24. . LIBERATION OF JAMBUVAN

Jairamdas became extremely fond of Nilkanth and was always ready to serve him with great devotion day and night. Every morning and evening Nilkanth would teach him the shastras and yoga. Everyday Jairam would bring lotus fruits for the young Brahmachari. One day Nilkanth asked‚ “Jairam‚ where do you get these lotus fruits from?” Jairam replied‚ “There is a lake. My friend Krishna Tamboli and I get the lotus fruits from that lake.” Nilkanth said‚ “Is that so? Will you show me the lake? I want to eat fresh lotus-fruits. Come‚ we shall sail in the lake and enjoy it there.” Jairam was very happy and agreed to the proposal. The sun was setting. Nilkanth and Jairamdas reached the shore of the lake. Krishna Tamboli kept a raft ready. The three of them got onto the raft and Jairamdas began rowing. A cool breeze was blowing. Tamboli plucked lotus plants from the water and offered the fruits to Nilkanth‚ while talking. Tamboli said‚ “Varniraj! Do you see those trees on the opposite shore? The forest there is full of ferocious animals. At night the roar of lions and tigers can be heard even from my house. No one ever ventures out there.” Tamboli went on talking and Nilkanth listened to him quietly. After some time Nilkanth said‚ “Give me the oar. Let me steer the raft for some time.” With these words‚ he took the oar from Jairam and began to row the raft. Soon the wind changed direction. Nilkanth increased the speed of the raft which began to sail swiftly towards the opposite shore. Krishna Tamboli and Jairamdas held their breath because they were heading for the forest. In a short while they reached the opposite shore. Nilkanth got on to the shore. Jairam shouted‚ “Nilkanth! Don’t go there.” Tamboli said‚ “Varniraj‚ it is not safe to go into the forest. There is great danger from wild animals. Besides‚ it being evening time‚ the beasts will come to the lake to drink water.” But Nilkanth would not listen. Although they did not like it‚ Jairam and Krishna Tamboli got down. Nilkanth began walking towards the forest. As Tamboli shouted not to advance further‚ Nilkanth went deeper into the forest. The roar of wild animals made the boys’ hearts throb with fear. Then suddenly they heard loud screams coming from a distance. Tamboli and Jairamdas began to tremble. ey thought that the bear would tear Nilkanth to pieces. At that time Nilkanth cast a glance at the bear and it calmed down. It stood on its hind legs‚ came near Nilkanth‚ bent down and bowed to him. Tears began to roll down its cheeks. Nilkanth helped the bear stand up‚ blessed it and said‚ “You may go.” The bear bowed again to Nilkanth and disappeared in the thicket. Nilkanth shouted for Tamboli. Tamboli and Jairamdas came down from the tree‚ still trembling. Nilkanth said‚ “Let us go home.” All three returned to the shore‚ got on the raft and began to row speedily. Then Tamboli asked Nilkanth‚ “Varniraj! How is it that the bear became quiet when it came to you? Why was it weeping? Who was it? Why did it bow to you before it returned?” Nilkanth said‚ “Its name is Jambuvan. It had served Shri Krishna but because of doubts it had been wandering hither and thither. Now it will be liberated. It will shed its body and be born as a devotee. He will then come into my contact and attain Akshardham.” Jairamdas and Krishna Tamboli were greatly surprised. They arrived at the opposite shore of the lake. Tamboli escorted Nilkanth up to the house of Jairam. Both Jairam and Tamboli related the story of the bear to the members of their respective families and ended by saying‚ “Nilkanth is Bhagwan Krishna himself.” This story spread throughout the village and to nearby villages also. Large crowds of people flocked to the home of Jairam in the morning and evening for the darshan of Nilkanth who became renowned all around.