA GETS A VISION

THE CHARIOT TRAVELED very fast and soon reached the banks of the Yamuna. Rama and Krishna bathed in their favourite river and drank its sweet water. They stood for a while remembering all the happy days they had spent on the banks of the Yamuna. They returned to the chariot which was stationed underneath the shade of big trees. Then Akrura with Krishna's permission went to bathe in the river. As prescribed in the scriptures, he repeated the Gayatri Mantra when dipping himself under the water. Then a strange thing happened. He saw both Balarama and Krishna standing in the water. But had he not seated them in the chariot before coming for the bath? Confused, he quickly came out of the water. Raising his head he looked at the chariot. He found the two boys calmly seated in the chariot. Thinking that what he had seen under the water was an illusion, he dived again. Now he had another and a more wonderful vision. He saw the Divine serpent Adisesha, with a thousand diademed hoods and draped in blue silk. Seated on that serpent bed was the Supreme Person Mahavishnu, deep blue in complexion, wearing yellow silk and sporting four arms. He saw many sages led by Sanaka and the seven rishis adoring the Lord. Akrura was filled with the highest delight and devotion. He realised the truth of what he heard that Narayana and Sesha had been born on the earth as the sons of Vasudeva. He folded his hands and prayed to Mahavishnu. Even as he was praying, the vision gently disappeared. Akrura then emerged from the water and went back to the chariot in astonishment. The great change in Akrura's face was noticed by Krishna and Balarama. Krishna now asked him, "You seem to have had some strange experience. Was the water very cold? Your hairs are standing on end!"



"You are right, I had a vision today which has opened my eyes. I have understood who you really are."

Akrura then drove the chariot again and they all reached Mathura by the evening. In the meantime Nanda with others had already reached Mathura by a short-cut through the forests.

They were waiting near the entrance of Mathura in the royal gardens. Akrura stopped the chariot there by Krishna's instruction. Krishna said, "Akrura, you please go home now. We shall take a little rest here, and then go round the city for sightseeing. You inform the king about our arrival."

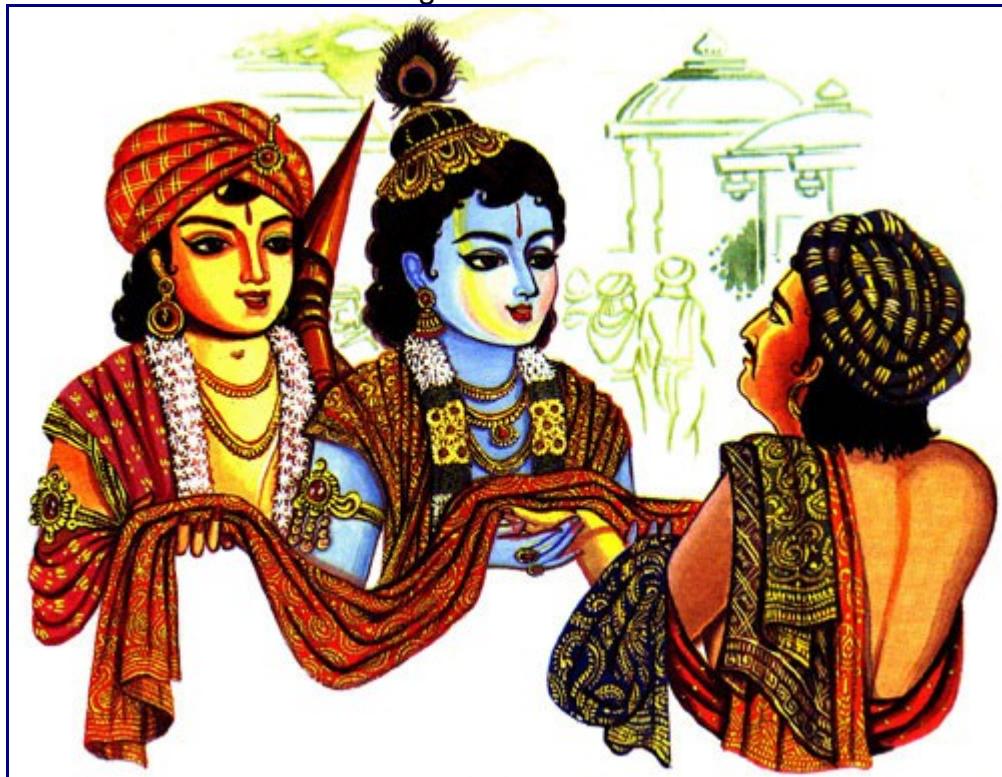
But Akrura said, with tears in his eyes, "I shall not enter the city without you. It is my request that all of you come to my house, and sanctify it. Be my guest for the day."

Krishna wiped the tears of Akrura with his towel and said, "I shall surely come to your house. I have ever been fond of my devotees. They are always dear to me and I shall not refuse anything to them. But first I have to destroy Kamsa, the oppressor and suppressor of the clans of the Yadus. And then I shall visit you."

Akrura was a little sad to hear these words of Krishna. He went alone to the city and informed Kamsa about Krishna's arrival.

Chapter 42 KRISHNA ENTERS MATHURA

For the first time Krishna, Rama and some of the Gopas had come to a city. So they were curious to see the sights that the city offered. Next morning they took the permission of Nanda and started sight-seeing. News had spread that Balarama and Krishna had arrived in Mathura. The people of Mathura had already heard about their heroic acts. So all were anxious to get a glimpse of them. The men gathered on the road side and the women and girls went up to the roofs of the houses to see them. They began to shower flowers upon Krishna and Balarama. Balarama and Krishna walked like lions along the streets of Mathura in the midst of such a



hearty welcome.

While Krishna and Balarama were walking along they saw a washerman carrying a large bundle of clothes strapped to his back. Krishna called to him and said, "Dear man! Give us some fine clothes to wear. It will bring you good."

That washerman was a servant of Kamsa and was proud of his office. He got annoyed and said scornfully, "O mannerless louts! How dare you ask for the clothes which belong to the king? Do you fellows who wander on hills and in forests generally wear this kind of dress? These are fit only for royalty. O Brainless rustics! If you want to save your lives, do not think of asking for these garments. The king's servants may beat you up."

Angered by this abusive speech of the washerman, Krishna struck him on his head. So

powerful was the blow, that the washerman fell down to the ground and died instantly. His assistants threw down all the bundles of clothes they were carrying and ran in all directions. Krishna and Balarama opened the bundle of clothes, selected the types of dress they fancied, and gave the rest to the Gopas. Some surplus clothes remained in the bundle. The boys left them on the road and went their way.

There was a tailor on that street. He was watching all these happenings. He felt great devotion towards these boys. He came running to them with some decorative new clothes having different colours and designs. He begged them to accept his humble gift. Rama and Krishna therefore dressed themselves in splendid attire and shone like two young elephants of white and blue complexion arrayed for a great festival. Krishna was pleased with the humility and devotion of the tailor. He blessed him saying, "You will become a rich man and live in great enjoyment for the rest of your life. After your death, you will reach Vaikuntha,



the Lords' abode."

Krishna was fond of flowers. So the boys next proceeded in search of a florist. There was a garland maker by name Sudama. He too had heard the stories of Krishna. He was overjoyed to see the brothers coming towards his house. He got up from his seat and prostrated before them. He seated them on pedestals, washed their feet and honoured them by worshipping them with flowers. He said with tears in his eyes, "O Lord! By your visit my life has been blessed. Command me your humble servant. What can I do for you?" He then joyfully decorated them with different kinds of garlands. Krishna was pleased with the love and devotion of Sudama. He wanted to grant him a boon. He said, "Sir, you think I am the Lord of Lords. Ask me anything you desire and I shall grant it to you."

But Sudama's heart was full. What had he to ask? He smiled sweetly and said, with folded hands, "Having seen you and your beautiful face, do you think I have any more desires? All I want, my Lord, is constant devotion towards you. I want to have the same devotion even

towards your devotees. Please make me compassionate towards all human beings. These are the only things I desire.” Krishna granted him this supreme devotion and also blessed him’ with immense wealth and fame.

Chapter 43 TRIVAKRA THE HUNCH BACKED

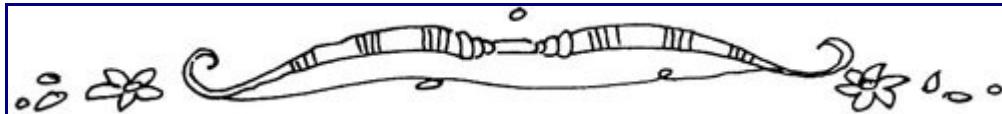


Krishna and Balarama resumed their walk along the road to the palace. They came across a woman carrying a vessel full of sandal paste. The scent was so powerful that the entire road was filled with fragrance. The woman, though young and beautiful was hunch-backed. Krishna said to her, "O pretty girl! Who are you? To whom are you taking these heavenly unguents? Please be good enough to give us some of it."

The maid was charmed by Krishna's words. She said, "Dear Sir, I am a perfume-maker by name Trivakra. King Kamsa patronises me for my skill in making these fragrant pastes. He likes my preparations immensely. But to you I shall certainly give the unguent. For, who is more eligible than you to use such precious stuff?"

She gave the sandal paste to Rama and Krishna and watched with joy as they smeared the paste over their chests, arms and palms. Krishna is always anxious to bestow his grace on devoted people. He resolved to make straight her body bent in three places. Pressing her feet with his and holding her chin by his two fingers, he gave her face a jerk. Krishna's touch made her whole. Her bends were straightened, all parts of her body became well developed and she was transformed into a matchless beauty.

Chapter 44 THE BREAKING OF THE BOW



Taking leave of her, Krishna and Balarama went forward along the high road accepting the worship of the innumerable devoted souls who had gathered on the sides of the road just to get a glimpse of their faces. Krishna wanted to reach the place where the Yaga was being conducted. He enquired of the citizens the way and proceeded in that direction. Kamsa had arranged for the sacrifice called Dhanur-Yajna, and to symbolize it he had placed a big bow near the sacrificial altar. Krishna reached the hall and saw there the bow which was wonderful like Indra's bow. Krishna went near that bow. It was guarded by many servants of Kamsa. They tried to prevent him from touching it. But he ignored their warning. He walked straight to that big bow and lifted it with his left hand. In the twinkling of an eye, he strung the bow in the presence of a big crowd.

The bow snapped at the middle into two halves even as a sugarcane under the feet of an elephant. Thunderous applause from the huge crowd greeted this feat of strength. The sound of the bow cracking filled the earth and the sky. Kamsa heard it from his palace and trembled in fear. The guards surrounding the bow were roused to anger and tried to arrest Krishna. Krishna and Balarama too became angry at this. Taking the broken pieces of the bow they started beating the guards to death. While this turmoil was going on, Kamsa sent a small troop of soldiers to assist the caretakers. But Krishna and Rama fought with them also and killed them all.

Then coming out of the hall, both of them again went about seeing the beauty of the city. The citizens of Mathura now began to consider them as gods. The two brothers strolled care-free in the street, without the least fear of Kamsa. When evening came they returned to the outskirts of the city where Nanda and others were camping. They washed their hands and feet and after enjoying a repast they went to sleep.

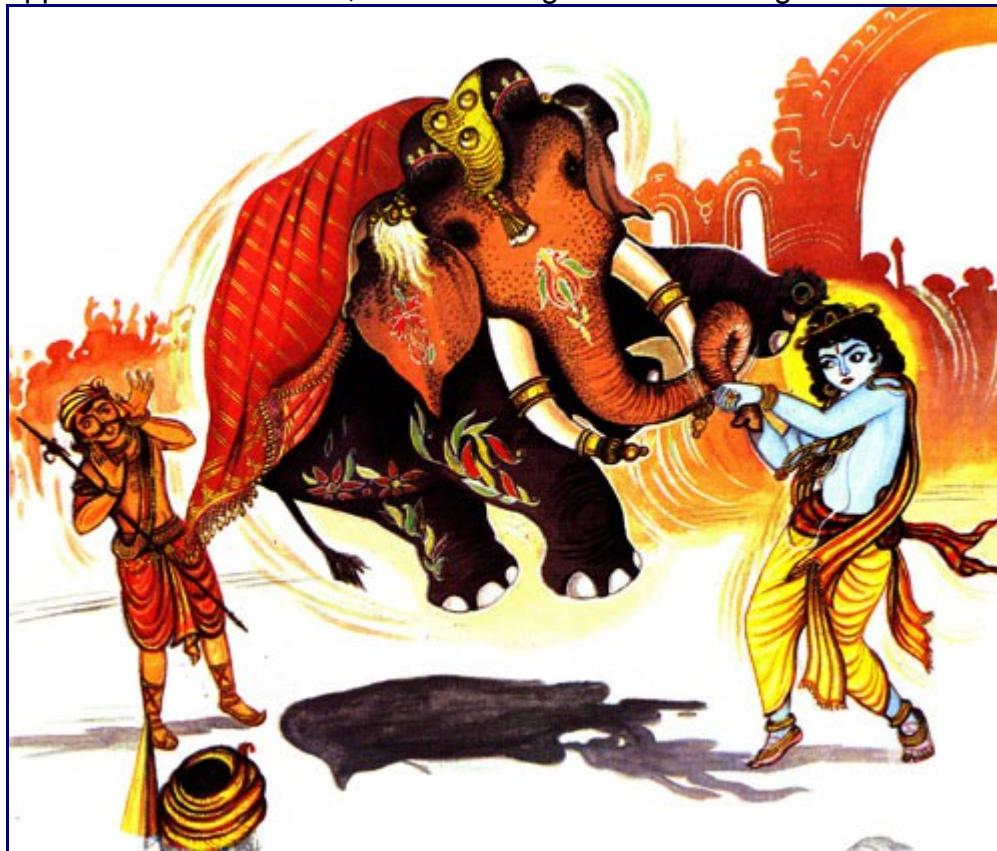


All the while, Kamsa was in jitters. He was stunned to hear how the mighty bow had been broken and the guards and soldiers killed. How could he get sleep? He knew now that the eighth son of Devaki had appeared on the scene and his death was imminent. He saw many inauspicious omens in his dream. He saw various kinds of ghosts being carried in a carriage drawn by donkeys. He dreamt that someone had given him poison. He also had a dream in which he was going naked with a garland of flowers round his neck and oil smeared all over his body. It was a dreadful nightmare for him.

In the early morning Kamsa gave order for the commencement of the wrestling match. The whole of Mathura assembled there to see the great event. With a trembling heart Kamsa sat on a royal throne placed on a high balcony of the palace surrounded by ministers and a number of bodyguards. Nanda and his friends, who had been invited by Kamsa, made presentations to the king and occupied one section in the gallery.

Chapter 45 KILLING OF THE ELEPHANT, KUVALAYAPIDA

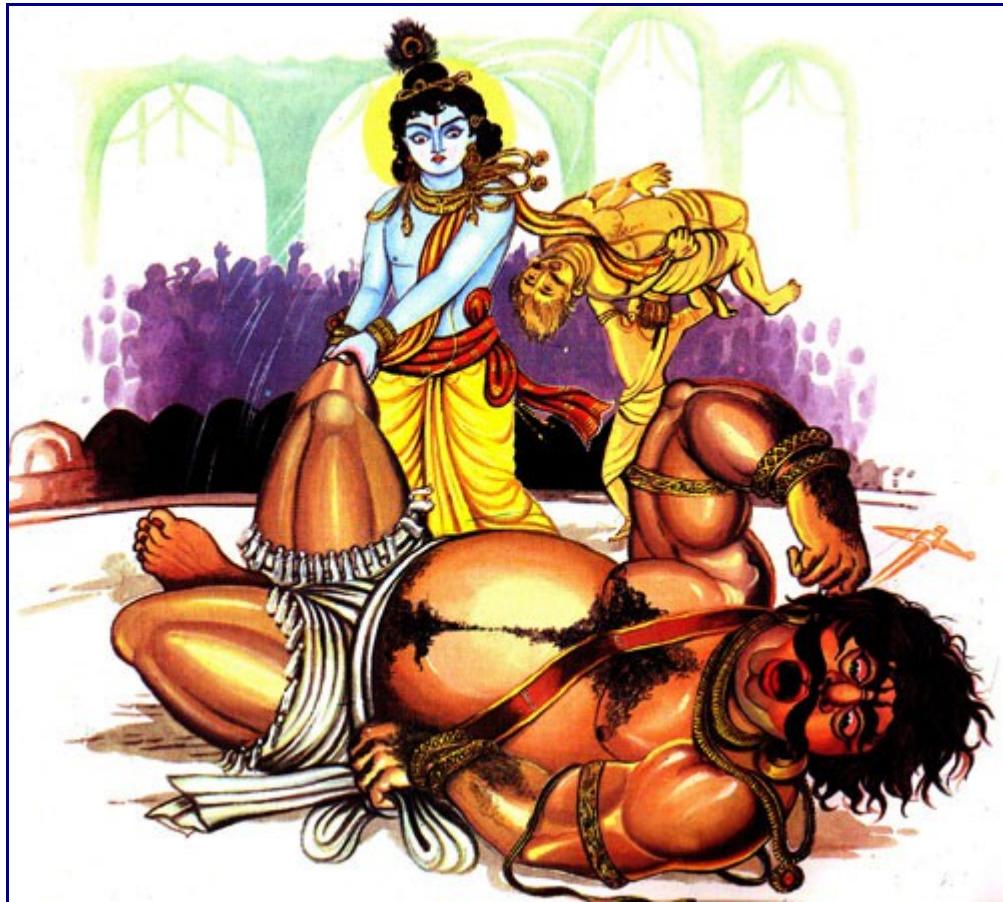
When they had finished their morning bath Krishna and Balarama heard the beating of drums to announce the commencement of the wrestling match, they immediately proceeded towards the arena. At the entrance gate, the big elephant named Kuvalayapida had already been stationed. The Mahout had then deliberately blocked their entrance. Krishna thundered at the Mahout, "O Mahout! Do not block the way with your elephant. We want to go in. If you do not make way, you and your elephant will be killed." The Mahout retaliated by provoking the elephant to attack Krishna. The elephant caught Krishna by its trunk, But Krishna cleverly slipped out of its grasp. He gave a mighty blow on its forehead and hid himself between its legs. Provoked to terrific anger at not being able to see Krishna, the animal somehow smelt him out. It again caught him by its trunk, but Krishna slipped out of its hold once again. This time he ran behind the elephant and caught its tail. He began to pull it and effortlessly dragged it to a distance of twenty five yards. It was as if he was playing with the calves in Gokula. As the animal turned to its side to catch him, he pulled it by the tail in the opposite direction, making it go round and round.



Next he appeared in front of the elephant, gave it a heavy blow and ran forward. The elephant pursuing him, felt at

every step that it could catch him, but just missed him by a few inches. When all its manoeuvres failed, the elephant grew wild. Prompted by its keeper it again charged at Krishna. Krishna now thought it was time to end this sport. He pulled the elephant by its trunk and toppled it to the ground. Then he pulled out its tusks and beat it and the mahout to death. With the ivory tusks as weapons Krishna, accompanied by Balarama and Gopa boys, entered the wrestling arena. From the distance the wrestlers were watching everything. They began to shiver within. Seeing Krishna's strength, Kamsa too became highly nervous. But the people in the galleries were thrilled to see Krishna and Balarama. They looked at the beauty of those boys with wide eyes. It looked as if they were drinking them up with their two eyes, licking them up with their tongues, smelling them with their noses and embracing them with their arms. They started chatting about what they had heard about the courage and strength of the boys. They said among themselves, "Rama and Krishna are indeed parts of Lord Vishnu. Krishna's real father is Vasudeva" and so on.

Chapter 46 DESTRUCTION OF FAMOUS WRESTLERS



All was now set for the wrestling match. The famous wrestler Chanura came to Balarama and Krishna and said, "We have heard about your past achievements. You are great heroes. You are both famous everywhere as experts in wrestling. Hearing this and desirous of seeing your valour, the king has invited you to his court. I invite you to a wrestling match." Krishna immediately understood the wicked motive of Chanura. He was also pleased at the proposal for a wrestling match. But he spoke as follows diplomatically: "We shall always do what is pleasing to the King. But we are only boys. We can engage ourselves only in playful wrestling contexts with boys of our own age group. The wrestling context should be arranged according to rules, or else sin would befall even those who witness it."



But Chanura replied, "Neither Balarama nor you, who have killed the elephant and many others can be called mere boys. You are undoubtedly qualified to wrestle with strong opponents. You show your strength against me and let Balarama compete with Mushtika, another great wrestler."

Accepting the challenge, Krishna and Balarama approached Chanura and Mushtika respectively. Entwining hand to hand and leg to leg, Krishna and Chanura pulled at each other eager for victory. Fist against fist, elbow against elbow, head against head and chest against chest, they clashed. Whirling round arm in arm, pushing away with a stroke of the hand, trying to strangle by embracing, throwing down on the ground, pushing forward and backward—by all such means each tried to overpower the other. By throwing up, by lifting, by whirling, by pressing down and such other tactics, they tried to hurt each other and win. Balarama fought with Mushtika in the same way.



Krishna now decided to kill Chanura.

He struck him thrice with the fist. The great wrestler furiously hit Krishna's chest with both his fists. But it made no impact on Krishna. Catching hold of Chanura by the hand, Krishna whirled him round and round until the wrestler fell dead striking the earth with his body.

Even earlier, Mushtika was struck by the powerful fists of Balarama. He trembled, vomited blood and fell down on the earth.

Later many other wrestlers entered the arena. But they were no match for Krishna and Balarama. All were killed in no time.

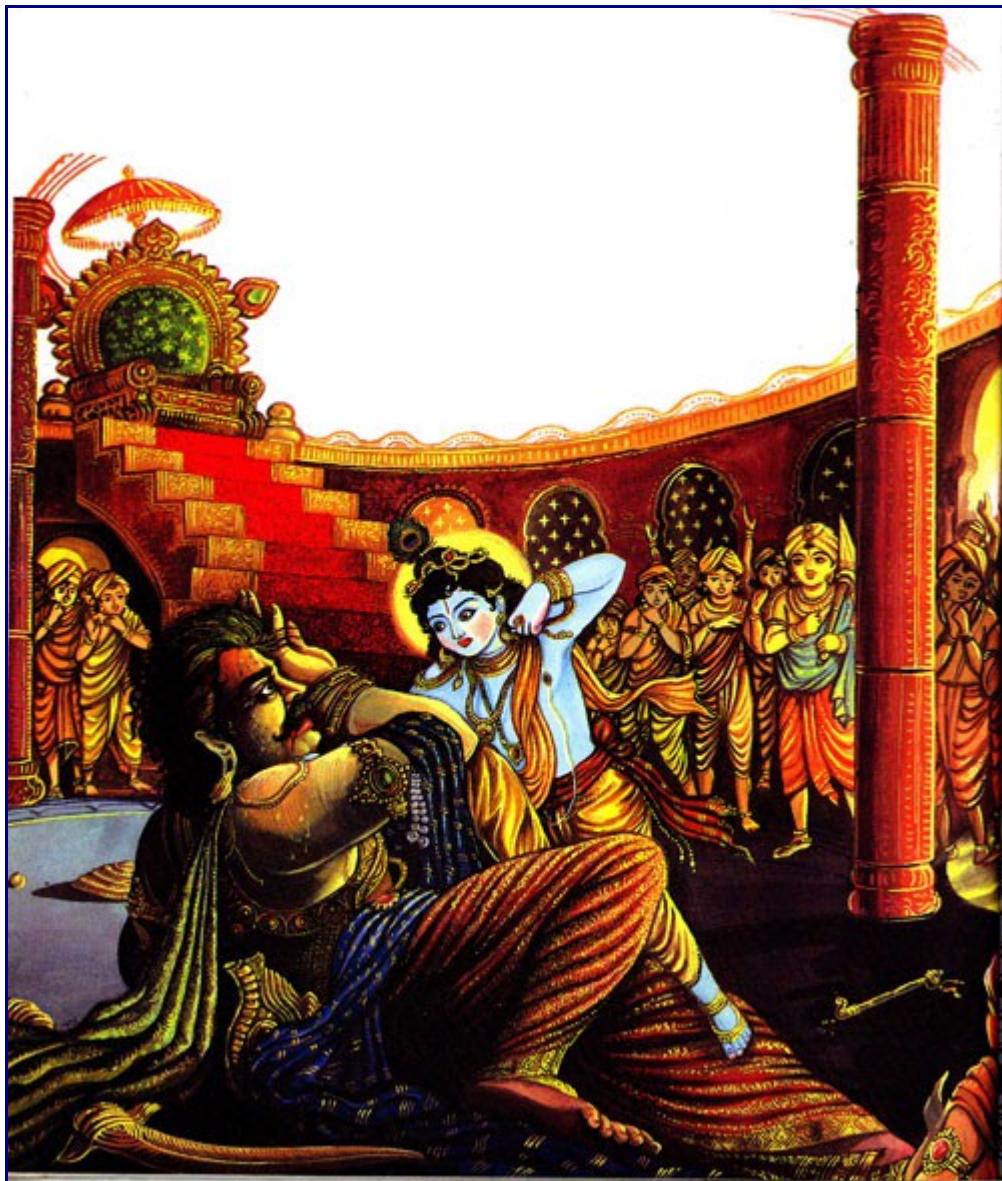
The people gathered there clapped their hands in great ecstasy. There was no limit to their joy. All the Gopa friends of Krishna jumped into the arena. Krishna and Balarama danced to their joyous singing. Everyone was delighted to see that dance of Rama and Krishna.

Chapter 47 KAMSA KILLED



IT was too much for Kamsa to tolerate. He resented the drums being beaten in celebration of Krishna's victory. He was angry that all his powerful supporters had been killed. He therefore ordered the drumming to be stopped. He shouted in frustration, "Drive out these two boys from Mathura. Arrest Nanda and kill him for his treachery. Also kill that rascal Vasudeva without delay. The faithless father of mine, Ugrasena, who has always supported my enemies, should be killed." Krishna could not tolerate the disregard Kamsa was showing to the elders. He became furious. He made his body very light and with one leap reached the very high dias on which Kamsa was seated. Seeing Krishna dashing towards him with great speed, Kamsa, who was bold in his own way, got up quickly from his seat and took his sword and shield to resist. Krishna with one push knocked the crown from the head of Kamsa and grabbed his long hair in his hand. He then dragged Kamsa from his throne to the wrestling arena and threw him on the ground. Kamsa died. Krishna dragged his body up and down in the arena as a lion would do with the body of an elephant it had killed. All the spectators cried. 'Oh! alas! Oh, alas!

Kamsa had eight brothers, headed by Kanka. All of them were younger to him. When they learned that their brother had been killed, they joined together and rushed towards Krishna in great anger to kill him. Balarama took charge of killing all of them. He took up the elephant tusk and killed the eight brothers one after another, just as a lion kills a group of deer. The wives of Kamsa and of his brothers came there weeping and waiting. Krishna consoled them all. He arranged for the necessary ceremonies for the dead.



Then Krishna and Balarama released their father and mother, Vasudeva and Devaki, who had been imprisoned by Kamsa. Krishna and Balarama fell at their feet and received their blessings. They also released Ugrasena, the father of Kamsa from the prison and crowned him again as the king. Nanda and Yasoda spent some days happily at Mathura and then returned to Vrindavan leaving behind Krishna and Balarama under the care of Devaki and Vasudeva.