



Stories and Messages from Srimad Bhagwat

Swami Amalananda's 'Bhagobater Kotha O Golpo'
Translated by Sanjukta Sarkar and Gargi Bhattacharya

Sukchar Kathiababar Ashram

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Publisher's Note

I am forever indebted to Ramkrishna Mission Kolkata Students' Home for providing me with requisite permission to publish Swami Amalananda's 'Bhagobater Kotha O Golpo' in English language. This book has been translated from Bengali to English by Ms. Sanjukta Sarkar and Ms. Gargi Bhattacharya. I offer them my thanks for helping me to publish this book with beautiful, devotional, educational and moral stories from the Bhagwata, which will not only reach out to children but will benefit grown ups as well. I specially thank Ms Ratna Das for going through the script thoroughly and making necessary alterations, omissions and inclusions.

I could not help but notice that though Hinduism is one of the oldest religions in the world, little do people around the world, outside India, know about it. Even within India, children nowadays are blissfully unaware of Hindu cultural traditions, stories from Purana and Bhagwata while they are well informed about other religions of the world like biblical stories of the prodigal son, Noah's ark, or the stories of Thor and Odin from Greek Mythology, or the stories about Moses and the Ten Commandments or even Aesop's' fables. This book will be an attempt to reach out to them.

I strongly believe that Bhagwata is not just for

Vaishnavas or for that matter Hindus. Stories from Bhagwata can offer wisdom to any human being in the world in search of true knowledge, transcending the boundaries of religion, culture and time.

I also offer my thanks to Dr. Jonathan Edelman (Janakiram Das) from Mississippi State University for agreeing to write a Foreword to this book on such a short notice. I hope that readers will gain much knowledge and wisdom from this book.

Sri Brindaban Bihari Das

Mohanto

Sukchar Kathia Baba Ashram, Kolkata

Editor's Note

“Aum Vasudevay Namah”

It is my incredible luck that I got the opportunity to do the translation work for ‘Bagobater Kotha o Galpo’ by Swami Amalananda. It was a challenging, enriching, and enlightening experience for me. I was surprised to experience difficulty in translating certain cultural concepts which I knew so well growing up in India as a practising Hindu, yet so hard to describe correctly in contemporary English. The challenge was to translate the cultural concepts to the closest linguistic approximation without losing the essence of the stories.

As an editor I have added explanations to certain conceptual words that do not have direct English equivalents to elaborate on their meanings. This will ensure that anyone without the knowledge of the words or of the religion may form an idea about the concepts.

I choose this golden opportunity to offer my obeisance to my Gurudev Dr. Brindaban Bihari Das Maharaj and express my gratitude to him not only for his guidance at every step but also for entrusting me with such an honorable job. I thank Ms. Sanjukta Sarkar for providing me with the basic framework for this book. I thank Mr. Jibonananda Sanyal for

all the help and assistance he rendered in facilitating my translation work. I hope readers will enjoy reading this book as much as I have enjoyed working on it.

Gargi Bhattacharya

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Foreword

I grew up reading about the adventures of Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer, Daniel Boone and the Jessie James. Their lives, the land upon which they lived, the language they used and the ideals they embodied left an indelible mark on my mind, or what the Indian Yoga school might call a *saCskâra*. I wish to thank Dr. Brindaban Bihari Das for making this collection of stories from the *Bhâgavata PurâGa*, which will surely help to open the amazing stories of ancient Indian literature and poetry to children, young adults and parents.

Since my late teens it has been the life of Vyâsa and his son Úuka, the lives of pious kings such as Paríkfit, Prahlâda, P[thu and Bali, the lives of sages such as Maitreya and Nârada, and the lives Gods such as Râma, Varâha, K[cGa and Balarâma that have inspired me. Therefore, when I first met Dr. Brindavan Bihari Das of the Nimbarka *sampradâya*, or tradition, I was delighted to hear that he was working on a compilation of stories from the *Bhâgavata PurâGa*, a great Sanskrit work containing some of Hinduism's most beloved tales and rich theologies.

The Bhâgavata surely stands out as a text that managed to captivate the hearts of its hearers with fantastic lore, and yet also integrate that into a unified theological system. It

attempts to show that the diverse range of ways that God is characterized in Vedic, Upanisadic and Tantric literature is unified under a single, non-dual reality known as Bhagavân, Brahman and Paramâtma, which the *Bhâgavata* collectively refers to as Krishna and Vishnu. In other words, there is a unity in diversity.

Once again I wish to thank Dr. Brindaban Bihari Das for this retelling of stories, and encourage the readers to take this opportunity to drink wonderful tales of the *Bhâgavata*.

Jonathan B. Edelman

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First Skanda

PREACHING OF SRIMAD BHAGWAT BY UGRASRAVA

In ancient times as mentioned in the Puranas there was a dense forest called 'Naimisharanya'. This forest was considered to be the forest incarnate of Lord Vishnu and was the celebrated venue for tapasya (meditation) and yajnas (to invoke a god or gods through worship, meditation, offerings and sacrifices while chanting mantras for a specific goal) for numerous saints and sages over time. At one point of time in Naimisharanya there lived a very learned sage named Shounaka who conducted a 1000 year long yajna with many other sages. During the time of this yajna another great sage Ugrasrava, son of great sage Lomharshana (disciple of Ved Vyasa author of Sreemad Bhagwat) happened to pass through Naimisharanya. Sage Ugrasrava was also known as Suta muni or Suta Goswami, since he belonged to the special group of sages with extraordinary memory and intelligence who could remember and understand anything narrated to them. The sages participating in the yagnas earnestly desired to hear about Sri Hari, especially the stories about how Lord Hari was born as the son of Basudev and Devaki and the miracles he performed from Ugrasrava or Suta Goswami.

He did so at their behest. Suta Goswami told them,

“You have selected a very nice topic to listen to. If there is no chance to listen to the stories of Lord ‘Shri Hari’, the Almighty God, then the whole point of doing yajnas would appear as an attempt in vain. Every yajna’s goal is to achieve the love and blessings of Sri Krishna or Lord Vasudeva as we know him and he is the one and only final destination of each and every Yogi (saint or sages who practice yoga in the form of meditation, learning etc.). He is the speed of each and every action. He is the source of knowledge, the essence in prayer and every thing; every being originates from him and at the end dissolves back in to him. He is the ultimate destination of the ‘Jiva’ or life.”*

Ugrasrava also said, “Basudeva Shri Krishna also known as Shri Hari has been reincarnating in different forms across many ages and these incarnations are called ‘Avatars’. The great intellectual Ved Vyas has written the stories of various stages of the Almighty God through time which was known as ‘Srimad Bahgwat Puran’ and taught the lessons to his son Shukdev. When the world was engulfed in darkness as Lord Krishna left his mortal body, it was then that Bhagwat Purana was like the sun, the only source of light. I have heard the stories of Bhagwat Purana with King Parkishit from Sukhdeva himself and now I will narrate the same to you from my memory.”

* Basudevamparam gyanam Basudevamparam Tapah.

Basudevaparo dharmo Basudevapara Gatih. 1/2/29

THE STORY OF RE-INCARNATION OR THE AVATARS

In the beginning of creation, God appeared in the form of a man (Lord Vishnu) created from five elements and with five sense organs, five vital organs, and with a mind to govern all the organs.

When Lord Vishnu went into deep meditation, Brahma emerged from his naval. The great almighty Vishnu is the originating source of every creation in this world. Lord Vishnu or Sri Hari has appeared in many forms across ages in this world. There are four types of avatars. The first kind is the ‘Purna Avatar’ or the full reincarnation and it happens when Sri Hari appears in human form with all his divine powers restored within the human body like Sri Krishna and Sri Rama. The second type is ‘Kala’ or part reincarnation, where Sri Hari incarnates in a body with full manifestation of one or more major divine powers like Varah or Hamsa avatar. The Third type is ‘Amsa’ or part reincarnation. In this case only a part, like eyes or hand or chest of Sri Hari is born as an avatar like Nara-Narayan. Finally the fourth type of avatar is the ‘Amsamsa’ or part of the part, where a part of another part of Sri Hari reincarnates itself. For example Sri Nimbarkacharya is known to be the reincarnation of Sri Hari’s discus like weapon called ‘Sudarshan Chakra’. Commonly we only hear the stories about ten such avatars but Shrimad Bhagwat Purana acknowledges 24 such avatars* of Lord Vishnu or Sri Hari. However Lord Krishna is God incarnate

himself** and he reappears through ages to rid the world of demons and sins and to protect common people.

*The 24 avatars mentioned in SriMad Bhagwat Purana are given below:

1) Chaturana 2) Narada Muni 3) Varaha 4) Matsya 5) Yajna
6) Nara Narayana 7) Kapila 8) Dattatreya 9) Hayasirsa 10)
Hamsa 11) Prsnigarbha 12) Rsabha 13) Prithu 14) Narsimha
15) Kurma 16) Dhanvantari 17) Vamanadeva 18) Parasurama
19) Raghavendra (Rama) 20) Vyasa 21) Balarama 22) Krishna
23) Buddha and 24) Kalki.

P.S: The 10 avatars that we commonly know of are included in the 24 avatars above: Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narsimha, Vamanadeva, Parasuram, Rama, Balarama, Buddha and Kalki-Sri Hari himself reincarnated in the above mentioned forms.

**Etey Changshakalah pungshaha krishnastu bhagwan swayam.

Indraari byakulam lokam mriyanti yuge yuge. 1/3/28

KING PARIKSHIT

King Parikshit was the grandson of the great Pandava Arjuna and his wife Subhadra who was Lord Krishna's sister and the son of brave Abhimanyue. When he was in his mother's womb he was blessed by Lord Sri Krishna himself. When the Pandavas and their wife Draupadi were leaving for

their final destination, the grandchild of Yudhisthir anointed Parikshit as king of the Kuru kingdom.

One day King Parikshit went out for hunting; he lost his way and entered into a dense forest. He was extremely hungry and thirsty. Searching for food and water, King Parikshit came across a saint who was in deep meditation in the forest. Parikshit asked for some drinking water from the saint but the saint did not give any reply to him as he was meditating. King Parikshit tired, hungry and thirsty waited in vain for sometime for the saint to get up from his meditation to provide him with some water. Finally tiredness, hunger, and thirst drove Parikshit into a fit of uncontrollable rage and he wound a dead snake around the saint's neck and left the place to find water elsewhere. The name of the saint was Shamik. Shringi, son of Shamik, came back after a while and found his father in such a condition. He was infuriated. Angry at his father's humiliation the little sage cursed — "whoever insulted my father like this will die being bitten by a poisonous snake within seven days".

Saint Shamik heard all about Shringi's anger and curse and he knew that this curse will ultimately affect the otherwise kind and religious king of the country, Parikshit. He rebuked his son and explained to him that it was too harsh of a punishment for someone who had a momentary lack of judgment due to hunger, thirst, and tiredness. However, Shringi being a practising and powerful sage himself, the curse was

irrevocable. So he conveyed this sad news to the great King Parikshit. King Parikshit was surprised by this news. However, he also expressed his own guilt and remorse for his actions. Then he arranged for a seat on the bank of the river Ganga after handing over all responsibilities of his kingdom to his son Janmayjay decided to sacrifice his life by starvation. At that time a holy young ascetic named Sukhdeva who was the son of Ved Vyasa who wrote all the Vedas and Puranas, reached the bank of the river Ganga. The King felt great comfort in his heart when he saw Sukhdeva. Parikshit said— “Hey! Great saint, demons are immediately destroyed whenever Lord Vishnu touches them and similarly all sins are destroyed whenever saints like you come in touch with common folks. Did Lord Krishna a friend of the Pandavas send you here at the end of my life? You are the great guru of the saints; I am asking you what is best for a man who is in the last stage of his life? What should I do? What should I remember ? What should be my prayer ?

Second Skanda

THE ADVICE OF SUKHDEVA TO KING PARIKSHIT

Sukhdeva said “Well, King, you have asked a very good question. Most people who seek happiness in wealth don’t care to ask such questions. Human beings don’t know when and how all of a sudden one day their precious life comes to an end. It will be beneficial for human beings to think at least once about the results of their actions. It is then that you start seeking the true meaning of life. The life of King Dileep, who is also known as Khatanga is an example of this. When Khatanga realized that he has reached the fag end of his life, he set out to unravel the mystery of life.

Khatanga was a very brave and influential king during his time. He used to fight with the lesser gods against the demons and giants. When the gods defeated the demons with Khatanga’s assistance they wanted to grant him a boon. Before asking for the boon Khatanga asked the gods if they knew how long he would live. The gods replied that he had merely a few more moments to live. Hearing this, Khatanga immediately returned to his kingdom on a flying chariot without asking for the boon. He denounced all worldly possessions immediately and started meditating on Sri Hari. Lord Sri Hari answered his prayers and Khatanga received His eternal blessings for his afterlife.

Dear Kourava, you have just a week to live. So in

order to enjoy a better life hereafter do everything that is possible within this period. Follow a simple ascetic life and meditate on the 'Aum' Mantra. Your mind will remain in peace by meditating on this 'Brahmabij Pranav' (source of all mantra). You will be able to get a glimpse of the Almighty whenever you think of Him with a focussed mind." Sukhdeva then discussed yoga and meditation in detail with Parikshit. He also said that in ancient times Lord Sri Hari himself taught Lord Brhama this and Brahma synthesized from those teachings that Bhakti or devotion is the only way to generate love for Lord 'Shri Hari' in one's heart. After hearing all these precious advice King Parikshit devoted his mind and life to Lord 'Shri Krishna'. Even after one renounces the worldly possessions the addiction to life and material world does not cease with it. Since death was nearing Parikshit eventually gave up his infatuation for this material world and focussed his entire mind on realizing the unconditional love for Lord Sri Krishna. King Parikshit finally told Sukhdeva, "Please tell me how I can completely surrender my soul to my beloved Lord Sri Krishna and die in peace*."

*Kathayastha mahabhaga yathahakhatmani.

Krishne nibeshya nihshangam manastakshe kalevaram. 2/8/3

SRIMAD BHAGWAT IN FOUR SHLOKAS OR HYMNS

The learned scholar Shukdev then started telling the King the stories from Shrimad Bhagawat. Shukhdev's voice was as beautiful as that of a cuckoo and in that beautiful voice he told Parikshit, "First of all, I would like to explain to you the theory about the nature of the Almighty God as described in Shrimad Bhagawat, which was revealed by Lord Krishna 'Himself' to Brahma." The great Almighty told that:

1. I was there the one and only supreme power, before the creation of this entire universe. All animate and inanimate objects that exist in nature now were non-existent before I started the creation of this universe. I existed before all, I exist with everything, and I will exist after everything is destroyed.
2. Soul or the inner spark of life, the indestructible force that comes out of me is often mistaken as a part of the body and is also confused with the five sense organs due to the 'maya' or illusion. For example optical illusion can make you see two moons when only one exists (acceptance of lie) and again we can not see stars in the morning even when they are present (rejection of truth).
3. I am always present within each and every creation of mine but I am not the being itself. I am the cause of creation, I am the life in the body, and yet I am not embodied in the body itself.

4. My presence is active or positive when I am observing, creating, empowering and initiating actions within beings. My presence is inactive or negative within inanimate objects. Though I am present there I am still inert. Thus, I am in both yes and no, in both positive and negative.” *

*Note: Sri Ramkrishnadeva used to say that only God is the true object and the rest is nothing.

Third Skanda

STORY OF BIDUR, UDBHAV AND MAITRAYO

Sukhdeva was very happy to see inquisitive Parikshit's interest in the Bhagwat. Parikshit was about to die within seven days and yet there was no visible fear in him. Then Sukhdeva narrated the stories of Kaurava and Pandavas to King Parikshit as he had heard from his elders.

Dhritarashtra, the blind King, allowed and abetted a lot of dishonesty and malpractice to please his dishonest sons. He gave his consent to burn the Pandavas, his own nephews, at Jatugreeha (a house made up of sealing wax). He did not stop his sons from dishonouring his own daughter-in-law Draupadi, by insulting her in the open-court. Duryadhan, the eldest son of Dhritarashtra, sent the Pandavas to exile when they lost every thing in a con game of dice. We know all this from the epic Mahabharata.

Bidur, another brother of Dhritarashtra was a very learned and honest man. He wanted to bring back the blind King from the path of sin to the path of honesty and virtue. He advised Dhritarashtra not to comply with the unethical and immoral requests of Duryadhan and to send him to exile. For that, Shakuni, uncle of Duryadhan and others who were with Duryadhan became angry with Bidur. After abusing Bidur in a filthy language Duryadhan drove him out of the king's court.

Bidur did not want to stay back any longer at

Hastinapur, the kingdom of Dhritarashtra, which was full of dishonesty and sin. He left the palace and set out on a pilgrimage to sacred places in India as a poor scholar. Many days later he met Udbhav who was a devotee and follower of Lord Shri Krishna. Udbhav began to cry when Bidur asked about Lord Shri Krishna. He said that the great Lord has left his earthly body and has gone away to his own place. Lord Shri Krishna was a friend to Udbhav from childhood. Udbhav narrated many stories of Lord Shri Krishna to Bidur including the stories of Lord Shri Krishna's birth, and the stories of killing the evil King Kangsha, and also the stories of Lord Sri Krishna during his stay at Vrindavan. We will discuss some of these stories later in this book. Udbhav asked Bidur to visit Saint Maitrayo when Bidur wanted to hear more about Sri Krishna. Eager to hear more about Sri Krishna, Bidur followed Udbhav's advice and went to visit Saint Maitrayo. Saint Maitrayo was very happy to see Bidur at his place as he knew that Bidur too was an honest follower and a devotee of Lord Shri Krishna. Saint Maitrayo told Bidur about the process of creation and the stories of incarnation of Lord Shri Krishna.

JAY AND BIJAY

[Moral: Excessive pride is not good and usually results in downfall. But one can achieve and enjoy all previous triumphs and glory through repentance.]

Lord "Brahma" had four sons, named Sanak, Sanandan, Sanatan, and Sanat Kumar. Unlike other children of Brahma they did not get married to procreate and chose a simple ascetic life. They did not have any specific income and relied on gathering food like many other hermits of ancient times. One day they went to visit Vaikuntha Dham where Lord Vishnu lived. They were dressed as poor simple hermits. After crossing every shrine one by one they reached the seventh and final door which was guarded by two guards. The guards were used to seeing other gods, goddesses, and other heavenly personalities coming to visit Lord Vishnu. So when they saw four poor hermits visiting Lord Vishnu they raised their staff and stopped the four brothers from meeting Lord Vishnu. The saints pleaded with the guards a lot but all was in vain. Angry the saints cursed them saying, "In the next life you will be born as giants". Jay and Bijay as the guards were named, became scared and realized their mistake.

When Sri Vishnu with Laxmi Devi reached home and heard about everything. He told the guards that he could not revoke the punishments since it was just. But Jay and Bijay were his favourite guards, so he told them, "Do not worry, after taking three births you will be coming back here again to me". The first time Jay and Bijay took birth from Din's womb as Hiranyakashipu, the elder one, and Hiranyakhya, the younger one. Hiranyakashipu was very arrogant. But somehow through asceticism and long meditation he got a blessing from Lord Brahma that nobody could kill him either

on the land or in the air. The younger Hiranyakhya drove away all the lesser gods from heaven using his club. At that time, the Earth was immersed in water due to a heavy flood and on top of it the Earth was being attacked by the two giant brothers. In the meantime, Varahadev went into the mass of water and killed Hiranyakhya and saved the Earth. In their second birth Jay-Bijay became Ravana and Kumbhakarna and in their third birth they became Shishupal and Dantabakra after which they returned to Lord Vishnu. In all their three lives as giants their only vice was their vanity or vain pride and through repentance and penance in their three births were they able to go back and serve Lord Vishnu.

STORY OF SAINT KAPIL

[The cause of our own captivity and freedom lies within us. Our mind is the key to our captivity or freedom. If we keep our mind focussed on God we achieve freedom. Saint Kapil told his mother about all this.]

Manu gave his daughter Devahuti's hand in marriage to a saint named Kardam. Their son 'Kapil was the author of 'Sankhya Darshan' one of the most important texts of the vedic religion. He was one of the incarnations of Lord Vishnu also. Knowing that his son Kapil was an avatar of Lord Sri Hari, Saint Kardam asked Kapil to take care of his mother and left the household to continue his meditation in solitude.

Before saint Kardam left, he told his wife Devahuti, "Your son will show you the way to attain God, and he will clear all your doubts." Saint Kapil stayed with his mother at Bindoo Sarobar. One day his mother told him, "I am blinded by the material desires, son, please tell me a way to get rid of this false pride and attachment". In reply Saint Kapil told, "O! Mother you know that our false identification of our heart and mind as 'I' is one of the main causes for the bondage of soul to this destructible body. * The mind is always controlled by the three gunas Swotaguna Prevails in a saint. He has wisdom, knowledge, kindness and remains aloof from the material world, Rajaguna dominates in kings and the wealthy they are usually full of arrogance. They are aggressive and have attraction for wealth and finally 'Tamaguna dwells in lazy and comfort loving persons. They are lazy and full of procrastination. If we devote our mind only to Almighty God and imbibe only the Swattogoon then that will lead towards the path of emancipation. By thinking about God's activities continuously, a process called devotion 'Jiva' or the life forms can achieve God in this life itself. Few people can give up false identification of 'I' and 'me' and ascribe all his or her actions unquestionably to the Almighty God. Once they achieve that they can observe and realize the glorious presence of God and are able to communicate with God all the time."

After the analysis of the 'Bhakti Yoga' which refers to the process of devotion, Saint Kapil started analytical

discussion about the philosophical theory of 'Sankhya Darshan'. He described to his mother the relationship between man and nature and also the 'Chaturbingshati Tatwa' in detail. He also described to his mother 'Ashtanga Yoga'***. He further explained to his mother how spiritual people advanced in life while materialistic people lost their way in the darkness. After hearing all this from her son, Devahuti's doubts and inner darkness began to fade away. She prayed to God, "O God! The person who remembers you regularly is equal to a great Brahmin and whoever always utters your names becomes your great devotee." After providing advice to his mother, Saint Kapil went off towards the sea. Till now, he remains in deep meditation inside the deep sea, which is known as 'Sagar Sangam' for the welfare of the world.

*Chetah Khalwaswa bandhaya muktaye chatmano matam.
Guneshu shaktam bandhaya ratam baa pungsi muktaye. 3/25/15

** Chaturbingshati Tatwa (the theory of 24): Pancha mahabhoot (five elements): earth, water, energy, wind and sky. Pancha tanmatro (senses): Smell, moisture, appearance, touch and sound. Pancha Gyannendriya (Five senses): Eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin. Pancha karmendriyo (Five organs): Face, hands, legs, anus and sex organ. Along with mind, intellect, pride and heart make the tatawa of 24 things.

***Ashtanga Yoga: Yam, Niyam, Asana, Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharana, Dhyan and Samadhi.

Fourth Skanda

DAKSHA YAJNA AND SATI'S DEMISE

Sukhdeva continued narrating the Bhagwata. Fuelled by the interest created in Parikshit and the other saints present around him he continued telling stories about different avatars of Lord Sri Krishna. He started narrating the story of how Sati died.

Prajapati Daksha had many daughters. He gave his beloved daughter Sati's hand in marriage to Mahadev, or Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva, a very powerful god of creation and destruction, thus became the son-in-law of Prajapati Daksha who was a mere mortal. One day Daksha arrived to attend a yajna, arranged by the lesser gods. When Daksha entered, all the lesser gods stood up to show respect to Daksha, except Lord Shiva who was in deep meditation. Daksha was infuriated since that would mean that his own son-in-law did not show any respect towards him. Infuriated Daksha proposed that Lord Shiva unlike other gods will not get any offering from that particular yajna. But Lord Shiva, engaged in his own meditation did not even care for it and sat quietly meditating without any reply. Lord Shiva's disciple Nandi however lost his calm and cursed Daksha that his human head will be replaced by a goat's head one day.

Few days later Daksharaj himself arranged a yajna and he invited many gods, saints, and sages but he did not

send an invitation to his daughter and son-in-law. When Sati heard about the yajna, which was to be held in her own parent's residence, she eagerly wanted to attend it. Initially Lord Shiva refused to allow her to visit her parent's residence but when he noted Sati's earnest desire, he gave her permission to go and sent Nandi and Bhringi along with her.

Sati arrived at her father's residence but her father showed no affection for her. Sati was not offended by her father's behavior and asked him why he did not invite her husband to the yajna. Instead of stating the real reason Daksha started to abuse Lord Shiva in front of his daughter. Sati was surprised and tried to reason with her father by saying, "Lord Shiva is beyond any discrimination and abuse of this world and he meditates only for the well-being of the world. Why are you so keen on making him your enemy father?" Again Daksha continued his rant without answering her questions. Sati realized her mistake in attending the yajna and was saddened by the insults she brought upon her beloved husband. Unable to bear the shame anymore her divine soul departed from her body on the yajna ground.

When Shiva heard all about Sati's demise from Saint Narada, he tore up his matted hair with great anger. A brave warrior named Birbhadr was born out Lord Shiva's intense rage. Birbhadr arrived on the yajna ground and decapitated Daksha with the help of Shiva's companions. This incident frightened the other lesser gods and they ran to Brahma for

a solution. So Brahma came forward and praised and prayed along with the other lesser gods to Lord Shiva who was also called 'Ashutosh' (one who is easily satisfied) and pacified his anger. Shiva told, "Daksha will survive ultimately, but his head should be replaced by the head of a goat."

Ultimately King Daksha got his life back and the yajna resumed and Lord Shiva was offered his due respect in the Yajna. Lord Vishnu also arrived at the same venue on his pet bird 'Garur'. Daksha's daughter Sati was reborn from Menaka's womb as Uma and she became the wife of Shiva again. At the end of the yajna Lord Vishnu told everyone present, "Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, we three are one and the same. Like one's head and hands belong to the same body, similarly Brahma and Shiva are my different manifestations. We are not separate entities, we are all same. Once a person realizes this, one can attain peace." *

*Trayanamek bhabanam yon a pashyati boi vidam.

Sarababhutanam Brahman saw shantimadhigacchati. 4/7/58.

STORY OF DHRUVA

[Kids are not weak. If they pray with all their heart their desires can also be fulfilled. The five year old child Dhruva was insulted by his step mother and prayed to Sri Hari for the throne of his kingdom. He succeeded in achieving the same.]

Once upon a time, the creator Lord Brahma thought of recreating himself in two different bodies. Gradually the body divided into two parts - one part was male the other part was female. The male was named Manu and the female was named Shatarupa, who became his wife. Manu and Shatarupa had two sons named Uttanpad and Priyabrata.

Uttanpad eventually became a king and married two queens named Suruchi and Suniti. The son of Suruchi was named Uttam and the son of Suniti was named Dhruva. The king loved Suruchi more than Suniti and also loved his son Uttam more than Dhruva. He used to take Uttam on his lap while sitting on his throne. One day Uttanpad was on his throne and Dhruva being a child insisted on sitting on his lap. Queen Suruchi, his step mother said, "Dhruva, you are Suniti's son, you don't have any right to sit on the King's throne. You must devote yourself to Lord Shri Hari so that you can pray and be born as my son in your next life, and then you will get the right to sit on that tempting throne."

When his stepmother scolded him, Dhruva started crying and went to his own mother. His mother took him on her lap with love and said, "My dear child, don't cry. Why should harsh words hurt you? Those who hurt others will be in distress themselves. Your stepmother will definitely be punished for her harsh behavior in time. I am not the favourite queen of the king, so, he will not listen to me if I complain to him. On the other hand Suruchi has suggested the right course

of action for you. You must worship Lord Shri Hari wholeheartedly. He is the only one who can grant you the king's throne. Lord Brahma achieved his rank as Brahma by surrendering himself completely at Sri Hari's feet. Your sincere prayer will certainly reach Sri Hari's feet. Saints also devoted themselves to him, you can also pray for you own wish to the great Lord "Padma Palash Lochan" Shri Hari. Only Lord Sri Hari can alleviate your pain.

Little Dhruva believed in his mother's words and left the palace at once and went off to a forest. "Where are you Shri Hari? Come and meet me", said little Dhruva. On his way he met with Narada, Sri Hari's most eminent follower. Narada being a Sri Hari devotee himself remained close to those who prayed to Lord Sri Hari whole heartedly. He heard the entire story from the innocent child. Then he started asking him questions, "Dhruva, you are a quite young my child. How will you be able to meditate? It is too hard! Also it's very difficult to reach Sri Hari. So my child, you should go back to your home." Dhruva replied to Narada, "My stepmother insulted me. My mind is very disturbed and your suggestion is not bringing peace back to my mind. O great Narada, I can only attain peace if I can reach Sri Hari, whom all my forefathers failed to reach. You are also part of Lord Brahma, please show me the right path." Narada then replied with great pleasure, "Actually I was just testing your determination. You are absolutely right. There is only one way to devote

yourself to Lord Shri Hari. You have to travel to Madhuban, by the bank of Yamuna at Brindavan. Lord Shri Hari resides there. There you pray to him whole-heartedly and meditate on this mantra, 'Aum Namō Bhagwataya Vasudevaya'."

Following Narada's suggestion Dhruva reached Madhuban (Vrindavan) and started deep meditation repeating the mantra imparted by Narada. After a few days Lord Shri Hari, satisfied by his meditation and devotion, appeared in front of him. The beautiful image of Lord Shri Hari ultimately came in front of Dhruva. The fascinated child surrendered himself at Lord Shri Hari's feet. Dhruva awed by Sri Hari's presence was not sure how he should start worshipping Sri Hari. In the mean time Lord Shri Hari, in his Vishnu avatar holding a conch, a chakra, a club and a lotus in his four arms, touched Dhruva's forehead with his conch. Delighted Dhruva prayed to him with complete devotion. Lord Shri Hari was pleased and blessed Dhruva saying, "Subrata (O devoted one)! You will get your father's throne and you will rule the kingdom for a long period of time. You will spend your afterlife in a heaven (known as Devlok) made for you through your devotion to me known as 'Dhruvalok'."

Dhruva prayed to Lord Shri Hari for his father's throne. Now, his desire had been fulfilled. Moreover, he met with Lord Shri Hari. Dhruva returned to his own kingdom. The king was extremely glad to get his son back. The king heard about Dhruva's meditation and his sacrifices and was extremely

happy to know that his son finally met Sri Hari. Eventually Dhruva grew up to be a capable young man. Uttanpad anointed Dhruva as the king on his throne and went away to a forest to spend the rest of his life worshipping Sri Hari.

After receiving the throne, Dhruva concentrated his mind in ruling the kingdom according to the guidelines provided to him by Lord Shri Hari. His brother Uttam was killed by a giant when he went out to hunt in the forest. Uttam's mother Suruchi died in the forest searching for her son. Enraged by his brother's death Dhruva attacked Alkapuri, the kingdom of King Kuber (King of giants) to give proper punishment to the giants. Many soldiers were wounded and killed on both sides. Finally Dhruva arrived at a mutual understanding with king Kuber following his grandfather's suggestions. With Lord Sri Hari's blessing he realized the presence of Sri Hari in him and everything around him. At last he handed over the kingdom to his son and took refuge in Badrikashram where he awaited the end of his mortal life. As promised by Sri Hari earlier, his angels came and took Dhruva to Dhruvalok. Even today if you look at the sky, you will see the bright Evening Star, also called the Dhruva star, reminding us of Dhruva's unwavering faith and devotion.

STORY OF PURANJAN

[The Supreme Being or God and human beings or the mortal soul are like best friends. Human beings spend their mortal life seeking bodily pleasures which earns them only

sorrow and grief. God then holds his hand like an old friend and shows the way to salvation.]

We just read about Dhruva. Now we are going to read about Prachinbarhi, a descendant of Dhruva. Prachinbarhi believed in animal sacrifices during his yajnas to ensure heaven in his afterlife. Narada, Sri Hari's devotee, advised him against doing so and told him the following story.

Once upon a time there was a king named Puranjan. He was passionate about travelling to new countries. He wanted to live in a beautiful city of his choice. After a lot of searching, he finally found that city at the foot of the Himalayas. It was a beautiful city and it had nine main doors. Once he entered the city he saw he was surrounded by beautiful buildings, flower gardens, and many jewels. He got whatever he wanted to get and within a few days he met an extremely beautiful princess. They fell in love at first sight and got married.

Puranjan was passing his days very happily. Puranjan obeyed his wife's each and every word. He was completely devoted to her. One day King Puranjan went out to hunt on a nice chariot, which was driven by ten horses. It was past midnight when he returned after hunting a lot of animals. The Princess was sad and angry with Puranjan. Puranjan appeased his wife with sweet words and many promises. Within a few years Puranjan and his wife had a huge brood of children.

Puranjan thus lived happily with his children and wife. Suddenly the king of Gandharvas, Gandharvapati Chandabeg attacked the city. He came along with his full regiment of 360 gandharvas and their wives. Chandabeg rushed in and destroyed Puranjan's favourite city. Then a mystical king named Yavan came and imprisoned Puranjan. Yavan having mystical powers changed Puranjan into a beautiful maiden within a moment. Puranjan forgot everything about his past days. He completely forgot about himself, his own property, and his children and got married to a king named Malayadwaj. King Malayadwaj eventually died. Puranjan struck by grief decided to end her/his life with the king. A pyre was prepared to cremate both.

At that moment, a handsome Brahmin appeared in front of Puranjan and told him, "Puranjan, have you completely forgotten who you are? Don't you know you are not a woman at all? Why should you sacrifice your life? You don't have any relationship with that dead person. You were a king. We had been very good friends for many years. Have you forgotten that even before you were a king, we were just two swans of Manas Sarovar (a lake in the Himalayas)"? The words of this young Brahmin revived Puranjan's memory.

The story narrated by Saint Narada is very relevant. Once Prachinbarhi requested Saint Narada to explain the inner meaning of the story, Saint Narada said, "In this story, Puranjan represents all mortal beings and the young Brahmin

represents God. Princess Puranjan's marriage represents the mind that gets easily distracted by meaningless pleasure. The city with nine main doors represents our body. We each have two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, one mouth, and two excretory apertures. The 360 Gandharvas and their 360 wives are 360 days and nights. Gandharva King Chandabeg represents time that makes everything pale into insignificance and the Yavan king represents death and as mentioned earlier, the two swans are God and the mortal beings."

Narada further told Prachinbarhi that actually there exists an eternal friendship between the Supreme Being and the mortal beings. The Supreme Being or God is invisible and cannot be seen with mortal eyes. However, when mortal beings are in trouble for their own stupidity, God comes like an old friend to rescue them. Human beings run about to get material pleasure and as a result sometimes they are happy and sometimes they are sad. They value their ego most and ascribe everything as 'mine' or 'me'. That bodily attachment to material pleasures leads to attachment for this material world and thus they can never break through the cycle of birth and death. Birth is like a nightmare and nightmares plague human beings as long as they survive. They are only free from nightmares when they awake from their sleep. Similarly if they can awaken themselves from the false attachments and infatuation for material world and can realize themselves as a part of the Supreme Soul, only then can they break free from the cycle

of birth and death and join the Supreme soul eternally.

Finally Narada told the king, "Dear king please try to get rid of your material attachments. Don't sacrifice animals for achieving heaven in your after life. Killing animals will get you nowhere. Instead do something that will please Sri Hari, learn something that will pull your mind towards Sri Hari; Sri Hari is the source of every power in this world and the ultimate destination of all human beings. Sri Hari is the one true best friend that any mortal being can have. The one who knows this is truly learned and the one with true knowledge is the guru and Sri Hari is reflected in the guru then.*

* Sa Bei Priyatamashchatma Yato Na Bhayamwapi.

Iti Bed Sa Bei Bidwan Sa Gururharih. 4/29/51

Fifth Skanda

JARA-BHARATA

[Illusion is the reason behind our captivity in this world. King Bharata who later became a saint had to be born as a deer calf because of his false attachment for a deer calf. In his next life when he started living without any attachments, he was blessed with infinite knowledge. His simple way of life made many think that he was stupid and inactive and called him 'Jara Bharata' meaning lifeless Bharata. Though he appeared stupid, he had infinite knowledge and wisdom within.]

Manu had two sons, Uttanpad and Priyabrat. We read about Uttanpad in the story of Dhruva. Now we will discuss the ancestors of Priyabrat. Rishavdev was one of the descendants of Priyabrat. Rishavdev had hundred sons and the eldest one was named Bharat. Many people believe that the name of our country India which is called 'Bharat Barsha' in the native tongue was derived from his name. Rishavdev handed over the kingdom to his son Bharat and went to Badridham to worship 'Nara-Narayana', one of the avatars of Sri Hari. Rishavdev through meditation and devotion attained the grace of God there.

King Bharata was a very capable and religious king whose subjects were really happy. However, he was not satisfied with his royal obligations. He handed over all responsibilities of his Kingdom to his sons and began to live

at Pulakashram so that he could live the life of a hermit.

The ashram or hermitage was situated in a very scenic place by the bank of the river Gandhaki. Bharat used to meditate on Lord Sri Hari's name by the bank of that river. Many deer would come and play near him and drink from the river happily. One day a lion appeared and attacked the herd of deer. Scared for its life a very pregnant deer jumped in to the river to swim across in order to get away from the lion and while she was in the river she gave birth to her calf. After crossing the river the mother deer entered a cave to save her life. But within a short while she died. All this happened in front of the King Bharat. The kind hearted King immediately took the helpless baby deer out of the river water and saved its life.

He brought the calf back to the hermitage and nursed it back to health with love and affection. In fact, within a short period of time he became so attached to the deer that he spent most of his time caring for the deer than practising his meditation and yajnas. He spent all his time thinking and caring for the deer. Eventually King Bharat's life come to an end and he left this world thinking of the baby deer.

It is said that a dying person's last thought materialises after his rebirth. So, the King was born again as a deer. But the power of his devotion enabled him to remember the incidents of his past life. He repented a lot about his past life's

false attachment and this repentance cleared his soul of all pain. Eventually he was relieved of his deer life and was born again in a religious Brahmin family.

The memories of his previous life did not desert him and he used his lessons learned in his past life this time. He behaved like a deaf, dumb, and insane person so that no one would develop attachments for him. His father, an experienced scholar tried in vain to teach him. He was named 'Jara Bharata' meaning lifeless Bharata by everyone, since he never communicated with anyone.

Time flew by and his parents of this life died due to old age. Unable to teach him any lessons, his brothers sent him to work in the field to earn his keep. One day King Rahugan was passing through that way on a palanquin. There was shortage of one bearer in number. So Jara Bharata got that place. However, Jara Bharata was in his own world. He was not paying attention to the other palanquin bearers and sometimes slowed down and sometimes stopped delaying the other bearers. The king got angry and started yelling at Bharata. The king yelled. "Why are you doing this? Are you tired? But you don't look tired. In fact you look fat. So what is your problem? Are you old or crippled in some way? I think I need to punish you in order make you work efficiently for me."

Jara Bharata appeared simple but he had infinite wisdom. He replied, "No I am not tired. I am not merely this

body. The eternal soul dwells within me. My soul travelled nowhere so why should I be tired? You might choose to laugh at me, but the truth is that palanquin weighs nothing and your soul has no destination. You are right to mock me as fat. This body is nothing but a mass of fat. It is the immortal soul that gives you consciousness. One who identifies this mortal body as himself or herself will experience mass and weight, hunger and thirst, and also tiredness. I am not my body so I don't experience all those. However, if you still think that I am only this human frame then I am as good as dead. Every body expires and the one who does not seek the knowledge of the immortal soul is as good as dead. How can you punish me to make me work? How can you do that? The relationship between the king and his servants is not absolute. If you lose your kingdom tomorrow and I become the king, our relationship then will change! I may appear simple or stupid to you but I have realized the true divine knowledge. Now your advice or punishment will have no effect on me. If you still consider me to be stupid, there is also no point in educating me since you should know that I am uneducable."

He continued, "My name was King Bharata in my past life. I renounced the material world to devote my life to the search of divine knowledge through meditation.* Due to irony of fate I became attached to a little deer calf and was reborn as a deer. But I worshipped Lord Krishna so with his grace I retained the memories of my past life as a deer. In this

life I act stupid, deaf and dumb so that I do not get attached to anyone again.”

King Rahugan was extremely surprised after listening to Jara Bharata. He got off his palanquin and touched Jara Bharata's feet with respect. He then said, “Dear Lord, please accept my apology. I had no idea who you were. Now after listening to you I realize that you have perceived the Lord *within* you. I was blinded by my pride of being a king. Please forgive me and tell me how I can be absolved of the sin of insulting a great saint like you?”

Rahugan further said, “It is hard to recognize the individuals who have earned the divine knowledge and hence are the part of the divine soul themselves. I apologize for my mistake and offer my respect to every child, man and woman who might have this divine knowledge. I hope they will bless me.”**

Bharata accepted the King's apology and gave him much valuable advice. He said that treading the material world is very dangerous. One needs to be very careful. Like the travellers who lose their way in the forest in search of money, men lose their way in this world in search of bodily pleasures. Instead of gaining pleasure they end up losing all the mental peace they had. The six robbers in the forest represent the six basic emotions such as anger, greed lust etc. They destroy everything. If one is not careful these emotions might drag one to one's doom like a wolf drags a wayward sheep or a fox

drags a weary traveller by the road to their dark den to devour.

So how can one be safe from all these dangers? Bharata explained it to Rahugan. He said that, “People who can control their impulsive desires and dedicate their lives to God can save themselves. They become the devotees of Sri Hari and wield the sword of knowledge against the robbers (emotions) to cross the dense forest called life.”

The advice of Jara Bharata adorn the stanzas of Bhagwata like shining pearls of wisdom.

*Aham Pura Bharato Nam Raja, Bimukto Drishti Shruto Sango Baddhoh.

Aradhanam Bhagowat Ihomano, Mrigohbhabam Mrigasangadhatarthah.

Saa Mang Smriti Mrigadehehapi Veer! Krishnarchana Prabhava No Jahati.

Atho Aham Jansangadsango Bishanko Manoh Bibritashcharami. 5/12/14

**Namoh Mohodbhyahstuh Namoh Shishubhya, Namoh Yubobhya Namoh aa Batubhyah.

Ye Bhrahmana Gambadhuta Lingashcharanti tebhyah Shibamastu Ragyam. 5/13/23.

Sixth Skanda

STORY OF AJAMIL

[Like fire burns wood without the wood knowing it or a strong medicine cures a severe disease, taking God's name can absolve one of any sin. There was a sinner named Ajamil who escaped hell's devils by taking Narayan's (an avatar of Sri Hari) name.]

It is mentioned in the Bhagwat that people who sin go to hell. King Parikshit asked Sukdeva how one could be absolved of sins and thus avoid hell. Sukhdeva told the King that hell could be avoided by controlling impulses and by leading a religious and disciplined life. He then added that one could be absolved of sins through pure devotion. Devotion clears sin like the sun clears the fog. To illustrate his point Sukhdeva then told Parikshit the story of Ajamil.

There was a Brahmin named Ajamil in Kanouj. He left his lawfully wedded wife for a maid servant out of lust and led a sinful life with her. They had ten sons together and he named the youngest one Narayan. Since Narayan was the youngest one, Ajamil was very affectionate towards him and would call Narayan every now and then to enjoy his company. Narayan became the center of all affection in Ajamil's life and was always in Ajamil's thought.

Eventually Ajamil turned eighty years old and the devils from hell (Yama Duta) came to take him to hell. Scared

Ajamil started crying out the name of his youngest son Narayan with all his heart.

Hearing the heart wrenching cries of Ajamil, Lord Narayan's heart melted. He immediately sent four of his angels to take care of Ajamil. The angels saw upon arriving that the hell's devils were tying up Ajamil to take him back to hell. They intervened and asked them to leave Ajamil behind. The hell's devils objected to this and told them that this Brahman is a sinner; he left his wedded wife and spent his life with another woman out of lust. He needs to be punished and so he should be presented before Yama, the King of Hell. Vishnu's angels argued that Ajamil was already absolved of all his sins since he had called Narayan's name as his end neared. Sri Hari's name not only washes away all sins but it also uproots the sinful desires in the sinner. Since he took Narayan's name, true knowledge will soon be revealed to him. Hell's devils finally conceded to Vishnu's angels and let Ajamil go. Ajamil humbled by the experience thanked Vishnu's angels with all sincerity.

After Vishnu's angels left, a new life began for Ajamil. He was struck with remorse and said to himself, "How was I so blinded by lust that I left my wedded wife, my work, and my parents? I lived with a lowly woman and insulted all my ancestors. I never paid my due respects to my true family. O lord how I have sinned! And yet when I cried for help to Narayan he sent his angels and saved me from hell. I will

leave my wayward ways and live a pious life from now on. I will control my impulses which got me here in the first place.”

Ajamil dedicated the rest of his life to Sri Hari through devotion and meditation. When his time was over, once again, Vishnu's angels came and took him to Vaikunthadham on a gold chariot.

It is wise to hate a sin but not the sinner. If one can show the sinner the wrongness of his way, the sinner can repent and lead a virtuous life.

DADHICHI'S SACRIFICE AND DEMISE OF BRITRASURA

[“We love our own body. But the body does not last long. If that body can help someone then it is his good luck.”- Saint Dadhichi]

Once upon a time, Indra, the king of heaven and the king of all other lesser gods, was sitting in his court with his wife Sachi Devi when the teacher or guru of all gods, Vrihaspati, arrived there. Ideally, Indra should have stood up and paid obeisance to Vrihaspati, but He completely ignored Vrihaspati and made no such endeavour. Insulted, Vrihaspati left heaven and went far away. Soon Indra realized his mistake and regretted his actions. He searched for Vrihaspati everywhere but could not find him.

The demons took advantage of this vulnerable moment of Indra and attacked heaven. Feeling helpless without their wise teacher and adviser, the gods ran to Brahma to seek his advice on how to subdue the demons. Brahma suggested that they should accept Tvashta's son Viswaroop as their teacher and offer yajnas to appease him in order to seek his help. Tvashta was the engineer for the lesser gods. Brahma also told the gods that Viswaroop appeared young but was the only one with skills to help the gods. The gods immediately followed Brahma's advice and started making sacred offerings to Viswaroop through yajnas. Viswaroop however was already very fond of the demons. So while he accepted the gods' offerings he passed those resources back to the demons to make them stronger. The gods soon realized this treachery and in blinding rage beheaded Viswaroop.

Tvashta heard about his son's death. He started plotting revenge against the gods. He started a yajna himself with the goal to annihilate Indra. A very powerful and vicious demon was born out of the fire of that yajna named Britra or Britrasura (Britra the demon). Britrasura immediately attacked the gods. The gods fired every weapon in their arsenal on Britrasura but Britrasura managed to swallow all the weapons. Terrified, the gods then started praying to Lord Vishnu. Hearing their desperate cry for help Lord Vishnu appeared in front of the gods. After hearing everything from Indra, Vishnu said, “Now that I have heard about the nature of the threat, there

is only one weapon I can suggest that can defeat this demon. You have to get Vishwakarma (another divine engineer) to devise a weapon named Vajra (lightning). Now Vajra needs to be built with the bones of a saint who has lived a sacred and ascetic life throughout. I think you should go to Saint Dadhichi and ask him to donate his bones for this cause.”

The gods immediately went to Saint Dadhichi and requested him to donate his body. Dadhichi being a great saint wanted to test the gods first before committing to them. Donating his body would mean death. So Dadhichi did not comply with the request at first. The gods then started praising him and told him, “Great saint you are a holy man with a life dedicated to spiritual causes; you have already dedicated your soul to the well being of the universe; donating the body should not be anything to you.” Hearing this Dadhichi admitted that he was just testing the gods and told them, “I just wanted to hear your cause once more. There is no doubt that my body is dear to me, however, with or without my consent this body will die one day. So if this body helps someone I’ll consider it my good luck. I will sacrifice my body for the well-being of you all today.”* Saying this Dadhichi went back to meditation and focussed his soul on the infinite Brahman and instantly left his body to blend as one with the Supreme soul or Brahman.

The gods then took the bones of Saint Dadhichi to Viswakarma. Viswakarma built the deadly Vajra and handed

it over to Indra. A deadly battle again ensued between gods and demons to regain control over heaven on the banks of the river Narmada.

The demons were scared by the might of the Vajra and started running away from the battlefield. However, the brave demon king Britra assembled them back again and started to fight. It was a deadly fight. Britrasura roared when he saw Indra and said, “You killed my brother Viswaroop. I will exact my revenge today on you. If you think you can win by killing me with that weapon of yours built by the bones of Saint Dadhichi, then you are wrong. It is actually a blessing in disguise for me. This weapon is built from the blessing of Sri Hari and the divine power assimilated by Saint Dadhichi. You yourself are being sent by Sri Hari. Where there is Sri Hari there can be no defeat. If I die today I will achieve salvation by the power of your weapon. Your weapon will not only destroy my body but all the sins and all the illusions that bind me to this material world, by the grace of Sri Hari.”

Saying this Britra started to fight viciously. Indra tore Britra’s one hand with the Vajra but still Britra kept fighting with his other hand. At this moment Indra dropped the weapon. Indra felt embarrassed to attack an already injured opponent and was thinking what to do. At this moment Britra spoke to Indra again. Britra said, “Indra, pick up the Vajra. Winning and losing, happiness and sadness, life and death, all are equal to me. Human beings act according to the gunas that

pervade their nature. A satwik person has noble and holy qualities. A Tamasic person is a lazy person and runs after sensual pleasures and a rajasic person behaves in a kingly manner possessing majestic qualities. Tamo (describes a lazy man who lives for bodily pleasures) and Rajoh (characters that describes a king) manipulate the body. The soul is like a witness to it all. This battle that we are fighting is like a game of chess. There is no knowing who will win or lose and when."

Indra was extremely surprised to hear the wise words uttered by the demon. Indra said, "O Demon King you must also be a great devotee, otherwise you would not have known this. You are a devotee of Sri Hari who is the life in all souls and is also the best friend of all life forms. You have already earned the grace of Sri Hari; what use do you have of heaven now!"

Indra tore away the other hand of Birtra with Vajra. Still, the demon kept fighting with his head. Britra opened his mouth and swallowed Indra along with his elephant, Oirabat, and his weapon Vajra. By the grace of Sri Hari, Indra tore through the demons stomach and beheaded the demon at last.

As soon as the the demon died, his body exuded a beautiful glow. It rose upwards and merged in sri Hari.

*Dhraman Boh Shrotukameno Yooyang Pratyudahritah.

Esham Boh Priyamatmanang Tyajantang santajamaham. 6/10/7

STORY OF PRAHLAD

Sri Hari or Almighty God is a friend to all life forms. So why do lesser gods (gods who are created from the Supreme Power but have limited power over parts of nature; for example Indra was king of all lesser gods, Varun was king of all water bodies etc.) and saints are preferred over the demons by Sri Hari? Why does Sri Hari help Indra to defeat the demons? These were questions that plagued King Parikshit's mind after he heard the saga of Saint Dadhichi and his sacrifice. Sukhdeva replied that praise or criticism, the sense of me and mine, only affect the body. The soul is not a part of it. Beings that focus only on their physical existence receive their dues according to their Karma. The punishment they receive from God is for their own good.

In ancient times there were two demon brothers, named Hiranyakkha and Hiranyakashipu. As discussed earlier in the story of Jay and Bijay, Varahadev went into the mass of water and killed Hiranyakhya and saved the Earth. Hirnyakashipu swore to avenge his brother's death and started meditating on Lord Brahma to attain a boon. Satisfied by his meditation, Brahma granted him a wish or boon. Hiranyakashipu wished that no man, no god, no Gandharava, no demon, and no animal should be able to kill him on Earth or in the sky. Brahma granted his wish. Hiranyakashipu became invincible due to the boon granted to him. He attacked heaven and drove away the lesser gods from it. Helpless, the gods

sought asylum in Lord Vishnu's Kingdom. The Almighty God provided them shelter and asked them to be patient. He said, "Just wait a little longer. A solution will emerge."

Hiranyakashipu had four sons. The youngest one was named Prahlad. Somehow Prahlad was not like other demons. Unlike other demon children he was not interested in quarrelling or fighting. He was calm, quiet, and very well behaved and he always meditated on Sri Hari in his heart.

The king was worried about the education of his youngest son. After all, who should he choose to teach this strange child? The demon king's head priest had two sons named Shanda and Amarko. Hiranyakashipu appointed them as Prahlad's teachers. After a few days the king picked up Prahlad on his lap lovingly and asked him, "Dear son, now that you have started studying, what have you liked best so far?" Prahlad replied, "The false attachment to this body that builds false identification as 'me' or 'mine' leads the soul to darkness. To get rid of this darkness it is best to seek Sri Hari's grace. This is the best thing I have learned."

The king smiled hearing this and thought that his son must have come in contact with some Vaishnava (worshippers of Vishnu) in disguise and that's why he was talking like this. The king warned his teachers that they should be more careful about those who come in contact with Prahlad and specifically forbade them to talk about Sri Hari and his grace. Shanda and Amarko became extra cautious while teaching Prahlad.

After a few days they brought Prahlad back to see his father again. Prahlad paid obeisance to his father by touching his feet. Pleased, the king asked the same question again, "Tell me the valuable thing you have learned from your teachers."

Prahlad replied, "Listening (about Lord Vishnu), chanting prayers (of Lord Vishnu), remembering (thinking about Lord Vishnu), caring (worshipping Lord Vishnu), invoking, praising, enslaving (oneself to Lord Vishnu), befriending, and complete self-surrender to Lord Vishnu are the nine criteria of devotion that when learned opens up the way to salvation. This is the best thing that I have learned."*

Hiranyakashipu was driven crazy by anger. He roared at Prahlad's teachers. "How dare you two disobey me? How dare you teach my son to worship my sworn enemy Sri Hari?" The teachers humbly replied that they were not to be blamed for what the boy has learned because they did not teach him any such thing. They also added that they suspected that Prahlad learned about these things through meditation. Prahlad was still sitting on his father's lap. He retorted again, "They did not teach me all this. They are not free themselves, how can they teach me to attain salvation through Sri Hari? You can only devote yourself to Sri Hari if you can renounce the material world."

Blinded by anger the demon king threw his five year old son on the floor. Enraged he screamed, "Kill this bad seed right now. He is devoted to my sworn enemy Sri Hari. If this

five year old boy becomes his own father's enemy there is no choice but to amputate him like an infected organ."

The demons then tried every torture possible to kill little Prahlad. They speared him, beat him, drowned him, and tried to kill him with many weapons, but all was in vain. Everytime the demons tried to kill him, the little devotee prayed with all his might and Sri Hari saved him. The demons then threw him in front of a mad elephant, but instead of killing him, the elephant picked up little Prahlad on its back and protected him. He was then thrown into a den full of poisonous snakes. When Prahlad chanted Sri Hari's name, the snakes raised their hoods and started dancing around him instead of biting him. They tried to throw him down from a mountain top and yet Prahlad emerged unharmed. Finally they decided to starve him. When the demons saw that after many days of starvation Prahlad was still alive, they gave him poisoned rice to kill him. To their surprise, yet again, the poison had no effect on Prahlad. Sri Hari protected his little devotee from all harm every time.

This worried Hiranyakashipu to no end. He started wondering where from this little boy got so much strength; more importantly is this little boy the king's doom! Shanda and Amarka reassured the king. They said. "Almighty king, you are the invincible king of all demons. Prahlad is just a little boy. He cannot harm you. Better give him back to us. Let us try and see if we can change him."

Prahlad was kept under the tutelage of Shanda and Amarka. When his teachers were busy, the other demon boys would crowd around him. Prahlad used to tell them beautiful stories. All those stories were about Sri Hari. He told them that being born as a human or a fully sensient being is extremely rare. Everyone should use their human lives to attain Sri Hari. He told them that the human body is again very unpredictable and fragile; one never can be sure when it will stop functioning, so the best thing to do is to start praying as early as possible. ** He also told them that the average human life span is about 100 years and half of it is wasted in sleep compounded with old age and diseases. The remaining time is spent in pursuing meaningless material desires. The way a butterfly encases itself in a cocoon, human beings too encase themselves in vain pursuits of material happiness. Prahlad then added, "Thus my friends, the wisest thing to do is to devote your life to Sri Hari; He is the final destination of all life. It is also not very difficult to please him. He is our very own, very dear. He is dearer than the dearest in our heart. If he is pleased you can achieve anything."

Prahlad's friends were fascinated by his stories. They wanted to know how Prahlad learned about all this. Prahlad replied, "I heard it all from Saint Narada when I was in my mother's womb. Almighty Lord Sri Hari himself was telling all these to Saint Narada then."

Prahlad continued, "Always listen to your teacher or

guru, be devoted to your guru. Always keep the company the saints and other Sri Hari devotees; always invoke Sri Hari in your heart. Respect him, always try to realize his nature and wonder about his miracles, always meditate on his beautiful feet that blooms like a lotus. Stay near his deity and worship his deity and knowing that he manifests in every living thing, treat everyone with love and kindness. Sri Hari can be pleased with worship and fasting, but true devotion and total surrender draw us closer to him. Unquestioned devotion to Sri Hari should be the sole goal of human life."

After listening to Prahlad, many demon children started changing. They became devotees of Sri Hari. Eventually the news about the other demon kids reached king Hiranyakashipu. Enraged he summoned Prahlad and said, "Evil child! gods and demons fear me alike, who gives you the authority to disobey me?"

Prahlad replied, "Father, the one who gives me my strength and authority, Lord Vishnu, is also the source of all your strength and authority. Right from the creator Brahma, all stationary and moving objects are owned by him; he is the Almighty God. *** Power, courage and intelligence, everything originates from him. You should give up this enmity with Lord Vishnu. You must conquer your own emotions and impulses first. Without conquering yourself if you think you have conquered the world, then your victory becomes meaningless. The one who has successfully conquered his

own impulses is the true winner and all their enemies become their friends in the end."

Hiranyakashipu roared back at Prahlad, "Damn you child. Be prepared for death. You dared to give me advice? Do you think that this God you are talking about is stronger than me? where is he now? If he is in everything does your God exist in that lifeless pillar too?" Prahlad said, "Yes father, he is in that lifeless pillar too." Hiranyakashipu shouted back, "Not only will I break that pillar into pieces right now; once I am done with I will behead you myself. Let's see how your God saves you from me now. I am invincible and I will kill you. Pray as hard as you can to Sri Hari now."

Saying this Hiranyakashipu jumped down from his throne and punched the pillar hard. The pillar broke into pieces with a loud noise and to Hiranyakashipu's surprise, Sri Hari emerged from inside the pillar. Sri Hari appeared in the form of Narsimha Avatar. His head was like that of a lion but he had a human body. Lord Narsimha attacked Hiranyakashipu with great valor. Hiranyakashipu's swords flew away from his hands and fear gripped his heart. Just as a mighty eagle tackles a snake easily, Lord Narsimha picked up the demon king. Not in the sky, not on the earth, he placed the demon king on his thighs and tore his body apart in to several pieces like a straw mattress.

Hiranyakashipu was vanquished, the lesser gods sighed

with relief. However, even the lesser gods and Brahma were scared to go in front of Lord Narsimha. To calm down the rage of the Almighty God, Prahlad started praying to him. Lord Narsimha picked up the little child and placed his hand on his forehead. Prahlad immediately got a glimpse of Brahma, the one true God. Lord Narsimha then offered to grant Prahlad a wish. Prahlad wished that his heart always remains free from false material desires and needs and that his father gets absolved of all his sins. Lord Narsimha granted Prahlad's wish and disappeared.

*Srabanam kirtanam vishnoh smaranam paadasevanam.

Archanam vandanam dasyam sakhyamatmanivedanam. 7/5/23

Iti pungsarpita Vishnou bhatishchednbalalakshana.

Kriyete bhagawatyadhya tanmanyehdheebhmuttamom. 7/5/24

**Koumaro acharet pragyo dharman bhagabataniha.
Durlabhang manusham janma tadapya dhruvamarthadam. 7/6/1

***Na kebalam me bhabotashcho rajan! Sa bei balam
balinancha paresham.

Parehbarehami sthir jangama ye, brahmadayo yeno basham
pranitah. 7/8/7

Eighth Skanda

STORY OF GAJENDRA MOKSHAN

In ancient times it is said that there was another mountain range named Trikut Mountains near the Himalayas. It had one golden peak, one silver peak, and one iron peak. The Trikut Mountain had a wonderful valley with a beautiful lake in it. Children of lesser gods and other magical beings used to visit and play in the lake. One day the king of all elephants with his elephant entourage arrived at the lake. The king of all elephants named Gajendra and his entourage made huge splashes in the lake while playing in the water. Suddenly a huge and strong crocodile swam near them and bit Gajendra's leg and tried to pull him deep in to the water. Gajendra tried his best to free his leg, his subjects helped him too, but the Crocodile had iron jaws and he could not free himself. Thus began a battle between the crocodile and the elephant which continued for a thousand years.

Many lesser gods arrived to witness the great battle. Gajendra started thinking that there must be more to this battle. He said to himself, "My own strength combined with the strength of so many other elephants is not enough to free me, This is not an ordinary crocodile. He must be god sent. So in order to save myself I must pray to Almighty God himself. Only he can save me now." Saying this, he started to pray to God. In his previous life too he had worshipped God He prayed, "You are the one who created this world, you are

the one that became every building block of this universe and again you are the universe itself. I seek refuge at your feet Almighty God! You are the best friend of every living thing. Saints renounce this world and all its riches to seek you. I seek refuge in your feet Almighty God! You are my savior. You create miracles in your mysterious ways, you have no form yet you are in every form. I surrender myself to you O Supreme Brahman!"*

Pleased by his prayer Sri Hari himself arrived at the lake riding his giant bird, Garuda, and approached Gajendra. Seeing Sri Hari himself with a conch, a club, a lotus, and a sudarashan chakra (discuss weapon) in each of his four hands, Gajendra offered him a lotus from the lake to show his devotion. Then Gajendra, weakened by the thousand year old battle, feebly said, "Lord Narayan, please accept my offering and devotion." Gajendra had no more power left to say anything else.

Sri Hari was pleased with Gajendra's prayers and disembarked from his bird and went in to the water. He then shred the crocodile's head into pieces with his discuss weapon and Gajendra was finally free from the crocodile's jaws.

The crocodile was actually a Gandharva under a curse. He was cursed by saint Deval and was born as a crocodile. He was freed from his curse when Sri Hari's weapon touched him. The gandharva offered his prayers and respects to Sri Hari and went to Gandhraloka (a limbo where Gandharvas live).

Gajendra was a great human king himself in his last life. His name was Indradumnya. He too was cursed by a saint and was born as an elephant. He ruled the Pandya kingdom. He was a very religious and devoted king. He was meditating in Malay Mountains once upon a time and during that time, decided to remain completely silent and devote himself to prayers. He was observing Mouni vrat (the practice of not speaking at all or making any sound for a stipulated period of time like a year or more). Saint Agastya arrived at the same ashram with his disciples. Since the king took a vow of silence he could not welcome the guests and pay them due respect by answering their questions. Saint Agastya mistook the silence for arrogance and lack of intelligence and cursed the king that in next life he would be born as an elephant since he was thick headed.

Soon after, Agastya left the ashram and the king accepted the curse as his destiny. The king was then born as Gajendra. Since he was a devotee of Sri Hari in his previous life, he remembered everything about his past life. Sri Hari then freed Gajendra from his elephant form and took him with him to his own home where Gajendra lived happily ever after.

*Tasmei Namah pareshaye brahmanehanta shaktaye,

Arupyaorurupayo namah ascharya karmane,

Namah atmapradipaye sakhshina parmatmaney,

Namo giram biduraye manasacheshchetasamapi. 8/3/9-10

THE CHURNING OF THE SEA (SAMUDRA MANTHAN)

A grand preparation is going on. The gods approached Lord Vishnu. He ordered them to do so. At one side there will be the demon king Bali and his demons while on the other side there will be all the lesser gods and their king, Indra. The under sea mountain, Mandar will become the churning stone and the great Serpent King Vasuki Naga will become the rope tied around the stone. Churning the sea will finally yield ambrosia that will grant immortality to lesser gods.

The question was where to place the Mandar Mountain. Who could bear the great weight of a mountain? Sri Hari solved the problem in an instant. He turned himself into a giant tortoise (Kurma avatar) and went under the sea. Mandar Mountain was then seated on his back and the great serpent was tied around the mountain. The churning started. First thing that was churned out of the sea was a deadly poison named Halahal. The entire creation was about to be destroyed. Such was the power of the poison. The lesser gods ran to Lord Shiva and prayed to him to solve this issue and save all creation. Shiva, another form of Sri Hari, friend of all creation, agreed to drink the poison to rid the universe of it. The poison turned his throat blue and henceforth Shiva was also called Nilakantha (blue throat). Saints often feel the pain of others and empathize with them. Empathizing with others in their pain is the best way to worship God.*

As a result of this churning the sea yielded a cow

named Surabhi, a horse named Ucchasraba, Oirabat and seven other elephants, a priceless jewel named Kaustava, and Kalpataru or a wish fulfilling tree named Parijaat. Finally, the goddess of prosperity, the beautiful Lakshmi Devi emerged from the sea. Everyone wanted to know who Lakshmi would marry. Lakshmi on the other hand saw that there was intense meditation somewhere but no power to control rage as in the case of saint Durbasha. There was power and position but no control over sensual desire. Like that of Brahma and Chandra (the moon); there was knowledge but no freedom from attachments like that of Sukracharya (teacher of demons); there was piety without mercy like that of saint Parshuraam; there was long life but no peace and bliss like that of saint Markandeya; and while the Chaturasanas possessed all the saintly qualities but they had taken a vow not to marry. Finally Lakshmi decided that her best choice for husband would be Sri Hari Himself since he is the embodiment of all virtues. Thus the goddess of prosperity married Sri Hari and accepted him as her husband.

Then emerged a lady named Sura which means intoxication, the demons accepted her with great praise. Finally the doctor of all gods, Dhanantwari emerged with the ambrosia in a golden pitcher. As soon as the pitcher arrived, the demons broke their peace pact and snatched the ambrosia away from Dhanantwari and escaped. Disheartened after all the hard work, the lesser gods assembled near Vishnu and prayed for his help.

Lord Vishnu turned himself in to an attractive and very beautiful female named Mohini and went to the demons. The demons were fighting among themselves in order to decide who should drink the ambrosia first and how much. When they saw an extremely attractive and beautiful woman approaching them, they stopped fighting among themselves and gave the pitcher to her and asked her to arbitrate the matter. Mohini asked the demons to sit in a row and made the gods sit in another row. Then she distributed the ambrosia among the gods while she kept the demons distracted by her sweet talks. There was one demon named Rahu, who suspected foul play and disguised himself as a god and sat in the row of gods. When he raised the glass of ambrosia to his mouth, Surya (the Sun) and Chandra (the Moon) recognized him and beheaded him. Since the ambrosia had reached his throat when he was beheaded, his head remained immortal and he tried to swallow Surya and Chandra. However, since the head had no body, Surya and Chandra emerged out of his head soon. Sri Hari then got rid of his disguise and appeared in his true form.

The lesser gods became immortal from then onwards. A great war ensued between the demon king Bali and the gods over the treachery involving ambrosia. Bali was defeated at the end.

*Tapyante Lokatapena Sadhobah prayosho janah.

Parmaradhanm tadhwi purushasyakhilatmanam. 8/7/44

STORY OF KING BALI AND VAMANA DEVA

Demon king Bali was defeated by the gods but this did not deter his spirit. In fact infused with a desire to avenge his defeat he started performing yajnas. These yajnas helped him to acquire weapons. Strengthened by these weapons his followers surrounded Indrapuri and with the help of those weapons he conquered the Earth. The teacher or guru of the gods, Vrihaspati asked Indra to have patience and told him that in time Sri Hari himself will take care of Bali. Thus Bali occupied heaven without any resistance and started a special kind of yajna known as Ashwamedh Yajna.

Meanwhile Sri Hari took birth from the womb of Aditi, the mother of all lesser gods as Vamana Deva or a little man or midget. His body was really tiny and his hands and feet were also tiny. In time his thread ceremony was held. Vamana Deva exuding a radiant glow arrived at King Bali's Yajna venue. As usual king Bali received him with due respect. Then he addressed him thus, "O Lord, "I shall offer you whatever you desire." Vamana Deva said, "You have spoken just like a great emperor. Your forefather was well known for his generosity."

Vamana Deva said, "King Bali you are a worthy king. You have descended from the great devotee Prahlad and your own father Birochana sacrificed his own life to save his enemies, the gods. You are as religious as were your forefathers. However, I do not want any riches, I only wish

you to grant me the amount of land that I can cover with my three steps."

Surprised at this request King Bali said, "Great Brahmin, you are just a little boy. You do not know that you are asking for a very insignificant thing from the King of three realms. Please ask for as much land as you need to spend your life in comfort." Vamana Deva replied, "I have no need of more land, please grant me what I have asked for and thus keep your word.

Smiling Bali accepted the Brahmin's water pitcher to grant him his request. The teacher of demons or guru Sukracharya was observing all this from a distance. Now he came running towards the king and cautioned the king saying, "What are you doing O king? You should know that this kid is not an ordinary man. He is Lord Vishnu himself. He is deceiving you. You will be deprived of your kingdom, fame and power. All these will then be acquired by Indra. Lord Vishnu is the Lord of the universe. He will easily acquire the three realms. How will you live after giving everything away to Vishnu? Wise men do not approve of charity that ruins the donor's life and livelihood."

The king replied, "Gurudeva you are right. But I am a descendant of Prahlad, if I have promised something I cannot retract my promise, even to save my own life. There is no bigger sin than a lie. Saints like Dadhichi gave their lives away to serve people, compared to that, just offering my land is

nothing. You will find several people who are courageous enough to die in the battlefield but rarely will you find a man who generously gives away everything when the time comes. So whoever this person in front of me is, he might be Lord Vishnu or he might be my biggest enemy, I will donate what I have promised." So in spite of his guru's warning, king Bali granted Vamana Deva's wish.

Meanwhile Vamana Deva revealed his full form. His body grew as big as the universe itself. King Bali saw that his body grew so big that he covered the entire world with his one foot, covered heaven and hell with the other and still he had one step left to claim. Vamana Deva then said to King Bali, "King Bali, you promised me three steps of land and there is no more land left. Please tell me what I should claim with my third step. If you don't fulfil your promise you will have to suffer in hell

Bali then said, "Almighty God, I never make false promises. I will give a place for your third step. Please place it on my head. I am not scared of hell, but I am scared of scarring my name. Any punishment that you give will be a blessing for me."*

Pleased with his offering Vamana Deva said, "This rare gem of the demon family has conquered the desire for this illusory world. He fully understood my treachery and his guru Sukracharya's warning and yet he did not step back from his promise. I will bless you with such a boon that is

even rare for gods to get. You will be the protector of this universe, the Manu during the Sabama Manvantara (the 8th cycle of destruction of life as we know it and creation of a new cycle). Neither men nor the gods can exceed you. You will always have the company of your grandfather Prahlad and I myself will protect you always with the club in my hand.”

*Yadyutamah Shloka Bhavannemeritam, bacho byleekam Surabrashamanyate.

Karomritayam tanno tabet pralambhanam, padam tritayam kuruh Shirshni me nijam. 8/22/2

Ninth Skanda

AMBARISH AND DURBASHA

Bhagwat is strewn with pearls of wisdom. Sukhdeva continued narrating those beautiful stories and King Parikshit's heart was filled with happiness listening to those.

As we have mentioned earlier, the creator of this universe Brahma was born from the naval of Sri Hari. Brahma created a son for himself just by wishing for a son with the power of his mind. This son was named Marichi. Marichi then went on and had a family. Marichi's son was a great saint named Kashyap. Lord Sri Hari's another avatar Vamana Deva was born of Kashyap and his wife Aditi whose story we have just finished reading. Ambarish, a great devotee of Lord Sri Hari and the main protagonist of this story, was a descendent of Vamana Deva.

Before we discuss Ambarish's story, let's give a little detail about his father Nabhag. Nabhag was a very honest and good man. He spent many years of his life in his guru's house educating himself. When he returned after finishing his education, he saw that his brothers had divided all their ancestral properties among themselves and left him their old father as his only share. Nabhag accepted his fate without complaining and went to his father. His father told him, "Don't worry my son! I will teach you two important mantras. The king of this country is doing a yajna. Go to the yajna venue

and chant these mantras near the saints who are conducting the yajna. You will see that you will get your well deserved respect from them." Nabhag obeyed his father immediately and learned the two mantras and went to the king's yajna and chanted the mantras before the saints. The saints were really impressed by him. They offered him money and wealth kept there for the Yajna.

Actually Rudra Deva, Nabhag's guru deserved this wealth. So he claimed everything. Rudra Deva told Nabhag, "Let's go to your father and he can decide how much wealth I should get." Listening to Rudra Deva's demands, Nabhag's father asked him to give away all his wealth to Rudra Deva. Nabhag immediately obeyed his father's command and handed over all his hard earned wealth to Rudra Deva. Rudra Deva was very happy to see Nabhag's obedience and devotion and returned all the wealth to him. Nabhag's days then passed in happiness. He had so much wealth that even some kings were poorer than him. In time Ambarish, Nabhag's son inherited all his property. However, Ambarish was never interested in money or wealth. He dedicated himself to Sri Hari.

Ambarish spent most of his time in praying, meditating, and worshipping Sri Hari. Sri Hari was so pleased with Ambarish that he ordered his discus weapon, the Sudrashan Chakra to protect Ambarish always. Ambarish decided to observe a three day long fast in honor of Sri Hari. Now as

it stands, he had to break his fast on 'Dwadashi' (the day after you break your fast is called dwadashi) in order to complete his worship. As he was preparing to break his fast, the great saint Durbasha known for his short temper, arrived at his place. Ambarish could not take food without feeding Durbasha. Durbasha wanted to take a bath in the river Jamuna before taking the food. So, Ambarish waited for Durbasha to return from his bath. Time passed by and Durbasha did not return. When Ambarish found that the time for breaking the fast was almost over he prayed to Lord Krishna and drank a little water. Just then Durbasha returned. Durbasha was extremely angry to hear that Ambarish had taken water without feeding his guest. Already known for his short temper, Durbasha in a fit of rage created from his matted hair a terrible demon. Ambarish was not scared; he didn't even take a step back. He stood still and prayed to Sri Hari for protection. Immediately the Sudarshan Chakra appeared and as soon as the Chakra touched the demon he was reduced to ashes within seconds. After that the Chakra chased Durbasha to kill him. Durbasha was now scared. He realized that Sri Hari's own weapon was after his life.

Durbasha started running very fast and the Chakra chased him through all three realms of Earth, heaven and hell. No matter where he hid, the Chakra pursued him. In order to find a solution, Durbasha went running to Lord Brahma. He said that he could not save him. He said, "It's beyond me

to protect you now. You must go to Kailash Mountain and see if Lord Shiva can protect you." Durbasha wasted no time and ran towards Kailash. Lord Shiva told him, "I can not help you here. You go to Baikuntha. Lord Krishna alone can help you. Finally Durbasha arrived at Vaikuntha Dham, Sri Hari's residence and sought refuge at Sri Hari's feet asking for mercy. Sri Hari told him, "I am a mere slave to my devotees. I cannot desert them; I know nothing beyond them."* Sri Hari also told Durbasha that meditation and knowledge are beneficial for a Brahmin, but if that knowledge and piety bring false pride then the reverse takes place. He then added, "Now you see your false pride brought you here. You must go to Ambarish and ask for his forgiveness at once. Only he can save you from my weapon."

Durbasha realized his fault and went to Ambarish immediately. He fell at his feet and asked for his forgiveness. Ambarish cringed as the much older and respected saint cried at his feet and he started praying to the Sudrashan Chakra to forgive Durbasha. The Chakra appeased by Ambarish's prayer left Durbasha and allowed him to live. Durbasha said to Ambarish, "O Mighty King! I tried to harm you and yet you protected me. Today I have learnt an important lesson of the greatness of the devotees of Sri Hari. It is very kind of you to forgive me and to save my life."

Ambarish was still starving. He then invited Durbasha to a grand feast. Ambarish fed Durbasha himself till his hunger

was appeased. Then Ambarish took his food.

*Sadhobo hridayam mahayam hridayastaham.

Madannyate na jananti, naham, tebhyom monagapi. 9/4/68

JAJATI AND DEBJANI

The teacher or guru of the demons was Sukracharya. He had a daughter named Devjani. Sharmishtha was the daughter of demon king Vrishaparba. One day Sharmishtha and Devjani went to a woodland nearby to take a bath in a lake there with their friends. After finishing the bath, Sharmishtha wore Devjani's clothes (a sari) by mistake. Devjani was angry with Sharmishtha for that and soon an ugly skirmish broke out between the two friends.

Sharmishtha was the king's daughter and she could not tolerate the insolence. So she threw Devjani in to a nearby well and left for the palace with her companions.

Meanwhile King Jajati from a neighbourhood kingdom, arrived at the woods hunting for deer when he heard someone crying nearby. He looked around and saw the sound was coming from a well. The king quickly went to the well and rescued Devjani out of it and offered his own clothes to her. Both Devjani and Jajati fell in love. Jajati asked for her hand in marriage and promised her that he would soon be back to marry her before leaving.

Devjani returned to her father and told him everything.

Enraged and humiliated Sukracharya decided to leave the demton kingdom. King Vrishaparba heard about Shukracharya's decision. He immediately ran to him and asked for his forgiveness. Shukracharya told the king, "I may stay back on one condition, that you fulfil all the demands made by my daughter Devjani." Devjani told the king, "My father will give my hand in marriage soon. Sharmishtha should accompany me as my personal slave to my new home." This condition was very humiliating for the king, but considering the greater good of his kingdom, the king decided to sacrifice his daughter's life and gave her away as Devjani's slave.

According to Devjani's request, Sukracharya arranged for a marriage between her and king Jajati. As previously decided, Sharmishtha accompanied Devjani as her personal slave to Jajati's kingdom. Sukracharya forbade Jajati to ever marry Sharmishtha.

After some time Devjani gave birth to a son. However, Sharmishtha was barred from marrying and having children. Desiring a child, Sharmishtha seduced king Jajati behind Devjani's back. She had three sons fathered by Jajati born out of wedlock.

Eventually Devjani realized her husband's infatuation for Devjani. Humiliated and heart broken she returned to her father's place. King Jajati realized his mistake. He also realized that he loved Devjani more than anything in this world. So he could not live without her. He went back after her to her

father's place. He pleaded with Devjani to come back with him. Sukracharya had anticipated this turn of events. Now when he saw that his daughter was in pain, he became mad with anger. He cursed his son-in-law saying, "Traitor, you disobeyed me and you broke my dear daughter's heart; you will age rapidly and will experience life as an old decrepit man."

While cursing his son-in-law Sukracharya completely forgot that now his daughter was married to Jajati, she will also have to suffer from a part of the curse. Jajati reminded him of that. After much thinking the demon guru calmed down a bit and said, "If any young man volunteers to accept your infirmity then you can become youthful again."

Material life and its material pleasures always allured king Jajati. He was selfish and self-indulging. He asked his eldest son Jadu to take the curse from him so that he could enjoy his life. Jadu was just like his father, extremely selfish. He did not agree. So did the three other sons of Jajati. His youngest son Puru was however very different from the rest. Puru thought that his father gave him his life and he also took care of him. So this was his turn to do something for his father. He said, "Sure I will take the old age from you father. How many people have the good luck to serve their father back? I am lucky to be the one helping you out." So while Puru, Jajati's youngest son, accepted his curse and became old and decrepit, Jajati gained Puru's youth. A thousand years

passed by and Jajati became jaded by his infinite youth. He realized that instead of having a sense of satisfaction from all the wealth and physical pleasures, his unhappiness increased and he wanted even more of everything. He then realized his mistake. He called Devjani and said to her, "Caught up by this illusion of youth, I forgot what's good and what's bad. I forgot that fulfilment of material desires can never end desire, it only increases it. Like oil aids fire, enjoying physical pleasures only increases the need for more pleasure."* Thus Jajati concluded that for his own good he will give up this never ending thirst for material pleasure.

After informing Devjani, he returned his youth to Puru and consecrated him as the king of his entire kingdom. He accepted the old age with grace now and went to the woods to spend the rest of his life in meditation and devotion.

*Na jatu kamah kamanamupa bhogeno shyamyati.

Habisha Krishnabatmerba bhuya ebhabibardhate. 9/19/14.

DUSHMANTA AND SHAKUNTALA

Sukhdeva told King Parikshit, "Your family, the Puru family is well known for producing great kings. One such ancestor was King Dushmanta. I will now tell you his story." One day Dushmanta went out to hunt deer with his entourage. Travelling through the woods he eventually arrived in a place where a great saint named Kanva had his hermitage. There he

met a beautiful young woman named Shakuntala. She was the daughter of another great saint, Viswamitra, who left his daughter with Kanva to complete his meditation. The king fell in love with her and wanted to marry her. Shakuntala agreed and they were married following Gandharva customs. The King consummated his marriage and left for his kingdom the next morning.

Eventually Shakuntala discovered she was pregnant and she gave birth to a son named Bharat. Bharat grew up to be a strong boy. He played with lions in the forest. Shakuntala decided it was time for Bharat to meet his father. She and her son Bharat, visited the king in his court but the king could not recognize his wife and son. He rejected their claim and was about to turn them away when a divine voice was heard in the court that said, "O King Dushmanata! How can you forget your own wife and son? Bharat is your son and is part of your soul. Do not disrespect Shakuntala. Accept them both." Realising his erring ways, the king apologized to Shakuntala and accepted them in his life with due respect. *

After Dushmanata passed away, Bharat became the king of his father's kingdom. This kingdom was later named after King Bharat as 'Bharat Barsha'. 'Bharta Barsha' is another name for the modern India.

*Note: The story described in 'Abhigyanam Shakuntalam' by the famous Sanskrit poet Kalidas is a lot different from the one described here.

RANTI DEVA'S HOSPITALITY TO HIS GUESTS

[There are 8 super natural powers or 'siddhis' that can be attained from God through meditation and devotion like 'anima' the power to shrink as small as an atom. Ranti Deva said, "I don't pray to God to achieve these powers. I don't even want salvation. I only pray to God to have the power to empathize with people when they are in pain and the capability to ameliorate their pain."]

Ranti Deva was a wealthy man. Whenever anyone was in need Ranti Deva always tried to help him with his own resources. Since he donated ceaselessly, one day he ran out of all his money and wealth. Not only that, he did not even have money to buy food for his family. Ranti Deva and his family were starving. 48 days passed by in starvation. It seemed that weakened by starvation, the entire family along with Ranti Deva was about to die. Right at that moment, by God's grace, a kind hearted person arrived with lots of food like rice, vegetables, sweets, and drinking water and handed over all of it to Ranti Deva and his family. After a long time the entire family smiled with gratitude.

When Ranti Deva and his family members were about to sit for supper, Ranti Deva heard a knock on his door. He went and saw there was an old and hungry Brahmin at his door begging for some food. Ranti Deva immediately brought

him to his supper table and fed him well. He distributed the remaining food generously among his family members and took some for himself. When they were again about to eat he heard another knock at the door. There was another hungry guest at his door asking for food. Ranti Deva believed that Sri Hari existed in every living being. So how could he turn Sri Hari away? Though Ranti Deva was starving himself, he fed the hungry guest with a part of his rice. The hungry guest accepted the rice with gratitude and left the house praising Ranti Deva's generosity. Ranti Deva was again about to eat his food when a weary traveller came by with his dogs. The traveller said to Ranti Deva, "Dear man, I have been travelling for many days and my dogs and I are very hungry. Could you spare us some food?" Ranti Deva had little rice and vegetable left with him which he gladly gave away to the traveller and his dogs and paid his respect to them as Sri Hari. Ranti Deva had no food left with him. Only a little drinking water was left. So he decided that he would drink a little water to save his life.

As Ranti Deva was about drink the water, a 'chandal' (a poor man from lower caste) appeared at his door step and said, "Dear man, I am a chandal. I am untouchable. People are not giving me any water because of it. I am extremely thirsty can you offer me a little water to drink? Ranti Deva assured the man and said, "Fear not my friend, I have a little water left and it is all yours." Ranti Deva was thinking, "I do

not want any super natural powers.* I do not want salvation. I only pray for the power to empathize and ameliorate the pain of people.** All Ranti Deva prayed for was to protect other people and reduce their pains. Knowing death was knocking at his door due to starvation and thirst, he did not hesitate once to give his water to the lowly and poor man.

Right from the first guest, the Brahmin, to the lowly man in Ranti Deva's house, all were different gods in disguise testing Ranti Deva's devotion at the instruction of Sri Hari. They disclosed their true identities to him and praised him for his devotion. They then offered to grant whatever he desired.

Ranti Deva remained determined in his wish. He wanted nothing more than to help others and understand their pain. He felt closer to God by helping people. His wish was granted. Free of all worldly illusions Ranti Deva devoted his life to Sri Hari. The gods sang in praise of him across the the three realms and returned to heaven.

*The 8 siddhis or Ashta Siddhis are: Anima (power to shrink as small as an atom), Mahima (power to grow infinitely), Prapti (capacity to travel across all the realms), Prakamya (power of astral projections), Ishitwa (power to create), Bashitwa (power to dominate) and Kamabasayitwa (the power to fulfill all desires).

**Na kamehham gitimishwarat poramashtardhiyuktam punarbhavam baa.

Aarti prapadyehkhilo deha bhajamantah sthito yen bhawantyodukkhah. 9/21/12.

Tenth Skanda

BIRTH OF LORD SRI KRISHNA

[King Parikshit is waiting for his death and Sukhdeva is narrating stories from Bhagwat to make his last few hours beautiful. Sukhdeva is describing the stories of the birth of Lord Sri Krishna and countless miracles that he performed.]

Parikshit said to Sukhdeva, "Listening to your stories is like drinking ambrosia. I have decided to starve and I am not even drinking water and yet I am not aware of any physical discomfort. Your words are so beautiful. Please tell me more stories about how Sri Krishna was born and what miracles he performed."

Sukhdeva replied, "I am so happy to see your interest in listening to stories about Sri Krishna. I am lucky to have a listener like you since it is also a good luck to talk about Sri Krishna with some one. As the sacred water of river Ganga washes away all sins and makes everything pious, similarly merely uttering Sri Krishna's name washes away all the sins of both the speaker and the listener."*

Then Sukhdeva continued his stories. Once upon a time mother Earth disguised herself as a cow and went to Lord Brahma to tell her grievances. She said, "Lord Brahma, I am tired of the kings and their demon soldiers fighting over my land and bringing sorrow to my people. I am exhausted.

Please help me."

Brahma was moved by this plea from mother Earth. He started deep meditation and sought Lord Sri Hari's help for a solution. Sri Hari told Brahma that he was aware of this problem and soon he will be born on Earth again to save Earth from destruction. He also told Brahma that other lesser gods and divinities have already started to reincarnate as human beings on the Earth with their spouses so that they can aid Sri Hari when he will need it. First one to be born would be the king of all snakes with a thousand heads, Ananta Deva, followed by other lesser gods. Even the goddess of all illusion, Yogamaya will also be born as a human being.

Vasudeva was born in Mathura in the Jadu dynasty. He married demon king Kangsa's sister Devaki. Right after marriage Kangsa himself was driving a chariot with Devaki and her husband to drop her at her new home with many gifts when a divine voice was heard from the sky. The voice said, "The one you are driving the chariot for will give birth to your doom as her eighth son." Demon King Kangsa immediately rushed to kill his own sister. But Vasudeva begged for her life. He said, "Devaki will not kill you. If that divine voice is true, her eighth son will. I promise you that every time a child is born to us, I will hand it over to you and you can kill all our offsprings. Don't commit the sin of killing your sister. This argument seemed plausible to Kangsa and he let them go for a while.

However, the fear of death haunted him like a ghost. To be sure, he apprehended Devaki and Vasudeva after a few days and imprisoned them in his dungeons. Kansa was infamous for his merciless ways. He usurped his own father's throne and imprisoned him for life. Scared for their lives, many descendants of the Yadu dynasty who were related to Vasudeva escaped to nearby kingdoms of Panchal and Kuru and sought asylum. Eventually Devaki was pregnant with her seventh son, Balarama. Knowing that Kansa will kill him too, Sri Hari transferred the foetus from Devaki's womb to Rohini's womb with the help of Yogamaya and asked Yogamaya to be born as Yashoda's daughter. Balarama was thus born from Rohini's womb in Vrajadhama where Sri Hari had decided to spend his childhood.

Finally one night at an auspicious moment, Sri Hari with all his powers was born from Devaki's womb. Soon after taking birth, Devaki and Vasudeva saw that Sri Hari with four arms holding a conch, a chakra, a club, and a lotus in each of them was standing in front of them. They started praying to him. Pleased Sri Hari said to them, "I was born as your son twice before, once as Prishnigarva and once as Vamana Deva. Both of you just need to think of me once, either as your son or as the Almighty God, you two will achieve salvation." After blessing them he turned in to an ordinary human infant again.

Thus Almighty God was born as an ordinary child on

Earth. But he was just a child; he needed protection. So Vasudeva carried him in his arms to Vrajadhama where he would be raised safely. It was raining incredibly hard that night and Vasudeva had to cross the river Yamuna to find a safe refuge for his son. The king of serpents, Ananta Naaga came to his aid. Ananta Nag spread his thousand headed hood to protect the child from the heavy downpour. Vasudeva reached Nanda and Yashoda's house where little Yogamaya was born to Yashoda at the same time. All were in deep slumber due to the spell cast by goddess Yogamaya so they did not know that Vasudeva kept Sri Krishna by Yashoda's side and took Yogamaya instead to his prison cell. All this while, due to the strong spell cast by Yogamaya herself, all the prison guards were asleep, the entire palace was asleep. The doors opened magically. Once they returned everything went back to the way it was. The prison doors were locked again and the guards were awake. The guards heard the infant's cry and informed Kansa that Devaki had delivered her eighth child. As soon as cruel Kansa heard this he snatched the child from Devaki and tried to kill her by smashing her against a rock, the way he had killed Devaki's six other infants. But the moment he raised his hand Yogamaya appeared in her full form with her eight hands holding weapons and warned the king, "You know very well I am not the one who will kill you. The one who will kill you will be brought up elsewhere. Don't kill infants like this." Kansa did not dare to go ahead with his killing spree after that.

PUTANA'S DEMISE

Kangsa's peace of mind was completely lost. He was always wondering about the child who will grow up to become his doom. So he sent out demon spies like Putana who could magically transform themselves and get the news. Putana brought back news to Kangsa that there was a new born son in the house of Nanda across the Yamuna River. Kangsa asked her to kill the infant. Putana had a very special way of killing infants. She had poison in her breast milk which she used to kill several infants following Kangsa's orders. She thought it will be another easy job.

Putana entered Nanda's house as a beautiful lady and when no one was looking started breast feeding the infant. Putana had no idea that this was Lord Sri Hari himself. The child remained unaffected by the poison and instead sucked Putana's life out. She died screaming revealing her true demon self. Everybody came running fearing the worst. But they were surprised to see the child unharmed. They tore the demon's body in to pieces and burned it. A strange thing happened then. A beautiful fragrance emerged from the burning body. Wise men explained that since Putana breast fed Sri Krishna, his touch destroyed all of her sins and she became as pious as the Almighty God's mother.

Kangsa learned of Putana's demise and his fear deepened. After a few days he sent another demon named Trinabarta who was vanquished by Sri Krishna again.

YASHODA SEES VISWAROOP (THE GOD'S TRUE FORM AS THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE)

Krishna, lovingly named Gopal in Vrajadham, performed many miracles that could not be explained by the simple cattle rearing village folk. His miracles surprised them. Yashoda, Sri Krishna's mother feels uneasy when she observes the miraculars feats of her son. However she ignores them most often as illusions. Sri Krishna earned himself quite a name for being exceedingly naughty. Still everybody loved him. His neighbours often came and complained to his mother that Krishna and his friends stole milk, butter, curd, and sweets from their homes. Yashoda had nothing to say. She knew they were telling the truth, since Krishna did not even spare his own kitchen from theft.

Krishna and Balarama were growing up together. One day Balarama and his friends came running towards Yashoda and told her that Krishna was eating mud. Krishna immediately came running towards them and told her, "No mother I did not eat mud. They are all lying. I am opening my mouth, you can check."*

What Yashoda saw in his mouth made her head reel! She saw the entire universe including her own village and herself in that mouth. It revealed that the entire universe was within him. That was the true form of the Almighty. He is everything. Yashoda was scared. She could not decide if she

was dreaming or what she saw was true. Krishna realized his mother's discomfiture and made her forget everything. The unsuspecting mother again picked up her adorable human child and cuddled him.

*Naham bhakshitabanambo! Sarbe mothyabhishansinah.

Yadi satyagirastarhi, samksham pashya me mukham. 10/8/35.

THE TIED DOWN GOD

Yashoda was the queen of Gokul. However, when helping hands were not available, she could do all the household work by herself. One such day when she was short of helping hands, Yashoda was churning some milk to make butter. Little Gopal, as Krishna was lovingly called in Vrajadham, came to her and held on to the churning rod making his mother unable to churn milk. Realising that the child must be hungry, the mother picked up her crawling toddler and started breast feeding him. While she was feeding him, she suddenly noticed that the milk she was boiling on the fire was about to spill. She put the child down in a hurry and went running to save the milk. Little Gopal was very angry with his mother. He threw a stone to break the earthen pot that contained milk and stole butter from the kitchen and fed it to local monkeys. When Yashoda returned and saw her son's mischief she decided to teach Gopal a lesson. She pretended to be very angry and took a stick and started chasing him. She was trying to catch the one who eludes all the gods and saints of

this world and still remains a mystery to most of them. Finally the child yielded to his mother, showing a lot of fear. Pleased with herself, she still showed mock anger to Gopal. In order to teach him a lesson she decided to tie him to a heavy post for sometime while she finished the housework. But everytime she tried to tie him with a rope, it was always two inches short. The longer the rope got the bigger the child got. Finally, Yashoda was tired and started sweating. Seeing his mother in distress, Gopal yielded and let her tie him to the post. This world is at his fingertip, yet he surrenders to the one who devotes himself or herself to him completely. *

*Ebam Sandarshita Hringya! Harina bhritya bashyata.

Swabashenapi krishnena yasyedang seshwaram bashche. 10/9/19

RESCUING THE TWIN ARJUN TREES

Little Gopal was tied to a heavy pillar now. Relieved Yashoda went back to attend to her household duties. Gopal was looking here and there when the twin Arjuna trees (a tropical tree with medicinal values) attracted his attention.

He started crawling toward the trees. The pillar broke off and the incredibly strong child was dragging the pillar behind him like a toy. He crawled through the twin trees however the pillar got stuck between to the trees and the huge trees broke down in a matter of seconds. Two enlightened figures emerged from the trees and started praying to Sri

Hari. They said, "O Almighty Lord of this universe! We are Lord Shiva's followers. Please bless us so that we always sing your praise, always listen to your praise, always do your bidding, always stay devoted at your feet, always have you in our mind, and always stay in company of those great men who are devoted to you."

Parikshit asked Sukhdeva, "Were they some lesser gods cursed to live a life of trees?" Sukhdeva told the king that these two entities were named Nalkubor and Manigrib and they were companions of Lord Shiva. The thought of being the companions of the great Lord Shiva filled them with pride and they started living an erratic life. One day these two were heavily intoxicated and decided to take a dip in the Mandakini River on the Kailash Mountain. While they were having fun with others, saint Narada, a great saint and Brahma's son passed by. Everyone immediately wore their clothes to show respect to the saint except these two. Offended Narada decided to teach them a lesson and cursed them to turn in to trees. When the intoxication vanished both repented their behavior and apologized to Narada. Narada then told them, "Don't worry, you won't forget your identities in the next life. You will be freed from the curse when Sri Hari will touch you."

Thus they were born as twin Arjuna trees also called 'Yamlarjun'. When Sri Hari touched them while crawling through them, he absolved them of their curse.

Gopal performed many such miracles one after the other. But by god's grace Yashoda never remembered any miracle. When she saw her Gopal crawl on his all fours, all she could see was her loving little toddler crawling around.

LORD BRAHMA'S DISILLUSIONMENT

A lot of disturbances created by Kansa in Gokul or Vrajadham made the elders of the village decide to shift their village to Vrindavan. Vrindavan was a beautiful place with abundant green pastures for the cows that was quintessential to a dairy farming community. Also, there was a beautiful hill named Govardhan nearby. So on an auspicious day, the entire village with all their animals and belongings moved from Gokul and settled in Vrindavan.

Little Krishna performed many miracles in Vrindavan too. Sri Krishna vanquished demons like Vatsasura, Bakasura, and Aghasura one after the other. The interesting thing is that when each of these demons was killed a light came out of them and merged in Sri Krishna.

Krishna with his brother Balarama was living happily in Vrindavan. One day Sri Krishna decided to go for a picnic with all his friends. Sri Krishna was encircled by his friends like a lotus is encircled by its leaves. At midday all the kids were hungry. They brought their lunch packets and shared the food. They were having a lot of fun. Unknowingly, the little kids arranged for a yajna since the destination of all yajnas, Lord Sri Hari himself was sitting in their middle and

accepting their offering by the bank of the Yamuna River. The children were sharing their food. Whatever they liked they took a bite and passed it on to others. Sri Krishna too was eating the half eaten food passed to him with pleasure like other ordinary kids.

Lord Brahma and other gods were observing this from the skies above when Brahma was stricken with doubt about Sri Krishna. He thought that how could this ordinary boy who eats half eaten food from others be the creator of this universe! He decided to test Sri Krishna. Brahma lured the calves away from the herd deep into the forest by providing them better food. When the other kids saw that the calves were missing from their herd they started to panic. Sri Krishna assured his friends and while they were still eating, he went in to the forest to look for the calves. As soon as Sri Krishna left, Brahma came and cast a sleeping spell on the other kids and hid them in a cave. Krishna could not find the calves and when he returned he saw his friends had disappeared too. He searched again for all of them but they were not to be found.

He remembered his true self then and suspected Brahma's scheme in all this. He immediately multiplied himself as all missing calves and all missing boys and started playing with them. When the calves returned to their mothers and children too returned to their mothers, they all were extremely happy since Sri Hari himself had appeared as calves and other boys and he is the only source of happiness in this

universe. One year passed by like this.

One human year is equal to one second for Brahma. When Brahma looked back after a second he saw that while the calves and the boys were still at their respective hiding places, Krishna had multiplied himself to fill in the gap. He became confused. He could not distinguish between illusion and reality. Brahma was caught in his own web of illusion that he knit for Sri Hari. At that moment Sri Hari appeared in the form of Lord Vishnu with his four hands holding a conch, a chakra, a club, and a lotus.

All confusion vanished and Brahma started praying to him and said, "Dear Almighty God! You are true, you are immutable, indestructible, and infinite. You are the celestial Lord self-revealing, and you are the source of happiness. You are incomparable, you are the soul of every living thing, you are the reason behind everything, you can not be described by any one title, and you are like ambrosia and elixir."

*Ekashtwamapurushah puranah, satyam, swayam, jyotirananata adya. Nityahakhsharohajasrosukho niranjanah, purnahodwayo mukta upadhitohmritoah. 10/14/23.

DEMISE OF KALIYO THE SERPENT

[Sri Krishna appeared on Earth to cleanse her of all demons.]

There was a beautiful lake near Yamuna River named Kalindi. In that lake lived an extremely poisonous and terrible serpent named Kaliyo. His poison was so potent that the water of the

lake always boiled and the trees around the lake died due to the terrible poison. Only one tree, a Kadamba tree (a tropical flowering tree) did not wither. It is said that when Garur, the bird, was delivering ambrosia to the gods a drop fell on that tree, thereby making it immortal. One day Gopal, climbed up that tree and without any prior warning to Balarama, jumped into the lake. He started playing in the water fearlessly. The serpent raised his head and attacked Gopal. Kaliyo hit Gopal's chest and wound itself round his little body.

In the mean time people came running from the village hearing the commotion. They all started to wail in fear and sorrow. Balarama asked them to calm down and see what happened next. Kaliyo's poison had no effect on Gopal and he could not bind him in his grip. He tried to swim around him and got tired. When the serpent tried one last time to raise his hood, Gopal jumped up on his head and started dancing. Gods started to rain flowers on him. Every time the serpent raised his head pressure from Gopal's feet drowned him a little more. Eventually blood started to gush out of his many mouths. Scared now, the wives of the serpent rushed towards Gopal and started begging for their husband's life. Krishna spared Kaliyo's life at their request. Kaliyo regained his consciousness and started praying to Sri Hari. He said, "Dear Lord we are evil by our nature.* This illusion is also created by you. We are created like this by you. So you now decide our fate." Sri Krishna told Kaliyo to leave the lake and to

head for the sea with his family immediately.

*Bayngkhala sahotpatya tamasa dirghamanyabah.

Swabhabo dustyajonathao lokanam yadsadgrahah. 10/16/56.

LIFTING OF GOVARDAN MOUNTAIN

Once upon a time Nanda, along with the gopis got busy making arrangements for a big festival to honour Indra who was the Lord of the clouds. He controls the rainfall. Krishna wanted to know why this festival was held. To satisfy the child's curiosity, Nanda told him, "Clouds are our friends. They give us water which ensures a good harvest. Indra is the god of clouds, so we are worshipping him and placing our offerings before him." Krishna was not very happy to hear this. He replied, "We should not be worshipping Indra. We are dairy farmers, not farmers who grow crops. If we have to worship someone, we should be worshipping the cows. Along with that we should donate our offerings to Brahmins and poorer folks to get their blessings. Also we should worship this mountain which shields us from so many things and provides us with so many resources." Since Krishna's argument was logical, everyone agreed to abandon worshipping Indra and decided to worship the cows and the mountain.

Nanda and villagers used the stuff brought for worshipping Indra to worship the cows and the mountain. Also he offered the brahmins many gifts and fed the poor folks, he also fed the cows. Finally Nanda and the villagers

walked around Sri Krishna to get blessings and thus ended their celebration.

Indra got very infuriated at this development. He simply could not understand how these ordinary villagers dared to ignore him. He ordered the clouds to inundate the village and thus punish them. A terrible storm began. The village was soon flooded. Brindaban was about to be washed away. All the villagers went to Sri Krishna and told him, "O Lord of Gokul. Please save us from the wrath of this god." Sri Krishna revealed his true divine form to them and told them, "Of course I will protect you all." Saying this he picked up the huge Govardan Mountain in his hand with ease like a child picks up an umbrella* He held the mountain like an umbrella with his left hand and asked the villagers to seek refuge under the mountain.

Nanda and all his villagers took refuge under the mountain. Sri Krishna held up the mountain for seven days and night. There was no sign of hunger, thirst, or tiredness in him. He did not budge an inch.

Indra was very surprised at this and realized his mistake. He came to Sri Krishna immediately and put his crown at Krishna's feet. He said, "O Almighty Lord! Now I know that it was I who was blinded by vain pride. It was my pride that led me to destroy Vrindavan with storm, thunder, and water. I am so sorry. Please forgive me and bless me so that I don't ever get the evil idea to destroy the lives of

innocent people." Sri Krishna replied, "Indra I wanted you to control your pride. I wanted to teach you a lesson, that's why I asked them not to worship you. My ruling sceptre is invisible to people who are blinded by wealth. I destroy the pride and wealth of the one that I love to show him and her, the true way."

Indra then asked his elephant Oirabat to fetch water from the Ganga River flowing through heaven. With that water he worshipped Krishna and named him Govinda which in Sanskrit means the finder and protector of cows.

*Ityuktwa eaken hasten kritwa govardanachalam.

Dadhar leelaya.Krishnashchhatrakamibo balakah. 10/25/19

RASA-LILA OR THE DANCE OF DIVINE LOVE

[A special part of Srimad Bhagwat deals with Rasa Lila where 'rasa' means aesthetics and 'lila' is an act. In other words it's the dance of divine love. It has been described in five chapters and hence it's called Rasa Panchadhyaye meaning the five chapters of Rasa Lila. Sri Krishna danced with female cow herds on the bank of Yamuna River. The young and holy ascetic Sukhdeva is describing this dance of divine love to the dying king Parikshit. This dance is untarnished by worldly sins and is only an allegory to signify pure divine love.*]

[1]

Sri Krishna is now eight years old. He is the saint of all saints. He had the capability to perform any miracle. We have already witnessed his super natural powers when he vanquished the demon Putana, the serpent Kaliyo, and the lifting of the Govardan Mountain also proves his divinity.

All the gopis, prayed to goddess Katyayani (goddess of desire) to have Sri Krishna as their only savior. Time has come for their wish to be fulfilled.

It was a full moon night. The bank of river Yamuna was looking beautiful bathed in moonlight. The moon bloomed like a beautiful white lotus in the sky. This made Sri Krishna very happy. He sat by the river bank and started playing his flute. The divine music attracted the simple gopis like a fire attracts moth. They left all their household chores and came running towards the river bank. Seeing them Sri Krishna said, "Why are you all here at this hour? There could be dangerous wild animals around and all of you are unarmed. You should not be here. If you are here to see the beauty of the forest and river bank in moonlight, now you have seen them enough. If you have come here out of love for me, that is also understandable. It's not just you but every living being is attracted towards me. Go back to your houses and take care of your children and husbands."

The ladies were saddened by Krishna's lecture. They told him, "We are here at your feet, leaving our world behind.

Please don't turn us away. The way God takes care of his devotees, you should take care of us too. O Almighty God! Even the goddess of prosperity Lakshmi is seeking your company. We are simple folks from Brindaban village. We are so thankful that we have got the opportunity to touch your feet. How can we now go back to our ordinary lives forgetting you? As Brahma protects his creation, you are the protector of our lands. O friend of all distressed people, please bless us. Please place your soft and beautiful hands on our heads. We are your humble servants."

Sri Krishna started playing with the ladies. He escorted all the ladies and strolled along the river bank with them enjoying the beauty of the moonlight. The ladies were now filled with pride. They thought they must be special, because Almighty God himself agreed to play with them, to escort them, and to show his love for them. They felt that they were better than other women in the world. The moment Sri Krishna sensed their pride he disappeared to teach them a lesson.

*Translation of Swami Vivekananda's (Madras address) speech as quoted by the author in the original Bengali text: "I am thinking about that beautiful expression of love that was described in the sweet dance in Vrindavan (Rasa Lila) as an allegory. Who else will understand it better other than some one who is intoxicated with love! Who understands why the gopis felt so much pain out of their love for Sri Krishna? The ideal love is that love that asks nothing in return. It gives up heaven for love. Who is capable of understanding this love,

is ready to give up every pleasure of this mortal life as well as everything in afterlife, just for the sake of love! The main goal of Krishna Avatar was to teach this lesson of love through the gopis. The unquenchable desire for divine love is visible in these gopis. Their love blurs the line between, guru and his disciple, the holy books and their rules, God and heaven. There is no sign of religion or fear – all that exists is unconditional love. It is that love that makes you forget about the world. The devotee then always sees Krishna; there is only Krishna and nothing else. Not only does the devotee see Krishna in everyone, he even sees Krishna in the mirror. His soul has Krishna painted all over. This is the power of Krishna consciousness.”

[2]

After Sri Krishna disappeared, the ladies were really perplexed. They started calling his name and looking around. They lost their minds within moments and started talking to the flowers and trees in the forest. They said to the flowers, “O dear Ashoka flowers (a tropical flowering tree), O dear champak flowers (Indian Magnolia), have You seen Sri Hari? O dear Tulsi (Indian Basil), Krishna is so fond of you. Did he tell you where he went?” Then they asked the trees, “O dear piyal (a nut tree), O beetle leaves, O dear mango tree, all of you always help others, now help us by telling where Krishna is? Our hearts feel so empty without him.”

The gopis enjoyed Krishna’s company. Now without

him they were losing their minds. They were under the hallucination that Krishna was with them. Out of their craze they started enacting the miracles they saw Krishna perform, like killing of Putana or dancing over Kaliyo. While enacting this, they found a footprint of Krishna and regained their cheer.

Now it’s very easy to recognize Sri Krishna’s foot print. He has a ‘Vajrankush’ symbol (the sign of the conch, the club, the chakra and the lotus) at the palm of his feet. Following those footsteps, a little while later they discovered another footprint. This was not Krishna’s. They wondered, if Krishna left with Radha. Radha was born to earn the maximum grace of Sri Krishna because in her past life she meditated and won this wish from all three gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. The Gopis said, “She is so lucky with her blessings. Did he leave all of us for her?” But where is he? They continued their search.

[3]

The gopis were completely immersed in thinking about Sri Krishna. They started discussing his many miracles among themselves. They said, “We get so much pleasure when we think about you or talk about you. Your name is like panacea, cures all the ailments of life. Just taking your name is equivalent to worshipping you or doing yajnas. People who spread your name around are the most generous people of all.” *

They continued saying, "O dear Lord, when you walk through the paths of Vraj, our hearts ache with worry so that you don't get hurt. Where are you now? You are our spark of life; you are our desire to live. We came here leaving all our families behind listening to your divine flute. Now please come back to us."

*Taba kathamritam taptajivanam, kabiviriritam kalmayapaham.

Srabanamangalam srimadtatam, bhubi griananti te bhurida janah. 10/31/9

[4]

When all their songs in praise of Krishna went in vain the gopis started to cry loudly in grief. It was then that suddenly Sri Krishna reappeared in front of them wearing yellow clothes (a dhoti). The gopis were happy now beyond any measure finding him back. Almighty God started playing with them on bank of the river again. All the night flowers were blooming in the moonlight. The air was fragrant with the beautiful smell of those flowers and the humming of honey bees was the only ambient noise. The beautiful spring moon was flooding the bank of the river with its light. It seemed everything beautiful in the universe converged that night at the spot where Sri Krishna was playing with gopis.

[5]

The gopis formed a circle and were dancing merrily. It was then that Sri Krishna multiplied himself and joined the circle in between each gopi. It seemed that every gopi was holding Sri Krishna's hand. * Every gopi thought that the Almighty God, who created this world, who owned everything, who owns even them, was holding their hand. Each one of them thought that Sri Krishna was hers and her very own. So long they could only see him in their hearts, now, they could also see him physically present with them.

Sri Krishna was in their mind and Sri Krishna was in front of their eyes. They started dancing round and round and saw Sri Krishna everywhere. Each one had Sri Krishna to her right and to her left and they danced along. It was beautiful. The beautiful creator of everything, every life, every matter, the untouchable, unimaginable Brahman was dancing with them. Sri Krishna was near and Sri Krishna was far away. There is nothing but Sri Krishna in this world. Rasa Lila is seeing Sri Krishna in everything and enjoying the infinite pleasure of the divine presence in everything. He is the pleasure incarnate; he is the happiness incarnate- 'raso bei sah'.

*Rasotsaboh sampritobritto gopimandalamanditam.

Yogeshwaran Krishnena tasham madhye dwayordwayo. 10/33/3.

DEMISE OF SUDARSHAN, SANKHACHUR AND
DEMON ARISHTHASUR

Sri Krishna had performed many miracles during his stay at Vrindavan. We have heard about some of the stories and now we will discuss about these three miracles that he performed right after the Rasa Lila.

During a certain festival when Nanda, Lord Krishna's father was spending his nights on the bank of the Saraswati a huge snake attacked him. Little Gopal saved his father then. As soon as he touched the snake with his feet a handsome man named Sudarshan came out of it. He was an educated man who was cursed to become a snake.

There was a demon named Sankhachur, who was an accomplice of demon king Kuber. Sankhachur started torturing the villagers. One day Sankhachur chased the gopis to the North. The gopis cried in fear for help. Krishna and his brother Balarama immediately went to rescue them. When the two children attacked Sankhachur, he tried to escape. Sri Krishna apprehended him and took the precious jewel from his head and gave it away to his brother Balarama.

Another day a demon named Arishtasur attacked the village in the form of a giant angry bull. Villagers started to cry and run about in fear. Sri Krishna came to their rescue. He stopped the bull and held it under his feet. Then he squashed the bull under his feet.

AKRUR AND KRISHNA-BALARAMA

Krishna and Balarama were growing up. It was their time to get out of the small village and rid the world of bigger demons. So according to the scheme of things, soon after Sri Krishna killed Arishtasura, Saint Narada went to King Kangsa. Narada said to him, "Dear king, I think you are unaware of the fact that your sister Devaki's seventh and eighth sons Balarama and Krishna, are growing up as Rohini's son and Yashoda's son respectively. The daughter that you tried to kill in the prison is not Devaki's daughter but Yashoda's daughter."

Kangsa vowed to kill both Balarama and Krishna. He sat in counsel with his evil ministers to draw out a flawless plan. They decided that on the 14th day of the waxing phase of the moon, they will arrange any agna to transform them into invincible archers. They will invite Krishna and Balarama to the yajna venue and when they arrive, a mad elephant named Kubalyapeerr will be released to crush them to death with his trunk. If that does not work then they will think of something else.

There was a descendant of Jadu dynasty who continued living in Mathura. His name was Akur. Kangsa regarded him as his friend. Kangsa invited Akur over to his place and told him about the yajna. He also told him that, "I got to know that two of my nephews are still alive. They might be my enemies but still they are members of my family. I want you to go on my behalf to Vrindavan and invite these

two boys to the yajna. Also invite their father, king of the village, Nanda with due respect.”

Akrur took a beautiful chariot to Vrindavan to fetch Kangsa's nephews. King Nanda welcomed him dearly and Krishna and Balarama washed his feet. He was treated to a gala feast. After the feast was over, Akrur revealed his true intentions for visiting them. He not only told them about Kangsa's invitation but also informed them about the foul play that he suspected. Kangsa's intention was to kill Balarama and Krishna. Both Krishna and Balarama were amused to hear this. They smiled and accepted the invitation and decided that they will head for Mathura with Akrur.

The news of Krishna's departure to Mathura spread like wild fire. All the Gopis started crying in dismay. They said, “O dear god, you are extremely cruel. One moment you transport us to the seventh heaven of delight by your holy presence the very next moment we are plunged into the darkness of despair by your disappearance. We love you, how can you leave us? You are like a little boy who plays with his toy one moment and breaks the same toy the very next moment. And you Akrur, your name means kindness, but you are the cruellest person we have ever seen. Alas! What is the point in calling you names when Krishna himself wants to visit Mathura in search of new love? Women of Mathura are lucky. They now live in a city that will soon be graced by Krishna's presence and we are mere village women now. Will

he ever return leaving the grandeur of a city to this small village again?” They were distraught and heart broken at his departure.

However, Krishna and Balarama knew they had to leave for Mathura. They had greater tasks to accomplish. Finally they climbed up on Akrur's chariot and started for Mathura. While leaving Akrur took Krishna and Balarama to the banks of Kalindi River. Krishna and Balarama enjoyed the view, and touched the water of the river and got back inside the chariot and Akrur decided to take a bath in it. Akrur went in to the water and saw Krishna and Balarama in the water with him. He got out of the river and went back to the chariot to check and to his surprise both of them were sitting there all dry. He returned to his bath and this time he saw only one of them. This time a beautiful deity was sitting on Ananata Deva's lap in the water. Akrur's heart was overwhelmed with devotion, and tears streamed down his cheeks. He realized that these were divine miracles of Krishna and Balarama. He started praying to them.

He said, “Dear God, you come in this world in many of your divine forms to complete your divine duties. People worship you in those many forms and all their ailments and sorrows are cured. You existed as Matsya avatar (giant fish) during the flood that destroyed the world to protect life. You killed demons like Madhu-Kaitav in your Hayagriva avatar (half horse half man). I salute thee. You are the one who held

the great Mandar Mountain on your back as a tortoise during the churning of the sea. O Great Lord, please accept my obeisance. You killed Hiranyakashipu as Narsimha Deva and you regained the three realms from demons as Vamana avatar. I salute thee. You are Parashuram from Bhrgu dynasty to challenge the vanity of the royalties. You are Rama from Raghu dynasty that rid the world of Ravana and his demon brothers. I salute thee. You are Vasudeva; You have appeared as Sankarshan, Pradumna, Aniruddha. I salute thee. You rid the world of sinners; you bring Satya Yuga back on earth. O Kalki avatar, I salute thee."

DEMISE OF KANGSA

Krishna and Balarama finally reached Mathura. They were fascinated by the beautiful city. The city had palatial buildings with golden doors and silver windows and beautiful gardens with lakes. They were delighted to see the beauty and grandour of the city. All the ladies of the city came out to catch a glimpse of Krishna and Balarama. The stories had reached their ears too. They said, "How lucky are the viallgers of Vraj! They get to see these two everyday."

While Krishna and Balarama were on their way, they met the washerman of Kangsa who was carrying back the cleaned clothes to the palace. As soon as he saw the two boys, he offered the clothes to them, and dressed them in royal attire. He then took him to Sudama's house, who worshipped them with garlands and sandal wood paste.

On their way to the palace, this time they met a lovely lady who had a huge hunch on her back. She said that she was the king's maid. Everyday she applied this sandal wood paste on the king. She offered to apply it on both Krishna and Balaram. The moment she touched them her hunch disappeared and her body became beautiful and healthy again. Her heart was filled with gratitude. She invited both Krishna and Balarama to her house. She insisted that they visit her place. They replied, "Not now, we ourselves will visit you some time later."

Time flew by and the yajna with arranged bows started. Krishna and Balarama were invited there as king's relatives. They finally reached the yajna venue where they saw a very strong and beautifully carved rainbow like bow that was being worshipped. That beautiful bow was guarded by royal guards. Sri Krishna picked up the special bow and strung it. The guards tried to stop him but failed. As soon as he fixed an arrow and shot it, it made a terrible noise and broke in to pieces. Immediately more guards poured in and tried to kiil the two brothers, but the brothers killed all the guards themselves.

The real celebration was organized the day after. Kangsa arranged a wrestling match. Early in the morning the entire population of Mathura assembled at the arena to enjoy the wrestling match. However, Kangsa appeared to be depressed and distracted. The preoccupied king sat on his

throne. Chanur and Mushtik, the best and the strongest wrestlers of the king entered the arena with other wrestlers. King Nanda and other invited dignitaries offered King Kangsa valuable gifts and took their seats among the audience.

It was Krishna's and Balarama's turn to enter the arena. However, their entrance was blocked by a gigantic elephant named Kublyapeerr which threatened to attack them. Sri Krishna ordered the mahout to control the elephant and leave the door so that they could enter the arena. Neither the mahout nor the elephant cared to obey them and instead attacked them. Sri Krishna killed both the mahout and the elephant and sent them to hell and entered the arena with Balarama.

People of Mathura have long heard rumors about the super human strength of these two brothers and now with the death of the elephant, they witnessed it. They said, "They must be avatars of Lord Narayan, it's Vasudev's good luck that they are born as his sons."

The war horns and drum rolls sounded and the strongest wrestler, Chanur and Mushtik entered the arena. He invited Krishna and Balarama to wrestle with them. He said, "We have heard that you guys practise wrestling while grazing cows and that you are celebrated heroes. The king would like you to demonstrate your strength here. This wrestling match should be conducted among equals. Sri Krishna replied, "We are merely kids who grew up tending cows. We don't know

anything about the art of warfare and wrestling. This will not be a fair fight." Chanur retorted immediately, "You can not claim you are ordinary boys. You have just destroyed the king's biggest elephant. You are stronger than ordinary boys. You will fight with me while your brother Balarama will fight with Mushtik. Defend your honor as heroes."

A terrible wrestling match thus ensued. After fighting a while when Chanur realized that he was unable to defeat Krishna in a fair fight, he started playing foul. He hit Sri Krishna on his chest. Chanur hit Sri Krishna badly on his chest. It was then that Sri Krishna picked him up and tossed him in the air. Chanur died instantly. Balarama too fought with Mushtik and once Mushtik crossed the line Balarama killed him too. Mushtik died puking blood. Seeing this other wrestlers fled. Krishna and Balaram started dancing in joy.

The entire arena was rejoicing at the victory. Kangsa stopped all the music. Kangsa panicked and screamed, "Throw these two boys out of Mathura right now. Imprison Nanda and kill Vasudeva. Kill my father Ugrasen too as he loves my enemies."

In order to protect both his foster and biological parents, Krishna jumped up to the throne instantly. Kangsa was terrified to see Krishna in front of him. Trembling he fell down and his crown fell at Krishna's feet. Krishna threw him in the wrestling arena and killed him.

Kangsa always thought of Krishna till his death. He used to think about Krishna while he ate, slept, sat or breathed. He used to think about Krishna all the time. So at the time of his death he received Krishna's blessings and merged in him.

The eight brothers of Kangsa came running towards Krishna to avenge their brother's death. Balarama took care of them all.

Flowers started raining down from the heavens. Mathura was rid of the greatest oppressor of its time. People rejoiced. Sri Krishna then arranged for the last rites to be performed according to custom. Then he freed his parents from the prison and surrendered himself at their feet.

CONSECRATION OF UGRASEN

When Krishna and Balarama rescued their parents -Vasudeva and Devaki from the prison they were overwhelmed to get freedom and see their sons after such a long time. However knowing that both Krishna and Balarama were re-incarnations of Sri Hari they were not overjoyed to meet their sons. They were aware that they were God incarnate. In order to give Vasudeva and Devaki the simple pleasure of having children, they, with their illusory powers, made them forget that Krishna and Balarama were avatars. They happily embraced their sons and were overjoyed to find them alive. Krishna and Balarama told them, "Dear parents we are your sons. Both

of you have suffered so much to keep us alive. It is our bad luck that we did not get the opportunity to live with you like other children. The happiness that we could have enjoyed as a family was denied to us all. You gave us this body that enables us to enjoy worldly pleasures. That is the reason why one is always indebted to one's parents. We failed to serve you because of Kangsa's schemes, so forgive us."

Devaki and Vasudeva were overjoyed to hear this. They embraced both Krishna and Balarama with love. They were speechless and tears of happiness flowed from their eyes.

Now with Kangsa eliminated, people started speculating about the next heir to the throne. They thought Sri Krishna will now rule Mathura as its king. But Sri Krishna installed the rightful king ugrasen, his maternal grand father on the throne. We shall see how Lord Krishna enthroned many kings but he never declared himself as a king. It is a unique example of detachment.

PAYING THE TEACHER'S FEE (GURU DAKSHINA)

In a country named Avantipur a great teacher named Sandipani resided. He was an old wise sage. Krishna and Balarama decided to go to him to get a formal education. Although they had already performed miracles like killing demon Putana and Kangsa, they humbly went to their guru and obeyed him and served him respectfully. They learned the

Vedas with intense concentration. They learned six types of political theories including religion, ethics, logic, etc. They also got skilled in all forms of art. They lived with their guru for 64 days. Their education was completed. Now they requested their guru to ask for anything he desired as fee.

Sage Sandipani started wondering what he should ask as his fee. God has blessed him by coming to him as a student. What more could he desire! His only son lost his life when he went on a pilgrimage to 'Pravash Tirtha'. After discussing with his wife, the sage asked God to return his dead son. This was the fee he desired.

In order to fulfil their guru's wish, they ran to 'Pravash Tirtha' which was by the sea. When they reached the sea, the sea came out to show respect to the Almighty God. Krishna said to the sea, "Sea, your waves devoured our guru's son. Please return him to us." To this the sea replied, "Dear Lord, it was not my waves but a demon named Panchajan who has taken the form of a conch and lives inside the water. He has devoured your guru's son."

Sri Krishna entered the sea immediately and killed Panchajan. But when he searched his stomach he did not find the little boy. He collected the conch that was once the demon's body and went to hell which was ruled by Yama with Balarama. Once he reached hell he blew the conch and the loud noise brought out Yama. Yama said, "Dear Almighty God, both of you are Lord Vishnu's avatar. You have arrived on this earth

to perform many miracles. Please tell me how I can be of any use to you. Sri Krishna told Yama, "My guru's son died because of his karma and you got him here. Please return him to us." Yama immediately carried out the Lord's order and brought him back to life.

Sri Krishna and Balarama went back to their gurudeva and handed over his beloved son. Both sage Sandipani and his wife were overwhelmed to get their only son back and blessed Sri Krishna and Balarama. With blessings of their gurudeva they returned to Mathura. The people of Mathura rejoiced at their return.

UDHBHAV'S VISIT TO VRINDAVAN AND THE COMPLAINTS OF GOPIS

Sri Krishna returned from his guru's place. He continued to live in Mathura. However, the gopis of Vrindavan were missing him dearly. Their adoptive parents, Nanda and Yashoda missed both Krishna and Balarama dearly too. Sri Krishna sent his messenger Udbhav to meet them all in Vrindavan.

Sri Krishna decorated Udbhav's chariot with many precious jewels and sent him to Vrindavan. When he reached Vrindavan, King Nanda welcomed him with respect and love. Then Nanda said, "Does Sri Krishna remember us? When will he come and see us? We think of him and miss him so much that we often stop our daily work. I think saint Garga's

prediction that Rama and Krishna as two divine avatars will appear on this Earth has come true. Krishna killed a great demon like Kansa and his strongest wrestler Chanur as though they were tiny insects. He broke the special bow easily the way an elephant breaks sugarcane sticks. He also protected us from Indra's wrath by picking up Mountain Govardan with his left hand and holding it up for seven days."

Udbhav and Nanda continued discussing the feats of Krishna the whole night. Eventually daylight appeared. The Gopis heard about Udbhav and came to see him. They told him, "We heard you are Krishna's messenger. He must have sent you to ask about his parents. He must have forgotten us. What use does he have remembering us now anyway? It is a known fact that when the need is over the subjects abandon their king, the disciple abandons his guru, and the priest (if he receives his fee) abandons his client. Birds abandon a fruitless tree and after the feast is over, guests leave the host. So we are not surprised at all that Krishna abandoned us."

Udbhav calmed the Gopis down and said, "Your hearts are dedicated to Almighty God Sri Krishna himself. You all deserve to be worshipped by all. Saints spend their lifetime in meditation and yajnas to earn the same devotion to Sri Krishna that you have earned through sheer good luck. It's the accumulated goodwill of all your lifetime that you were fortunate enough to earn this devotion. Tell me who else can be luckier than you? I have brought message back from your

dear one. I will tell you that now."

Sri Krishna told Udbhav, "Tell them that I can never live away from the people in Vrindavan, from the Gopis. I am their soul. I recreate and destroy myself. This is a cosmic game. I know I am your beloved one, yet there is a reason why I live apart from you all now. When I am not in front of your eyes, you will start remembering me more; you'll start meditating on my image. I will meet you all through meditation."

This message calmed down the gopis. Udbhav spent a few months in Vrindavan to make them happy. He was truly enlightened by the devotion of Gopis towards Sri Krishna. He realized what unconditional love and devotion was. He thought, "We are Sri Krishna's companions yet we don't get his company. However these simple women, tending cows enjoyed his company exclusively during Rasa Lila (Dance of Divine Love). If I am capable of touching the dust of their feet, I will feel myself lucky. I offer my respects to the Gopis."*

*Translation of a quote by Sri RamkrishnaDeva as quoted by the author in original Bengali: Ramkrishnadev was filled with wonder at the overwhelming love among Gopis for Sri Krishna. He also added that it was not only complete love and devotion it was more than complete.

NEWS FROM HASTINAPURA

Sri Krishna was a very close relative of the Pandavas (the famous five brothers). One day Sri Krishna thought that

he had not heard from the Pandavas for a long time. He said to Akrur. After King Pandu's death, the Pandavas and their grief stricken mother are not doing too well. The blind king Dhritarashtra is misbehaving with them. Please go to Hastinapura and get their news in detail."

Akrur went to Hastinapura. Kuntidevi (mother of Pandavas and wife of Late King Pandu) came running towards her brother Akrur and said while crying, "Did you all and Sri Krishna forget me? Don't you know how difficult it is for me to raise five fatherless boys?" Akrur calmed her down and told her that her five sons had divine protection and no one could harm them. Akrur then went to Dhritarashtra and tried to reason with him. Akrur told Dhritarashtra, "As a king you should take care of your subjects, kin and this world upholding ethics and morality. It's the duty of a king to treat all your subjects and kin fairly without nepotism. If you do that you will earn fame and respect as a great ruler. Just think, your own body wouldn't last forever, so how fragile is your relationship with your sons. A man is born alone in this world and he dies alone. Rest is all illusion."

Dhritarashtra replied, "O Generous soul! I know you are very kind. I know you donate food and money to many in Mathura. You have offered your sound advice to me generously too. Your words are beautiful and I'd like to hear more, but having said that I love my sons very much. This illusion of love is also created by God who is now born as

Krishna of Jadu dynasty." Akrur realized Dhritarashtra's true intentions. He realized that Dhritarashtra was never going to be fair to the Pandavas. He also realized that a war between Kouravas and Pandavas was inevitable. He returned to the Jadu palace in Mathura and told Krishna everything.

WAR WITH KING JARASANDHA

King Jarasandha was the father-in-law of King Kansa. When he heard of his son-in-law's demise he decided to take revenge on Sri Krishna. He kept Mathura under siege with 23 Akshauhini soldiers (it's an ancient battle formation consisting of 21870 Chariots; 21870 War Elephants; 65610 Horses with Soldiers; 109350 Infantry Soldiers). Sri Krishna decided to eliminate all of Jarasandha's allies first; after all he was here on this Earth to rid her from war mongering demons. So he decided not to kill the King of Magadha first.

When Krishna and Balarama were preparing for the war, two battle chariots came down from heaven armed with weapons. Krishna asked Balarama to take the weapons and to fight the enemies to protect Jadu dynasty. Both Krishna and Balarama were ready with their battle gear. When they faced Jarasandha, he said, "Krishna is merely a kid. I will not fight against a child. However, I can fight against Balarama."

A fierce battle ensued. Balarama tried to kill Jarasandha by tying him up with a water weapon called 'Varun pash'. In order to fulfil his plan of identifying Jarasandha's allies, Sri

Krishna requested Balarama to leave Jarasandha. Defeated and ashamed Jarasandha went back to his country.

Jarasandha eventually attacked Mathura 17 times. Each time he got defeated and he escaped to Magadha. With each attack he lost many of his soldiers. God's will of ridding the world of warring clans was gaining success.

KAL YAVAN AND MUCHUKUNDA

Trouble never comes alone. When Jarasandha was attacking Mathura repeatedly another enemy named Kal Yavan from Yavan dynasty attacked Mathura with his 30 million soldiers. Krishna feared that Kal Yavan and Jarasandha might attack Mathura from both sides. Following Balarama's advice Krishna then built a whole new city in the middle of the sea guarded by a fort and named it Dwarka. Then with his divine powers he shifted all the members of Jadu dynasty from Mathura to that new city of Dwarka. He then returned to Mathura alone. Balarama stood guard at the city door of Mathura and Krishna went out to meet the enemy.

Kalyavan thought that this was his chance because Sri Krishna was walking all alone and unarmed too. He started chasing Sri Krishna to capture him. Even the greatest of the greatest saints spend more than one life time to get God, and Kalyavan was trying to get Him in a few minutes. He could see Sri Krishna but everytime he tried to touch him, Krishna seemed far away. Krishan lured off Kalyavan from Mathura

to a cave in a mountain far away.

Kalyavan was following Sri Krishna closely but once inside the cave, Sri Krishna disappeared. Kalyavan noticed that a man was sleeping under a blanket a little inside the cave. He thought that this must be Sri Krishna trying to trick him. So he went up to the man and kicked him hard. The sleeping man woke up and looked at Kalyavan. To his surprise fire rained out of the man's eyes and burned him down to ashes.

Parikshit now wanted to know more about this mysterious man from Sukhdeva. Sukhdeva told him that the man sleeping in the cave was a very brave and righteous king named Muchukunda. He belonged to Ikshaku dynasty and was the son of the great king Mandhata. He was honest, truthful and a pious king. Lesser gods have asked for his help when they were attacked by demons. He protected the lesser gods for many days. Satisfied with his service the lesser gods offered him a boon. Muchukundu said to the lesser gods, "I am so tired of this war now. All I want is to sleep. The only boon I want is, if anyone wakes me up from sleep, he or she will be burned to ashes from the fire of my eyes." The lesser gods granted him the boon. Krishna knew about this and thus he used it in his favor.

RUKMINI'S MARRIAGE TO SRI KRISHNA

There was a king named Bhisma who ruled the land

of Bidarva. He had a beautiful daughter named Rukmini. Rukmini had five brothers one of them was named Rukmi. Both Sri Krishna and Rukmini have heard about each other and were interested in marriage. However, Rukmi wanted his sister to marry Shishupal, King of Chedi.

Rukmini knowing her brothers intentions secretly sent a letter to Sri Krishna through a reliable Brahmin. She wrote, "Dear Lord! I have surrendered my soul to you just by hearing about your beauty and deeds. My dear, make sure that a mere fox King Chedi does not touch the offering that is due for a lion. Tomorrow they have arranged the marriage. Please defeat king of Chedi Shishupal and Jarasandha and marry me. In order to seek blessings, the bride goes to goddess Ambika's temple, please elope with me then. If you don't marry me I will kill myself. If it takes 100 life times to get you as my husband so be it." Reading this Krishna decided to marry Rukmini.

Sri Krishna ordered for a chariot. Within one night he drove the chariot alone to Kundanpur, the capital of Bidarva.

Balarama also reached Bidarva with many of his infantry, horses and elephants to Kundan to support Sri Krishna. Bhishmak and Shishupal's father Damoghosh were also in Kundan to perform the rituals before a marriage.

Rukmini on the other hand was getting worried, since the messenger from Sri Krishna was not back yet. Finally the

messenger returned with good news of Krishna's arrival. Meditating on Krishna Rukmini completed the worship of goddess Ambika with her companions. There were guards around the princess. Many other royalties and dignitaries were surprised to see the beauty of the princess. Rukmini suddenly spotted Sri Krishna among the royalties. She was happy and assured. When Rukmini was about to return to the palace where the marriage venue was, Sri Krishna went near her and pulled her up on his chariot and then drove the chariot fast towards his kingdom.

The guards and the royalties were so baffled by this incident that they even forgot to chase them. Seeing his future wife getting kidnapped like this, Shishupal was distraught and started crying over his misfortune. Jarasandha consoled Shishupal and told him, "Young King, Don't be so sad. What you like or dislike is not fixed. The way a puppet master controls a puppet, similarly man's destiny is controlled by God."*

Jarasandha continued to console Shishupal and said, "I attacked them 18 times with 23 Akshouhini soldiers and I won only once. We are not happy or sad about it. When the time comes we will win again."

All the royal guests and dignitaries returned to their own kingdoms. Rukmi was fuming with anger. He went after Sri Krishna and attacked him. Rukmi was defeated by Sri

Krishna in a blink.

When Sri Krishna was about to kill Rukmi in the war, Rukmini begged for her brother's life. Sri Krishna did not kill him but he shaved his head and tied him up to a post. When Balarama returned and saw this he immediately freed him and let him go.

Sri Krishna then married Rukmini and returned with her to Dwarka. Lots of celebrations were held in Dwarka in their honor.

*Jatha darumayi yoshit nriyate kuhakecchaya.

Ebameeshwara tantrohoymihotey suhadukkhayoh. 10/54/12.

PRADUMNYA

In time, Rukmini gave birth to a beautiful boy who was named Pradumnya. When he was six days old he was kidnapped by a demon named Sambar and thrown in to the sea. He was then swallowed by a big fish. This was caught in the net of a fisherman who sold the fish back to Sambar's palace. Demon Sambar's cook discovered the child from the fish's belly. She saw the beautiful child and thought that the child was as beautiful as Kama Deva (Lord of attraction and desire).

Indeed this child was Kama Deva in his previous life

and the cook herself was his wife Rati Devi in her previous life. So according to divine scheme the cook sheltered the child and started raising him. One day saint Narada came and reminded her of her true self.

Pradumnya grew up in Demon Sambar's house. When Pradumnya turned into a handsome youngman, the cook transformed herself into goddess Rati and reminded Pradumnya of his past life. Sri Krishna's son Pradumnya used his divine powers inherited from his past life to kill the demon and then returned to Dwarka with his wife Rati.

Rukmini did not recognize her own son initially. Again saint Narada appeared and reminded her about her long lost son and his past life. Rukmini was delighted and welcomed her only son and daughter-in-law back.

SYAMANTAKA JEWEL, JAMBABATI AND SATYABHAMA

The Sun God named Surya Deva once owned a jewel named Syamantaka which was as bright as the Sun himself. Not only did this jewel produce 1.5 tons of gold daily. But worshipping this jewel also rid the place of war, famine, poverty and venomous snakes.

Satrajit got this jewel from the Sun god as a blessing and built a temple to worship this jewel everyday. Therefore in time he became the owner of a lot of wealth. Sri Krishna requested Satrajit to give this jewel as gift to the king of Jadu

dynasty. Satrajit did not comply with his request. One day Satrajit's brother Prasenjit went to hunt in the jungle wearing that jewel as a locket. Once he entered the jungle, a lion attacked him and killed him. The lion took the jewel and went to a mountain. In the mountain lived the king of bears named Jambaban. He killed the lion and kept the jewel for himself.

Satrajit noticed that his brother was missing. He also heard that his brother wore the jewel to the jungle. He thought that Sri Krishna killed his brother to steal the jewel. Eventually Strajit started telling people this story and people started believing in this rumour. The rumour reached Sri Krishna's ears too. In order to prove that this accusation was false he went to the jungle in search of Prasenjit. Once inside the jungle he saw the remains of Prasenjit and his horse. As Krishna continued his journey he also found the dead body of the lion in front of a cave. He then entered the cave. There he saw a little boy was playing with the jewel. Seeing a stranger the boy cried aloud in fear. Immediately Jambaban came running to his son's aid.

A terrible battle began which continued for 18 days and night. Jambaban realized that he was fighting no ordinary mortal. Jambaban was a devotee of avatar Rama. He realized that this was Rama incarnated as Krishna, he was fighting with. Immediately he fell to his knees and started praying to Sri Krishna. He said, "Now I realize Almighty God, that you are Lord Vishnu. You destroyed the great demon Ravana as

Rama. You are my god Rama." Satisfied with his prayers Sri Krishna asked for the jewel back and he also told Jambaban that he needed the jewel to clear his name from a false accusation. Jambaban not only gave the jewel back but also gave his daughter Jambabati's hand in marriage to him.

It has been days since Sri Krishna went in to the jungle. People of Dwarka started losing their hopes. They started praying to goddess Durga for the safe return of Krishna. Sri Krishna returned with Syamantaka jewel and his new wife back to Dwarka. He told everyone about Prasenjit's fate and how he retrieved the jewel. Then in front of all citizens of Dwarka he returned the jewel to Satrajit.

Satrajit now was really embarrassed. He had spread a rumour about Sri Krishna without verifying it. He wanted to gift Sri Krishna the jewel now as an apology. He also offered his daughter Satyabham's hand in marriage to Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna married Strajit's daughter but returned the jewel to Satrajit. He said, "You are a devotee of the Sun god and it was his gift to you. So I think you should keep it. Only let us share some of its good fortune with you."

CONVERSATION WITH KUNTIDEVI AT INDRAPRASTHA

Time moves on. After the conspiacy of Duryadhan son of Dhritarashtra, the blind king, to kill the Pandavas and their mother Kunti by burning them inside a house made of

sealing wax failed, Pandavas moved back to their newly established kingdom Indraprastha with their wife Draupadi.

Sri Krishna arrived with Satyaki and his other Yadav (a person from Yadu dynasty) friends to meet Kunti and the Pandavas in Indraprastha.

Sri Krishna paid his respects to Kunti Devi. Her eyes were filled with tears of joy to see Sri Krishna. Overwhelmed with emotion Kunti narrated her misfortunes. With tears in her eyes she told Sri Krishna, "You are our greatest benefactor that's why you sent Akrur to get our news and that has helped us a lot. You are the friend of every living being and you dwell in every soul. You don't have any ego and the sense of 'me' and 'mine'. Yet you reside in anyone's heart who thinks of you and ameliorate their sufferings."*

Sri Krishna spent few months with the Pandavas. When Khandav forest was burned Sri Krishna became Arjuna's chariot driver. Sri Krishna saved a good demon named Moydanav from the fires of Khandav forest and in return Moy built a magical palace for the Pandavas in Indraprastha. Duryadhan came to see that magical palace and mistook water for solid land.

Sri Krishna returned to Dwarka from there. After returning he married Kalindi, daughter of Surya, the Sun god.

*Na tehanti swapara vishwasya suhridatmanah.

Tathapi smaratam Shahswat klesham hansi hridisthitah. 10/58/10.

STORY OF USHA AND ANIRUDDHA

We have already read the story of King Bali. His son Bann was the king of a country named ShonitPura. Bann had several arms which made him incredibly strong. He earned these extra arms by satisfying Lord Shiva through his meditations.

Bann's daughter Usha dreamt of Sri Krishna's grandson Aniruddha. She fell in love with the prince of her dreams immediately. She was constantly dreaming about him. Usha's friend Chitrlekha, a minister's daughter saw Usha's condition and asked her about it. Usha told her everything. Usha also told Chitrlekha that she did not know the name of the prince. Alas what could be done now! Chitrlekha provided a solution for this problem. Chitrlekha was blessed with a supernatural power. She could draw pictures of any king or princes from her memory. So she started drawing them one by one. Chitrlekha drew many pictures, but Usha remained quiet. Finally Chitrlekha drew the picture of Aniruddha grandson of Krishna and son of Pradumnya. Usha jumped with happiness and said, "Yes this is him." Chitrlekha also had magical powers. She brought back the sleeping prince to Usha's bedroom by her magic. Aniruddha was very pleased to meet the princess and started living with her.

King Bann eventually heard about the stranger in his daughter's room. He went to check and discovered that all

the rumors were true. He got very angry at the courage of this stranger who infiltrated into his home. He attacked the innocent prince. Aniruddha had no weapons, yet he fought like a tiger. At the end, however he was captured.

Narada informed Sri Krishna that his grandson Aniruddha was captured by King Bann. Sri Krishna gathered his bravest soldiers and went to free his grandson from Shonitpura. A terrible battle followed. Sri Krishna was overwhelmed by Bann's several hands shooting arrows at him at the same time. However, he defeated the king by chopping off his arms till only four of them remained.

King Bann was Shiva's devotee, so Shiva came to his rescue now. Shiva begged Sri Krishna to spare Bann's life. Shiva said to him, "Please let him go. He is the descendant of your great devotee Prahlad. Please spare him."

Sri Krishna forgave Bann immediately and said that four hands were enough for the king to rule his kingdom effectively. He also remembered that Bann was Bali's descendant and as Vamana Deva he had promised Bali that he would never kill any of his descendants. However I will kill his army to cleanse the earth of war mongers.

Bann was grateful that Sri Krishna did not kill him even when he had the opportunity. He bowed down in front of Sri Krishna with gratitude. Now there were no more problems in getting Usha and Aniruddha married. King Bann

then got his daughter married to Aniruddha. Sri Krishna returned to Dwarka as a victor with his grandson and grand daughter-in-law.

NARADA'S VISIT TO DWARKA

Saint Narada knew that Sri Krishna was continuing his life with his many wives and children in Dwarka. He was very curious to know how Almighty God himself was spending time as a mere mortal. So he decided to visit Dwarka.

Dwarka was a beautiful city built by Vishwakarma himself. The main palace had sixteen thousand rooms. Narada entered one of the rooms. He saw Rukmini was fanning Sri Krishna using a fan made of oxtail called 'chamore'. As soon as Sri Krishna saw Narada he got off his bed invited Narada in to his room and washed his feet with water. Sri Krishna is now a mere mortal at his home, so he performed his duty and showed due respect to his divine guest. After exchanging niceties he asked Narada if he required any service of him.

Narada replied, "I came here to see you once. Now that I have seen you all my desires are fulfilled. O dear Lord of all things, O savior of your devotees! Lesser gods and saints meditate for years to catch a glimpse of your feet in their heart. I had the good luck to see your feet with my own eyes. That is my biggest achievement. Please bless me so that I remain at your feet forever."

Saying this Narada took his leave and went to another room. To his surprise he saw Sri Krishna was playing a game of dice with another one of his wives and his friend Udbhav. As soon as Sri Krishna saw Narada again he welcomed him and worshipped as a host would worship his guest. Narada was amazed. This Krishna was like a totally different human being. It did not seem that they had met just a while ago.

Without saying anything Narada went to the other rooms. He saw there Sri Krishna was playing with one of his many children. In the next room he was preparing to take a bath. Like this he saw in multiple rooms Sri Krishna was doing various things with different people at the sametime. In some rooms he was reading the Vedas and donating gifts, in some rooms he was making necessary arrangements for marrying his grand children, in some other rooms he was conducting grand yajnas for the lesser gods who were parts of him and at some other place he was trying to build a well or build a temple to help families. Again he was also seen simultaneously at the King's court where he was organizing hunts and discussing diplomatic matters with ministers all at the same time.

Lord Krishna was carrying out so many duties at the sametime. He was a responsible spouse, responsible host and he was also a great soldier and a great commander. Only the Lord of lords can perform such feats.

Narada was struck by boundless surprise witnessing

Sri Hari's unimaginable power. He prayed in his heart and said, "O King of all sages! Today I saw your real self. Give me the permission to return now so that I can sing your praises across the three realms.

DEMISE OF JARASANDHA

One day a Brahmin arrived at Dwarka to meet Sri Krishna. The Brahmin informed him that Jarasandha had imprisoned many kings in the giribraj fort. These innocent kings were captured for no reason and were suffering at the hands of Jarasandha greatly. Sri Krishna was the only one who could stand up against Jarasandha and save those innocent kings. Just at that moment Narada arrived and informed Sri Krishna that Yudhishthir, the eldest of the Pandavas was contemplating to perform a 'rajsuya' yajna, a yajna to claim superiority over all kings and was asking for Sri Krishna's permission. Udbhav advised, that the yajna was a way to kill both Jarasandha and to free the other kings. The third Pandava Bhimsen was equal in strength to Jarasandha and hence Bhima can disguise himself as a Brhamin and invite the king for a wrestling match and kill him. However, Sri Krishna must stay with him through all these.

The elders of Jadu dynasty happily supported Udbhav's plan. Thus Balarama and Sri Krishna with their friends and families arrived at Indraprastha.

This was a unique condition for completing 'Rajsuya' yajna.

All the other existing kings must be vanquished in war by the king or ally of the king who was conducting the yajna. So with Sri Krishna's permission Yudhishthir sent out all his four brothers with brave soldiers to conquer the neighbouring kingdoms. Sahadev the youngest Pandava brother went south, Nakul the fourth brother went west, Arjuna the third brother went north and Bhim the second brother went east to conquer the kings in their respective directions.

They returned victorious with wealth, however, none of them could defeat Jarasandha. It was then that Sri Krishna, Bhima and Arjuna disguised themselves as poor Brahmins and entered Jarasandha's country and requested for a meeting with the king. When they met Jarasandha they said, "We are guests in your country. We came from far off lands and you must comply with our requests."

Jarasandha became suspicious. He wondered what kind of Brahmins are these guests! Unlike Brahmins they have commanding voices. Their hands were very strong indicating that they were good archers. Brahmins lead a life of austerity, and had sweeter voices. They also were not much trained in using weapons. Jarasandha thought that these must be Kshatriyas (royalties and warriors) in disguise. Anyhow he told them, "Dear kingly friends, since you have presented yourselves to me as Brahmins you will be treated with due respect. Your prayers will be granted. In order to break the pride of the Demon King Bali, Lord Vishnu disguised himself

as a poor Brahmin and begged to give him three steps of land. In spite of his gurus' cautionary words, King Bali kept his promise and gave the Brahmin what he wanted. Similarly I too promise that you will receive what ever you ask for. Please tell me now what you want?" Sri Krishna said to him, "All we want is to have a wrestling match with you. As you have already guessed, we are Kshatriyas. Let me introduce ourselves. I am Sri Krishna and these two are Bhimsen and Arjuna, two of the Pandavas."

Jarasandha was infuriated at this deception. He said, "Krishna you are a coward, you escaped from Mathura and you are now hiding in the sea. I will not fight with you. Arjuna is much younger than me and so I will not fight with him either. However, Bhima seems capable enough and I will fight with him." He immediately brought two clubs and handed one to Bhima.

Bhima could not hurt Jarasandha a bit in the club fight. They were truly equals and thus many days passed by while they kept on fighting. Finally Sri Krishna silently indicated that the only way to kill Jarasandha was to tear his body apart vertically, the way two branches can be torn apart. Jarasandha was born in two separate halves. A demon lady named Jara used her black magic to join the two parts together. So he was named Jarasandha 'Jara' was the demon lady and 'sandha' meant joining together. Bhima followed Sri Krishna's advice and threw Jarasandha on the ground. Then he held his

two legs and tore his body apart. Jarasandha died. Sri Krishna consecrated Jarasandha's son who was also named Sahadev to Jarasandha's throne. He freed all the innocent kings who were imprisoned wrongfully by Jarasandha. The freed kings said, "Dear Lord Sri Krishna, please accept our salute. You are the refuge of the helpless; you alleviate the pains of all your devotees and you know what is in our hearts. Lord Vasudeva Sri Krishna we pay obeisance to you!"*

Sri Krishna was pleased with their prayer. He then requested the free kings to join Yudhisthir in his 'Rajsuya' yajna as his allies.

*Krishnaye vasudevay haraye paramatmane.

Pranata kleshnashaya govindaye namo namoh. 10/73/16

RAJSUYA YAJNA AND DEMISE OF SHISHUPAL

With all the kings conquered Rajsuya yajna started. Brahmins, saints and royalties started coming to the yajna venue from all over the world, answering Yudhisthir's invitation. Drona, Bidur and Bhishma, the elders of Hastinapur attended the yajna. Shishupal too was in attendance. Indra and other gods were also present and the yajna started.

Now the question was which guest should be worshipped first? Who is the Supreme Purusha? Everyone discussed about it. Then Madri's son, the youngest of the Pandavas, Sahadev said, "The one who owns this universe,

the one and only one Sri Krishna should be worshipped first. He is the Supreme Purusha. This was accepted unanimously and happily and Yudhisthir happily worshipped Sri Krishna first and placed the offerings at his feet.

Shishupal got off his seat and protested against this. He said, "Kali yuga (the last segment of time before the great flood and destruction of life) starts from today. A mere child confused all the wise men here. How could you leave all these learned and accomplished men in this meeting and worship a mere cow herd?" Then Shishupal started hurling a barrage of abuses at Sri Krishna, Yudhisthir and many other wise men whom he did not like. Sri Krishna kept quiet, and did not try to stop Shishupal. Many other kings however were very angry with Shishupal and tried to kill him. Shishupal armed himself and prepared for a fight. Sri Krishna requested the other kings to desist from such a fight. He then used his discuss weapon Sudrashan Chakra to behead Shishupal. A bright light shot out of Shishupal's body like a meteorite and merged in to Sri Krishna's body.

Hiranyakashiu, Ravana and Shishupal, were the reincarnations of Sri Hari's guard Jay. Through all these three lives, he only thought about Sri Krishna all the time as his enemy. Since he always thought about Sri Krishna though as an enemy, he became one with the Lord.

*Janmatrayanu gunita beira sanruddhaya dhiya.

Dhyayam tanmayatam yato bhavo hi bhavakaranam.

DEMISE OF DANTABAKRA

We have already read about how Sri Hari's guards Jay and Bijay were cursed to be born as mortals. In the first birth they were Hiranyakashipu and Hirankhya, in their second life they were Ravana and Kumbhakarna and in their final birth they were Shishupal and Dantabakra. We just read about Shishupal, now we will read about Dantabakra.

Shishupal's friend Shalwa was insulted during Sri Krishna's marriage with Rukmini. In order to avenge his humiliation shalwa meditated hard by surviving only on a handful of dust everyday and appeased Lord Shiva. He acquired many supernatural powers by the grace of Lord Shiva. He also received a flying chariot from Shiva. This chariot could go anywhere and had many mystical powers. Shalwa created a false Vasudeva (Sri Krishna's father) with the help of his mystical powers and killed him in front of Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna was worried for a moment but within seconds he realized the truth through meditation. He knew that his father was safe and this was just delusion. So within moments he brought down the flying chariot and dragged Shalwa out and beheaded him with his Sudrasha Chakra.

Dantabakra was the king of Karush (now known as Bihar in India). He was a good friend of both Shishupal and Shalwa. When both of them died in the hands of Sri Krishna

Dantabakra decided to avenge the death of his friends. He took his club and rushed towards Sri Krishna and said, "Though you are my maternal uncle's son, yet I consider you to be my enemy." Saying this without warning, he hit Sri Krishna on the head with his huge club. Sri Krishna stopped the club and then he took out his own divine club embled with lotus and hit Dantabakra. Dantabakra's chest split apart with one blow. Just like Shishupal, a light came out of Dantabakra's body and blended in Sri Krishna.

The guards Jay and Bijay were both now freed from their curse with the death of Shishupal and Dantabakra. They rejoined Sri Hari in Vaikuntha Dham.

CLASSMATE SHRIDAM

Sridam was a classmate of Sri Krishna in Sandipani Muni's Ahram. Shridam was a poor Brahmin boy. He grew up to be a very honest and good Brahmin. But he was extremely poor. He and his wife did not even have enough to eat for a day. His wife wore torn clothes and most of the days they had to go without food. One day Shridam's wife had absolutely no food to offer her husband. She said with great sorrow, "I have heard that Sri Krishna who is husband of goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, is your friend. Please go to him. If he hears about your misery, he is sure to offer you wealth." Shridam thought over it and decided that there would be no harm done if he visited Sri Krishna once. It will at least enable him to see Sri Krishna once again and

that would be a great reward. While preparing to visit he said to his wife, "I am going to see my friend after such a long time. How can I go empty handed? Give me something that I can gift him." The wife thought and remembered that a little flat rice remained in the house. She tore a piece of her cloth and wrapped the flat rice in that sari and gave it to her husband.

Sri Krishna lived in a great palace in Dwarka. There were many guards around him. Poor Shridam in his tattered clothes managed somehow to enter the palace. He saw that Sri Krishna was lying in his bed and Rukmini was fanning him. As soon as Sri Krishna saw Shridam he ran up to him and embraced him. Then he made him sit on the bed and wanted to know many things about him. Rukmini was now also fanning Shridam. People in the palace were surprised to see a poor Brahmin getting so much respect.

Shridam and Sri Krishna started talking about the good old days. They recalled that once they were asked by their guru's wife to collect firewood from the forest. They lost their way and the sun was setting. Soon darkness followed and with darkness came rain. They spent the entire night in the rain and in the morning saint Sandapani searched the forest and found them. He was very worried and concerned about them and hearing about their suffering, he blessed them a lot. They recalled many incidents about their childhood. Suddenly Sri Krishna asked Shridam, "Dear friend, what have

you brought for me?"

Shridam was trying to hide the bundle of flat rice. He thought that his poor offering was not fit for someone who lived in palace and who was married to goddess Lakshmi herself. However, Sri Krishna managed to snatch the bundle out of his hand and opened it. He grabbed a handful of flat rice and ate it. He then said to Shridama, "Friend this is like ambrosia. You have brought this for me with so much love that it is tastier than any other food. I'll accept anything like leaves, flowers, fruits, and water, anything that you offer me with true devotion.

Sri Krishna was about to take another handful of flat rice, when Rukmini took it away from him and told him, "You are the Almighty God. You can fulfil any desire of your devotees. Just a little bit is enough for you." Sri Krishna thought in his mind that, "This poor Brahmin never asked for an ounce of gold from me. He only came here to make his wife happy. I will give something really precious." Sri Krishna did not tell Shridam anything. He fed Shridam sumptuously and offered him a gold bed to sleep on.

Night turned in to day. It was time for Shridam to go back to his house. He could not ask for anything. He was truly happy that he just got to see Sri Krishna.

Shridam was on his way back home happily thinking about Sri Krishna. But once he reached his village he could

not find his house. Where his hut existed, now stands a palatial building with beautiful gardens. As he stood in front of the big house baffled, his wife came out of the building. She was wearing beautiful clothes like goddess Lakshmi. She happily told the Brhamin that this was their house and invited him in.

After his bewilderment subsided he realized that this was all Sri Krishna's blessing. He thought, "I did not even ask for anything and he gave me all this! I wish to remain his friend, to earn his grace and to be his slave forever." He is the source of all virtues, and he is the ocean of kindness. In every birth I seek his company."

*Patram pushpam phalam toyam jo me bhaktya prajacchati.
Tadaham bhaktuyphritamashnami prajatatmanah. 10/81/14.

LORD SHIVA'S TROUBLE

A demon named Brikasura, asked saint Narada once, "Which god can be appeased most easily?" Narada replied, "It's Lord Shiva. It is very easy to appease him through meditation." Brikasura then started unrelenting meditation and yajna of Lord Shiva. It was not as easy as he thought though. When he was almost ready to offer his own head in the fire of Yajna Lord Shiva appeared. He said to Brikasura, "I am appeased with your meditations, now ask for a boon." Brikasura asked for a strange boon. He asked to have the power to kill anyone by touching his head. Lord Shiva was

unwilling to grant a wish like that, but since Brikasura did not change his request he finally granted him his wish.

The demon was extremely sly. He decided to check the power by touching Lord Shiva's head. Thus Lord Shiva was now being chased around by his devotee Brikasura who wanted to kill him. In this bizarre situation, Lord Shiva was scared and started running around across all three realms with the demon following him. He went to Brahma for help but Brahma could not help and remained silent. Then Lord Shiva went to Shwet Deep (White Island) where he heard Sri Hari was then and asked for his help. Sri Hari is the only one who can truly relieve everyone from pain. So after learning about Lord Shiva's peril Sri Hari decided to help. Sri Hari disguised himself as a small boy and pretending to be all innocent and unaware of the world he met Brikasura. He started a conversation with Brikasura and requested him to tell his story. Brikasura took a break from his chase and stood there to explain to the child his situation.

After listening to everything, the child started to laugh and said, "Don't talk about Lord Shiva anymore. He is no more a god because of Daksha's curse. He stays with all ghosts and ghouls and has become a lowly life form himself. Why did you trust him? He can not grant you such a powerful wish. Touch your own head and see that it's all a lie."

Listening to Sri Hari's deceptive words, Brikasura was confused. Without thinking any further he touched his

own head following his advice. Immediately his head exploded in to pieces and he died. Brikasura was killed, all the lesser gods sang in praise of Sri Hari..

Lord Shiva was freed from of this trouble. Almighty God then told Shiva that Brikasura died because of his own sins. You are Lord Shiva, a great god, if someone tries to trick you, he or she will end up like Brikasura.

THE FOOTPRINTS OF BHRIGU

[Ramakrishnadeva used to point out that in Bengali alphabetical system there are three types S pronunciations S as in sorry, s as in shame and even a finer s that can be pronounced as shh. The Bengali word for patience too starts with an 'S' (Sajhya). He used to say that one who can be patient and bear anything is the greatest of all.]

Once upon a time great sages assembled on the banks of river Saraswati and arranged for a great yajna. In that yajna they were baffled by the question that out of the three forms of Sri Hari Brahma, Vishnu and Lord Shiva also called Maheshwar, who is the greatest one? The sages assigned saint Bhrigu, son of Brahma to find the answer. Accordingly Bhrigu first went to his own father Brahma. But Bhrigu did not bow down and touch his feet to show respect to him. Brahma was angry with his son but forgave him for the time being. But it was evident that Brahma was angry with his son.

Bhrigu then went to Kailash to meet Lord Shiva. Lord

Shiva was happy to see him and came up to embrace him. Bhrigu stepped back and avoided the embrace thereby insulting Lord Shiva. He also said, " Lord Shiva you stay in cremation grounds and you are smeared with ashes. You also stay with ghosts and ghouls all day. Please don't touch me." Shiva was really angry and almost would have killed Bhrigu if not intervened and saved by Shiva's wife goddess Parvati.

Bhrigu then went to Vaikuntha Dham to meet Sri Vishnu. He saw Lord Vishnu sitting on his throne with goddess Lakshmi. He entered the room and without saying anything kicked Lord Vishnu on his chest. Lord Vishnu did not wince a bit. Realising that there was no true malice in Bhrigu's heart he instantly forgave him. He welcomed him and offered him a seat. Sri Hari then said to Bhrigu, "O great saint, I hope you had a pleasant journey. We were not expecting you so were not prepared for your arrival. Please forgive us. Your foot print will always remain in my heart."

Bhrigu now had the answer to the question. He was extremely pleased with Vishnu's words and behavior. Tears of devotion streamed down his cheeks. He returned to the yajna venue and announced the conclusion he had arrived at. Vishnu was the greatest of the three. The other sages accepted his decision.

He is religion himself. He is the Satwa goon Himself (piousness incarnate).* Calm hard conscientious people worship Him. He is the greatest and there can be no doubt

about this. Parikshit was very happy to hear this story from Sukhdeva.

*Satwam yasya priya murti brahmanatwishta devata.

Bhajanantanashishhah shanta yang baa nipun buddhayah. 10/89/17.

DWARKA AND JADU DYNASTY

The stories about different miracles of Sri Krishna were coming to an end. Sukhdeva was now telling Parikshit about the prosperity of Dwarka. The palace of Dwaraka was filled with all sorts of precious diamonds and jewels. People were healthy and beautiful. The roads were well decorated and clean and beautiful horses, elephants and chariots transported people across the city. The gardens of Dwarka were decorated with many types of flowers.

Sri Krishna had many wives. Out of many Rukmini and seven others were considered to be his main wives. Each of these eight wives had ten sons each. Out of these eighty sons eighteen gained prominence. They were: Pradumnya, Aniruddha, Deeptiman, Bhanu, Samba, Madhu, Brihadbhanu, Chitrabhanu, Brik, Arun, Pushkar, Vedabahu, Shrutadeva, Sunanadan, Chitrabahu, Birup, Kavi and Nygrodh. Out of these eighteen Rukmini's son Pradumya was the embodiment of all virtues. Pradumya's son was Aniruddha. Aniruddha's son Vraja was the only one to survive after the downfall and demise of the entire Jadu dynasty. Being descendants of Sri

Krishna they were considered to be extremely lucky.

It is just a mere illusion that Sri Krishna was born from Devaki's womb. In reality he is the owner and savior of all animate and inanimate objects in this world. The entire Jadu dynasty was born to serve him. Sri Krishna and his Pandavas cleansed the Earth of all power hungry demons. He is again that sweet smiling boy dearest to all gopis. He is the King, Creator and Protector of all mankind. Let us all sing in praise of the great Lord!

*Jayati jananibaso Devaki janmobado/jadubar parishat Swerdyobhirasyannadharmam. Sthirchara brijinaghna susmita srimukhen/Vrajapuro banitanam bardhanayam kamadevam. 10/90/48

Eleventh Skanda

THE IRON CLUB AND THE CURSE OF THE SAINTS

Time flew by. Along with the rise and prosperity of Jadu dynasty, also came its downfall. The descendants of Jadu dynasty increasingly became haughty and quick tempered. Sri Krishna was born in their dynasty. This pride overwhelmed them. They started thinking that they were superior to all others. They started ignoring and disrespecting their elders and other learned visitors.

One day many great sages like Vishwamitra, Durbasha, and Narada assembled in Dwarka to visit Sri Krishna. When they were returning from their meeting, young Jadavs thought of a prank to play on them. They dressed up Krishna's son Samba as a pregnant woman and sent her near the sages. Then they said to the sages with innocent faces, "Dear sages, this lady is pregnant. You all are great sages and all of you can see the future. Tell us if she will be blessed with a son or a daughter?"

The sages felt insulted at this. They were great sages and knew in an instant that Samba was not a woman and that the young Jadavas were just joking with them. They were really very angry. They said, "He will deliver an iron club and that iron club will destroy your Jadu dynasty (Mushlam kulanasham)." * Young Jadavas wrapped clothes around Samba's stomach to make him look pregnant. When Samba

tried to get rid of his disguise and unwrapped those clothes, to their great surprise a huge iron club came out of it. Now the young Jadavas were scared. They ran back to King of Jadavas Ugrasen and told him everything. The news spread like wild fire and soon the entire population of Dwarka was terrified by the incident. The king ordered to grind the iron club into fine powder and throw it out into the sea. All of it except for a chunk of the club could be finely ground and they threw away the grounded iron club and the small piece out into the sea. The fine powdered iron reached the shores of the sea with the wave and a strange weed with hardened sword like sticks were born out of it. The shore was covered with that strange weed in no time. The other smaller piece was swallowed by a fish that was captured by a fisherman. They handed over that piece of iron found from the fish's intestine to their friend a local hunter. This hunter crafted an arrow head out of that piece of iron.

Sri Krishna knew about everything. He did not intervene to retract or save the Jadavas from the curse because he knew that the words of great sages must never be proved false. The Jadavas invited their own demise.

*Ebam pralabdha munayastanachuh kupita nripa. Janiyshyati bo manda moshalam kulanashanam. 11/1/16

NARADA'S ADVICE TO VASUDEVA

The great sage Narada visited Dwarka quite frequently.

During one such visit he met Sri Krishna's father Vasudeva. He said to Narada, "I prayed to God to have Sri Krishna as my son. I did not pray for salvation. Please tell me the way to attain salvation."

Narada replied, "The king of Bideha called Nimi and Nava Jogindra (nine sons of Hrishav Deva, the nine great sages were called Kavi, Havi, Antariksha, Prabuddha, Pippalayan, Avirhotra, Drumil, Chamas and Karabhanjan [were together known as Nava Yogindra]) had a similar conversation where Nimi asked Nava Yogendra about the path to salvation. King Nimi asked each of the kings nine questions and they answered. I will now tell you what they were."

These were the questions of King Nimi:

1. "Tell me about the ways, that I can practise to earn Lord Vishnu's protection and grace?"

Saint Kavi replied to this, "Always thinking about the feet of Sri Hari seeking his protection is the only way to have him. If you worship Sri Hari all your fears are eliminated from your mind. Whatever you pronounce, whatever you think, whatever you decide and whatever you enjoy with your five senses, always dedicate those to Sri Hari."*

2. Nimi asked again, "How do I identify a true devotee of Sri Hari?"

Saint Kavi replied, "The one who sees God in every

being and sees every being in God is the best devotee. The one who loves all beings, pities the less fortunate and ignores his/her enemies is a good devotee. However the one who only worships the deities for self gain knows nothing about true devotion."

3. Nimi asked, "What is the true nature of illusion?"

Saint Antariksha replied, "The power with which the Almighty God creates this universe is the illusion. This illusion ties living beings to the material world and they are stuck in the cycle of life and death till the end of times.

4. Nimi asked, "How do we free ourselves from this illusion?"

Sri Prabuddha saint discussed the nature of illusion in details again and told Nimi at the end, "The only way to free yourself from this illusion is to have a great teacher or guru who has the true divine knowledge about the nature of God and this universe. Only He can show you the way to get rid of this illusion."

5. Nimi asked, "What is the true nature of the Supreme being?"

Saint Pippalayan replied, "The one who is the cause behind every effect like creation, continuation and destruction, but is the effect of no cause himself; the one who never sleeps, though every being in this world

sleeps at some time; the one who adds life to body and senses to the sense organs, yet who himself is not observable through any known sense; the one who is never born or has no death; he is the one and only supreme being.”

6. Nimi asked next, “What can a man do to free himself from the cycle of karma?”

Saint Avirhotra replied, “Following the general code of ethics prescribed to people is the way to free yourself, however, you have to do everything in life with a sense of detachment in it and offer every action and every thought to God. Then only you can free yourself from the cycle of karma.”

7. Nimi requested, “Please tell me what God did during his birth in this world as avatars.”

Saint Drumil satisfied Nimi’s curiosity. He started describing the various miracles that Sri Hari has performed in his various avatars.

He said, “Sri Hari has arrived on this earth many times to help people as avatars. As part avatars, Sanak, Sananada, Sanatan, Sanat Kumar, Nara-Narayan, Dattatreya and Hrishavdeva, Lord Vishnu preached the knowledge of Supreme Being.”

[We have already read about the many avatars at the beginning now we will discuss the miracles

performed by each.] As Hayagriva or Hayashirsha avatar Lord Vishnu rescued the four Vedas from demons Madhu and Kaitav. He protected the water submerged world as giant fish in his Matsya avatar. He killed Hinakhya as Barah avatar. Churning of the sea was possible because of Kurma avatar where he was born as a huge tortoise to hold the churning rod Mandar Mountain. As Sri Hari himself he rescued Gajendra Moksham from the vicious crocodile. He protected Prahlad as Narasimha Deva avatar.

As Vamana Deva he challenged the pride of demon Bali. As Bhrgu’s descendant Parashuram he rid the world of Kshatriyas (royalties and warriors) twenty-one times to teach them a lesson. He killed Lanka’s ruler demon Ravana as Sri Ramachandra avatar. As Sri Krishna avatar of Jadu dynasty he performed many miracles some which were even beyond the powers of any lesser gods. As Buddha avatar he will preach non-violence and love to the world and as Kalki avatar in Kali Yuga he will kill all the corrupted kings.

8. Nimi asked again, “People who do not worship God, who are not calm and who are impulsive, what happens to them? How are they punished?”

Saint Chamas replied, “Some people ignore God because they are ignorant and some people ignore

God knowingly. All of them fall out of His grace and suffer in their next lives. They might have the knowledge of this divine philosophy in a literal sense and they might read a lot about it too, yet they lack wisdom. They think that their body is lasting and people who only live on a physical plane of existence are never happy. They work hard to earn money, build houses and take care of their relatives. But all these are temporary. One day unwillingly they have to part from everything with death. Then they reach hell after death where they await another life time."

9. Finally Nimi asked, "Can you please tell me what colour does God display in each of the Yugas and what shapes and sizes and what are the names that he is being called in each and how is he worshipped?"

Saint Karabhanjan replied, "There are four Yugas or time periods of this world. They are Satya, Kreta, Dwapar and Kali and in each of these Yugas the colour of God changes. Sri Hari is white in Satya Yuga, red in Kreta Yuga, Grey in Dwapar Yuga and Black in Kali Yuga.

He has four arms in Satya Yuga and he wears tree barks and carries a stick and a water jug and he is known as Hamsa, Suparno, Ishwar, Paramatman etc. In Kreta Yuga he has four arms, wears a piece of cloth called mekhla, decorated with garlands and

sandalwood paste, he is called Vishnu, Yajna, and Prishnigarva etc. In Dwapar Yuga he wears yellow, he is the Conch, chakra, club and lotus carrying Vasudeva and he is also known as Sankarshan. In Kali Yuga he is as bright as Indranil jewel as Rama and Krishna etc. He is the heart of all and with his Sudarshan Chakra he resides with his companions Sananda et.al.

In every Yuga human beings worship Sri Hari according to the norms of that Yuga. In Satya Yuga people worshipped Sri Hari by leading ascetic life and doing meditations. In Kreta Yuga people worshipped Sri Hari by following rituals prescribed in the Vedas. In Dwapar Yuga people worshipped Sri Hari by following both Vedic and tantric (occult) rituals. Finally in Kali Yuga people will worship Sri Hari through singing hymns in his praise and doing yajnas in his praise. Of all these four Yugas wisemen applaud the Kali Yuga. This is the only Yuga where just by singing Sri Hari's hymns of praises one can attain anything.** People are travellers through this temporary cycle of material world and to these people singing Sri Hari's praises in hymns is the only source of true happiness. Singing his hymns gives endless peace to mind and one can willingly leave one's body behind and get freed from this cycle of death and birth."

King Nimi was very happy to hear about the philosophy of Bhagwat from the Nava Yougindra. He then practised what they preached to attain salvation in life.

Vasudeva and Devaki also felt lucky to hear this narration from saint Narada. Narada told them many other beautiful stories. Finally Narada said to them, "Sri Hari has arrived on this earth as your son. What are you worried about?"

*Kayen bacha manasendriyeir ba
Budhyatamana banusrita swabhabat.
Karoti yat yat sakalam parasmei
Narayanayeti samarpayet tat. 11/2/36

**Kalin sabha Jayantarya gunnagya sarbhaginah.

Jatrasankirtaneneiba sarbah sarthohati labhyate. 11/5/36

Note: The conversation between Nava Yogindra and King Nimi was full of deep and meaningful philosophy. An abbreviated and simplified version is presented here for new readers.

SRI KRISHNA AND UDBHAV

One day Brahma paid a visit to Sri Krishna in Dwarka. Brahma praised Sri Krishna and bowed in front of him and said to him, "You came to this Earth to re-establish peace, order and religion and to rid this place of demons. It's been 125 years since you have arrived in this Jadu dynasty. You have completed your tasks. Now you should come to your

place at Vaikuntha dham and take your rightful place as the father of this universe."

Sri Krishna replied, "Dear Lord Brahma, I understand your sentiments and my work here is almost done. But the Jadavas because of their vanity and pride have now arisen as threat to the peace on Earth again. I can not go back without destroying them."

Brahma went back. However life in Dwarka was interrupted and disturbed by several freak accidents. Sri Krishna assembled all the elders of the Jadavas and told them, "We must leave Darka at once, if you all want to live. We should go out on a pilgrimage to 'Prbhash Tirtha' right now and after worshipping the gods and bathing in the sea we should free ourselves from all bad luck." Hearing this everyone in Dwarka prepared to go on a pilgrimage to 'Prabhash Tirtha'. Sri Krishna's chariot was prepared too.

Udbhav was a very special devotee of Sri Krishna. He came running to Sri Krishna and said, "Dear Lord, you are Almighty God and yet you did not refute the curse of the sages. You are now planning to destroy Jadu dynasty and you are preparing to take your leave from Earth. You are my soul's soul. How will I stay alive without you?"

Sri Krishna replied, "You are right Udbhav. I came here on this Earth to answer Brahma's prayers and my work has now been fulfilled. Jadu dynasty will be destroyed through

civil war and exactly seven days from today the sea will reclaim Dwarka back in to his sea bed. So it will not be wise of you to stay back in Dwarka. Leave all your relatives and family and devote yourself completely to me. See me in everyone and everything. Treat everyone equally." Udbhav said to Sri Krishna, "Dear Lord, you are asking me to sacrifice my life as I know it. But I am a Materialistic ordinary man. It is very hard for me to get rid of the illusion of 'me' and 'mine'. Please teach me something so that I understand your advice better."

God replied again, "Man finds his own path of salvation. Man's soul is his best teacher.* The soul is the key to everything good. This world is full of many life forms, some have two and some have four legs. Yet out of all I love human beings the most because only human beings are capable of realizing their true self, their soul, the part of Brahman. One can not sense with sense organs and I am beyond any debate. The funny thing is the one who can not be seen or known is being searched by everyone. The one, who finds me, finds happiness."

*Atmano gururatmeiba purushasya bisheshatah.

Yat pratyakshanumanabhyam shreyohasabanubindate. 11/7/20.

UDBHAV GEETA

The 6 to 29 stanza of chapter 11 in Srimad Bhagwat is very meaningful. It is known as Udbhav Geeta to scholars

and wise men who learn and practise Hindu philosophy. In the Kurukshetra war Sri Krishna gave some very valuable advice to Arjuna for greater good of mankind (known as Srimad Bhagwat Geeta) about Karma Yoga (work and occupation), Gyan Yoga (knowledge and wisdom), Raj Yoga (politics and diplomacy) and Bhakti Yoga (devotion and worship). Similarly before wrapping up his work on Earth Sri Krishna gave a series of valuable advice to Udbhav for greater good of mankind regarding religion, ideal love and seeking refuge in God and the beautiful love of the Gopis and their innocent and all encompassing devotion. We will first discuss about Avadhuta (an ascetic who has renounced all worldly possessions) and his twenty-four teachers or gurus in short. Then we shall discuss few other episodes and finally we shall discuss the final advice of Sri Krishna to Udbhav.

THE 24 TEACHERS OF AVADHUTA

Sri Krishna said to Udbhav, "Our ancestor King Jadu was a very spiritually enlightened man. He got a lesson from a young Avadhuta (an ascetic who has renounced all worldly possessions). I will tell you about that now."

Once there was a young Avadhuta who roamed about the world freely and happily. Seeing him king Jadu asked him, "You look so content, so happy and yet you have no income to speak of and no work to do. You are not even miffed by any desire. What is the reason behind your happiness? Where did you learn to be so happy and content?"

Avadhuta replied, "You are absolutely right dear king! I am very happy and content. I have learned a lot and I have not one but 24 gurus. I will tell you about each of them and also tell you what I learned from them."

Avadhuta continued:

1. "My first guru is this Earth: We torture this Earth so much and yet it never objects. I learned from Earth, that no matter what, stay determined at your will. I have also learned many things from the trees, and mountains of this Earth. People blast mountains and use its stone to build houses and roads. Trees provide fruits, flowers and shade and help people in many ways. Yet people chop off the trees when they need it. The mountains or the trees never object to this treatment. I learned from them that our lives are to help others.
2. The wind: The wind carries fragrance in it without getting involved in it. I learned from the wind to stay in the world and to stay uninvolved with the world at the same time.
3. The sky: One can see the sky from their homes through the window. Then it becomes a little piece of sky. But, again outside it's the infinite sky. I learned from the sky that while our bodily experiences are like the sky seen through the window, our soul is infinite and indestructible.

4. The water: Flowing water can clean dirt from any object, yet stays crystal clear itself. I have learned from water to stay clean myself and to cleanse the world from malice.
5. The fire: Even when we can not see, the wood has the power to burn. It has fire in it (inert stage, potential energy). We can only see it when the fire burns wood. Fire burns everything yet never changes its nature. Fire or energy cannot be created or destroyed, what we see or see dissipating are the visible flames not the actual energy.

Like fire Sri Hari is present in everything. One can only know him through devotion and meditation.
6. The moon: The moon's appearance changes in our eyes. We see the moon waxing or waning, but the moon itself never changes its shape. All the changes we undergo from birth to death belong to our body not to our soul.
7. The Sun: The Sun taught me that the soul or 'atman' is same for everyone. In morning when we see the Sun's reflection on various water bodies, it's our illusion of many Suns. There is only one Sun in the sky; we see many reflections of it on the Earth. Similarly all souls are part of the divine soul and are the same.
8. The pigeon couple: There lived a pigeon couple on a

tree in a forest. They were living happily with their nestlings. One day a local hunter captured all of their nestlings in their absence in a trap. The mother cried and came closer to the trap to free her children and she got trapped herself. Finally the father pigeon came and saw that his wife and children were all trapped. The father pigeon too willingly got trapped following his family.

We can attain salvation in this life. But we are too much attached to this material world like the pigeon couple. One who traps himself/herself in the trap of material world is the one with the bad luck.

9. The python snake: Python eats whatever it gets. It waits for days with patience if it does not get anything. Intelligent people don't run after bodily pleasures. Conscientious human beings will eat whatever they get, it should not matter if the food is dry or juicy, or if there is a lot of food or little food.
10. The Sea: The Sea is deep and unfathomable. It never overflows due to rain in monsoon or dries up due to heat in summer. Similarly a true devotee of Sri Hari never gets overwhelmed with either pain or happiness.
11. The insects: The way moths and other insects get attracted towards fire which then kills them, similarly only a shallow and stupid person gets attracted to

superficial good looks and destroys his/her life in pursuit of fake physical beauty.

12. The honey bees: The honey collected by the bees is used up by other people. Wise men never hoard money or other worldly possessions. They use it up to help others.
13. The elephants: The male elephant blindly steps in to trap of the hunter while chasing the female elephant. I have learned to stay away from women in a way so that I don't have to get involved in the material world.
14. The bumble bee: The way bumble bee collects honey from many flowers, similarly wise men collect knowledge from everyone irrespective of their age and status.
15. The deer: The deer was once trapped by the deadly music played by the hunter. We have seen many great sages getting involved with women because they were smitten by the art of singing and dancing. A true devotee should never show interest in music and dancing for entertainment.
16. Fishes: I have learned from the fishes that if one can not control their gustatory senses then their demise is inevitable. In search of a juicy worm the fish gets hooked in to the fishing line similarly human beings lose control over their taste buds and eat themselves

to death (most diseases can be avoided by maintaining a proper diet). A wise and conscientious man can conquer all his sensual desires except for the gustatory sense. Conquering gustatory senses leads to conquering all the other senses.*

17. Pingala: There was a prostitute named Pinagala. I have learned from her that expectations bring pain. If you can stop expecting you can be happy.**
18. The cormorants: Cormorant or water side birds catch the fish and other birds chase it. They leave it when the bird drops the fish. I have learned from them that having nothing is the best way to live. Attachment to any material possession ultimately becomes the root of all evil.
19. A child: A child does not have any ego. The child pays no attention to the world and plays all by himself/herself. I have learned from a child how to stay happy alone.
20. The spinster: There was a spinster who wore many bangles in her hand. Whenever she would do her house chores the bangles would rattle against each other and make noises. She could not do anything without making noise. So one day she broke all her bangles except one and could then do house chores in silence. I have learned from her that in order to

devote yourself to Sri Hari, in order to meditate and dedicate your time to Sri Hari, one must live alone. More people will make more noise just like the bangles.

21. The arrow builder: Once an arrow builder was busy building his arrows. The king passed by his house in a procession making much noise. The arrow maker did not even notice. I have learned from him that I have to keep my mind focussed through Yoga.
22. Snakes: Snakes don't build nests. They occupy old houses or small holes dug by other animals and spend their days as best as they can with what they get. I have learnt from snakes it's best to not have a home. Having a home and family will cause a lot of pain later.
23. Spiders: The spider can build its own web through a secretion from its body and again it can break its own web. I have learned from the spiders that God creates this universe with his own powers and then destroys it when needed.
24. Chameleon bugs: There are some bugs which capture other bugs for food. However there is one chameleon bug that mimics the captor bug thereby confusing the captor bug. I learnt from the chameleon bug that if I pray and think about Sri Hari all the time I will aquire his semblance.

Finally, I have one more guru and that guru is my own body. This body helps to synthesize all information and helps to understand and enjoy the philosophy. This body builds family and goes through hardships to maintain the family. However, at the end the body leaves everything behind and dies. I have realized that this body is temporary and it is also true that we received this body due to good luck. Wise men should try to maintain the body and should use the body in a way so that one can attain salvation in this lifetime.

The Brahman is one and only one; however different sages have described it differently. We have something to learn from each of them.”***

King Jadu renounced his worldly possessions after listening to Avadhuta. He spent the rest of his life in meditation and prayers of Sri Hari.

Udbhav was mesmerized to hear this saga from Sri Krishna.

*Tabojjitendriyo na syad bijitendriyoh puman.

Na jayed rasanam yabojjitam sarbam jite rase. 11/8/21

**Asha hi paramam dukkham neirashyam paramam sukham.

Yatha sanchhidya kantasham sukham sushwap Pingala. 11/8/44

***Sri Ramkrishna Deva used to say that as long as we live, we learn.

BONDAGE AND FREEDOM

Udbhav asked Lord Sri Krishna, “Kindly, tell about beings that have achieved salvation or freedom and beings that are still in bondage of this material world. How do they behave and how do we identify each? What do they eat and where do they sleep? Finally please tell me whether the same soul can be bound for sometime and then again attain freedom?”

Sri Krishna replied, “Every one is bound by the ‘three gunas’ or three sets of basic human characteristics (Satwo, tamo and rajo) and these characteristics sometimes make a man free or captive. Like a dream that fades away when one is awake, life, its pains, its pleasures, birth and death fades away like a dream when one awakens to true knowledge. So ignorance is the cause of bondage and true knowledge is the cause of freedom. Manifestation of true knowledge and ignorance are both expressions of my (Almighty God) powers. All life forms are manifestations of my power. Through my power is created the illusion that binds the being to the darkness of ignorance and through my power is created the capability to seek out true knowledge to attain freedom. It sounds conflicting, yet it is true that both seed of ignorance and the seed of knowledge reside in the same body; one is the captive being suffering from the woes of the material world and the other is the free soul, part of Almighty God, content and happy.”

Sri Krishna then said, "God and the mortal being are like two beautiful birds.* They are mirror image of each other and they reside like friends in the same body. One suffers from all the karma of this material world and the other suffers nothing, he resides happily with the power of knowledge. The one attached to the world, suffering the pain does not have the true knowledge about the divine self and hence remains captive.**"

Once one realizes the true divine self and frees himself/herself from the cycle of accumulating karma, he/she is the God then. Though still bound by the body, the free being is beyond the ordinary parameters of the body then."

*Suparnabeito sadrishou sakhaou

Yadricchayeitou kritanirrou cha brikhse.

Ekastayo khadati pippalanna

manyo nirannohopi balen bhuyana. 11/11/6

**We have discussed this concept in detail in the chapter called 'Story of Puranjan' in this book.

THE ESSENCE OF GOD

Udbhav now wanted to know about the presence of God as essence of divinity. Sri Krishna replied, "During the Kurukshetra war Arjuna (the third Pandava) also wanted to know about the same thing. I'll tell you what I told him then.

I (Almighty God) am the benefactor, soul and God; I am the cause of creation, continuation and destruction. I am the talent and virtue in the talented and virtuous. I am pranava mantra (source of all mantras) among mantras, Gayatri among rhythms, Indra among lesser gods, Agni or Fire god among the eight Vasus (the gurd of eight directions), Vishnu among three gods, Bhrgu among great sages, Manu among ruling sages, Narada among godly sages, Kapil among the enlightened sages, Garur among birds, Daksha among kings, Prahlad among demons, Moon among heavenly bodies and Kuber among the Yakshas (fairy like creatures with supernatural powers).

I am Oiravat among elephants, king among humans, Uchhasreiba among horses, and gold among metals. I am lion among animals, Ganga among rivers, Himachal among mountains, and Banyan tree among trees. I am non-violence among practices, and religion in the society that establishes moral and ethical code which makes people safer. I am spring among seasons, Agrahayan (ninth month in the Hindu calendar) among months, and Satya Yuga among yugas. I am Vasudeva among enlightened mortals, Udbhav among devotees, Hanuman among monkeys and Sudarashan among educated and learned ones.*

I am clarified butter made of cow milk among butters, wealth of businessmen, con of conmen, forgiveness of people who forgive, and strength of the mighty ones. Please know

that I am both the mental power and physical power of strong people, I am also the devotion of the devotees and I am the best devotee among the devotees. Among the Knights I am Arjuna. Know that I am in everything of this Earth, wind, sky, water, energy, beings, nature, the three sets of characteristics (Satwa, Tamo and Rajo) and everything is in me. I am Brahman. There is nothing without me.”

Then Sri Krishna advised Udbhav, “Control your mind and conversations and control your life and sense organs. If you can manage to control all of it you will be freed from this eternal cycle of life and death.”**

*Vasudevo bhagawatam twantu bhagwateshwoham.

Kimpurushanam Hanuman, bidyadhanam sudarshanah. 11/16/29

**Bacham yaccha mano yaccho Pranam Yacchendriyani cha.

Atmanamatmana yaccha na bhuyah kalposehdhwane. 11/16/42

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

[Udbhav asked questions and Sri Krishna answered them.]

Question: What are ‘Yam’ and ‘Niyam’?

Answer: Non-violence, truth, comparsion (happiness instead of jealousy for others’ wealth), detachment, humbleness, non-hoarding, belief (in guru’s advices and scriptures), abstinence, silence, patience, forgiveness and fearlessness are the twelve ‘Yams’. * Physical and mental cleanliness, meditation, ascetism,

conducting yajnas, respect, serving guests, worship, pilgrimage, desire to help others, satisfaction and caring for guru and elderly are the twelve ‘niyams’.

Acquiring these virtues not only help people who have renounced the world for spiritual quest but also wordly beings who can benefit in their wordly life with these. **

Question: What is true happiness? What is true sorrow? Who is wise and who is ignorant? What are hell and heaven? Who is a friend? How do we define the wealthy and the poor?

Answer: True happiness lies in conquering both happiness and sorrow. The desire to pursue bodily pleasure is true sorrow. The one who has the true divine knowledge is the wise one and the one who only believes in bodily existence is the ignorant one. When one is flooded by Sattwo Goon (characterized by everything good and godly) then this body becomes heaven and when one is flooded by tamo goon (characterized by overindulgence of bodily pleasures) then this body becomes hell. Almighty God and/or the guru is the only friend; no one else is a true friend. The one who is virtuous is wealthy, and the one who has everything and yet suffers from dissatisfaction is poor.

*Ahimsa satyamasteyamsango hrirsanchayah.

Aastikyam brahmacharyancha mounam stheirya kshama bhayam. 11/19/33.

**Shoucham japastapo homah shraddhatithyam madarchanam.

Tirthatanam parartheha tushtiracharyasevanam. 11/19/34.

Etey Yamah saniyama ubhayardwadashah smritah.

Pungsamupasitastat! Yathakamam duhinti hi. 11/19/35.

LORD KRISHNA'S LAST ADVICE TO UDDHAV.

[The summary of Bhakti Yoga or the theory of devotion]

Udbhav said to Sri Krishna, "Your advice about practice of religion according to me is very hard to grasp for simple mortal human beings. Please tell me an easier way to attain salvation."

Pleased with Udbhav's simplicity, Sri Krishna replied, "Udbhav! I will now tell you about simple practices that can free one from the cycle of death. Start all your activities thinking about me and dedicate all the results to me. Behave like the sages. Attend celebrations held in my honor. Discuss, read and gather knowledge about sages and saints. Through all this when your mind will be cleansed then you will feel my presence in everything in this world. Then you will be able to witness me in every living thing. The one, who can treat Brahmin and non-brahmin, honest and dishonest, the sun and a spark of fire, good and bad equally, is a wise person. Realising me in everything is the best way to achieve me.

Surrendering yourself to God is the only way to attain salvation. I just told you the summary of Brahman bad. Once you know this, you know everything. Anyone who spreads

this message among my devotees will earn my grace. But remember don't discuss this philosophy with agnostics, atheists, and ill mannered people. Udbhav, now do you understand this philosophy? If you have fathomed it, all your sorrow and illusions will fade away."

Udbhav paid obeisance to Lord Krishna and said, "Dear Almighty Lord! Your words have cleared all my illusions. Your affection created that extreme attachment for you within me and now you have freed me with the sword of knowledge. O greatest of all great yogis! I bow down to you. I have taken refuge at your feet. Please guide me and bless me so that my mind stays focussed on your divine feet.*

Hearing this Sri Krishna said, "Now you leave for Badrika Ashram, one of my favorite places on Earth. Once there meditate on my words. Devote your mind and your words to me. Eventually you will be free from the three sets of basic characteristics (Sattwo, Tamo and Rajo). People attain hell, heaven or this Earth when they are born again. But you will go beyond these three and achieve me at the end."**

*Namohastute mahayogin prasannamanushami mam.

Yatha tachchoranambhoje ratih syandanapayini. 11/29/40.

**Mayyabeshito bak chitto maddharmo niyato bhavo.

Atibrajya gatistisromameshyesi tatah param. 11/29/44.

THE FINAL DEPARTURE OF SRI KRISHNA

Parikshit humbly asked Sukhdeva about the details of Sri Krishna's departure from this Earth. Sukhdeva narrated the story below.

Udbhav followed Sri Krishna's advice and went for Badrika Ashram. Sri Krishna gathered all the people of Jadu dynasty and started for 'Prabhash Tirtha'.

The Jadava warriors with Sri Krishna finally reached their destination and started to conduct many religious and auspicious functions. However, destiny was following them. The Jadavas drank a strange sweet drink that messed their minds. They started behaving like crazy people. Sri Krishna created such an illusory situation that a great civil war ensued. Jadavas blinded by rage started fighting among themselves. Brothers turned against brothers, uncles turned against nephews and friends turned against friends and went on a killing spree.

Sacred pravash Tirtha turned into a battlefield. Relentless fighting resulted in depletion of weaponry and destruction of the Jadavas. Shortage of bows and arrows forced them to break the weeds by the sea shore to fight. These weeds were born of the cursed iron club dust. So as soon as the Jadavas touched the weeds they turned in to strong iron swords in their hands. Sri Krishna and Balarama tried to stop them but the Jadavs chased them away and tried to kill them. There was the curse of the sages and the illusion

created by Sri Krishna that drove them to their end. Like a forest fire burns a forest rapidly, the vain pride of the Jadavas destroyed Jadu dynasty rapidly.

Jadu dynasty was completely destroyed. Balarama went to the sea beach and sat in deep meditation. He fixed his mind on Almighty God and left the Earth for his heavenly home. Balarama's departure made Sri Krishna sad and he sat under a tree in silence. His true self with four hands was revealed eventually. The entire place started glowing. His complexion was like a fresh monsoon cloud. His uncovered chest had a calf drawn on it and he was covered by two pieces of cloth. His lotus like left foot was on his right thigh.

Meanwhile a local hunter named Jara had entered the forest to hunt. His arrow was built with the cursed piece of iron. He mistook Sri Krishna's beautiful feet to be a deer and shot an arrow at it. The arrow struck Sri Krishna's feet. Jara came running to collect his hunt. He saw that Lord Sri Krishna was lying on the ground with his four arms. He realized that he had made a big mistake. He put his head at Sri Krishna's feet and started crying. He said, "Dear Lord, I did not do this knowingly. Please forgive me!"*

Almighty God assured him and said, "Don't worry. Whatever happened was bound to happen. It was destiny. You have no fault in this. You have fulfilled my desire. So I bless you. You will go to heaven." Jara went around Vasudeva thrice to pay his final respects and then rode the golden chariot

to reach heaven. Sri Krishna's chariot driver Daruk came in search of him and saw him lying like that. He started crying and said, "O Lord you are leaving me behind. I am directionless and confused without you. Where should I go now? How can I get any peace? Tell me now."

Sri Krishna consoled Daruk and said, "The time of Jadavas is over. Jadu dynasty has fallen. My elder brother Balarama has also returned to the skies. You have to go back to Dwarke and tell them this. Tell them also about me. I have left Dwarka, so the sea will reclaim it soon. Ask the remaining Jadavas and my parents to leave Dwarka and go to Indraprastha where my friend Arjuna will take care of them. Then you get rid of all worldly attachments and meditate on my image.

Daruk went back towards Dwarka to carry out his Lord's command. All the lesser gods came down on Earth to see Sri Krishna's final departure. Sri Krishna saw Lord Brahma and all the lesser gods in front of him. He closed his lotus eyes and got immersed in his inner self. With his yogic power he left his mortal frame and reached Baikuntha Dhan. Flowers started raining from heaven.

Sukhdeva then told Parikshit that Dwarka was flooded soon after Sri Krishna's departure. The sea reclaimed Dwarka. The remaining Jadavas were all children women and elderly people. They were escorted back to Indraprastha by Arjuna. There they anointed Aniruddha's son Vraja as the king of

Indraprastha. The news of Sri Krishna's departure made all the Pandavas decide to leave Earth as well. Then Sukhdeva told Parikshit that, "Anyone who narrates the story of Almighty God and his miracles to others or sings it becomes free from sin.

*Ajanata kritamidam papena madhusudana.

Kshantamarhasi papsya uttamahshloka mehanagha. 11/30/35

Twelfth Skanda

THE LAW OF TIME (YUGA DHARMA) AND
SUKHDEVA'S LAST ADVICE

Parikshit now asked how religious practices change with time (Yuga Dharma). Sukhdeva replied, "In Satya Yuga there are four levels of religious practices. They are truth, mercy, meditation and asceticism, and charity. In Kreta Yuga one of these levels gets depleted and is replaced by lies, jealousy, dissatisfaction and opposition. In Dwapar Yuga another level depletes and another malicious sin is added to it. In Kali Yuga three levels of practices get depleted and are replaced by malicious practices. In Satya Yuga due to the natural abundance of Sattwa goona (characteristics of an ascetic) people spend more time in meditation and in acquiring knowledge. In Kreta Yuga due to natural abundance of Rajo goona (characteristics of a king) people spend time in creation, and run after fame and prosperity. In Dwapar Yuga both Rajo and Tamo guna (characteristics of an ignorant) people spend time pursuing their pride and vanity. In Kali Yuga only Tamo guna is in abundance hence people are more inclined to spend time in sorrow, sleep, illusion and lies.

In Satya Yuga people meditate to appease God. In Kreta people conduct Yajnas, in Dwapar people worship Vishnu and in Kali people just sing hymns about Sri Hari to appease God and to gain salvation. So dear Parikshit! You should focus your mind and heart on Sri Hari. You will be able to

achieve Sri Hari that way."

The last few days went by pleasantly for Parikshit. The light of knowledge enlightened his heart. His time of death was nearing. Sukhdeva was giving him last few words of advice.

Sukhdeva said to Parikshit, "Dear King! It will be ignorant and animal like of you to think that 'you' are dying. You should relinquish such thoughts. You existed before your body was there. Your body came later and it will be destroyed too. But 'you' are not your body. Neither you are born, nor can you die. You are not your body, you are your soul.*

Wood can produce fire but wood itself is not fire. Similarly the soul stays within the body but it is not the body. When a pot breaks, the air in it blends with environment, similarly when the body dies the soul goes back to Brahman. You need, oil, a wick and a container to make a lamp, the connection between the body and soul is similar. The body is born out of and is destroyed by the three sets of characteristics, Sattwa, Tamo and Rajo goona. The soul, however, is self revealing and is as clear and unattached as the sky. You know this philosophy now, so you should immerse yourself in meditation of Vasudeva and know for sure that your soul is a part of Vasudeva. If you think like this no curse can harm you. The Takshak snake will come to bite you according to the curse of the great sage but your soul will remain unharmed; it will only harm your body. You have the elixir of immortality,

you have God within you, no death can touch you.**Just think that you are a different manifestation of the Almighty God, the Supreme Soul, then you will see that the venomous Takshak snake is also your soul; your body has become your soul and everything that you see with your eyes in this world is your soul. Everything at the end is a part of your soul.

*Twantu rajan marishyeti pashubuddhimimam jahi.

Na jatah prag bhutahadya dehabat twam na nangkshasi. 12/5/2.

**Chodito biprobakyen n twam dhakshati takshakah.

Mrityubbo nopadhakshyanti mrityunam mrityumishwaram. 12/5/10.

DEPARTURE OF KING PARIKSHIT

The stories of the Bhagwat were coming to an end. King Parikshit paid obeisance to saint Sukhdeva and said with gratitude, "It is so kind of you to tell me about the beautiful and infinite Sri Krishna. I am so grateful to you. Now I don't care how I die. It may be due to snake bite or something else I have got rid of my ignorance. You have shown me the way to my God. I have received the reassurance from Almighty God. Now please give me the permission so that I can focus my soul on Sri Krishna and leave this body behind."

Sukhdeva gave the king permission to leave his body and went away from that place. The king now faced North

by the bank of river Ganga and sat there meditating on the image of Sri Hari.

In the meantime Takshak snake was on his way to the river bank to kill Parikshit. He met saint Kashyap on the way. Kashyap was very skilled at curing people suffering from snake bites.. He had the power to suck out any venom Takshak knew this. So he bribed Kashyap with a lot of wealth and persuaded Kashyap to leave. Takshak snake then disguised himself as a Brahmin wearing Kashyap's attire and went near the King. He then bit him. Takshak's poison was like fire. King Parikshit by then had already left his mortal frame. He was a king before and now he became a saintly king. His body turned in to ashes in front of everyone and he merged in the Supreme Being the Brahman. The ignorant people of the world cried for him, but the lesser gods with their ethereal bodies knew the truth. They welcomed Parikshit by raining flowers on Earth for him.

JANMAJAY'S YAJNA TO EXTERMINATE SNAKES

King Parikshit had a son named Janmajay. He was mighty angry with snakes for killing his father. In order to have his revenge he arranged for a huge Yajna to exterminate all snakes. The saints were chanting mantras to capture each snake and then those snakes were sacrificed in the fire of the Yajna. Takshak, the venomous snake actually responsible for Parikshit's death, was scared and took refuge in Indra's kingdom. The sages then started chanting mantras to capture

Takshak with Indra and it was seen that Indra was falling down from his flying chariot with Takshak from the sky. The guru of the lesser gods, Vrihaspati, came running to Indra's rescue. He said to Janmajay, "Dear King, people bring about their own life and death through their karma.* Sorrow or happiness lies within oneself. So I request you to stop this yajna of death." Janmajay stopped the yajna to honor the great saint's words. Janmajay's yajna has been immortalised in the epic 'Mahabharata' by Veda Vyas.

*Jivitam maranam jantorgatih swenyeiba karmana.

Rajamastotohanyo nastyasya pradata sukhadukkha. 12/6/25.

Conclusion

CONCLUSION

THE LAST FEW SHLOKAS OF BHAGWAT

Sarvabhuteshu yah pashyedbhagwadbhabamatmanam.

Bhutani Bhagawatyatmanyesh bhagowatottam. 11/2/45

Ishware tadadhineshu balisheshu dwishyatsu cha.

Premamaitrikripopekkha yah karoti sa madhyam. 11/2/46

Archayemeba haraye pujam yah shraddjayehate.

Natadbhakteshu chanyeshu sa bhaktah prakritah smritah. 11/2/47

The one who sees god in every being and see every being in god is the best devotee. The one who loves all beings, pities the less fortunate and ignores his/her enemies is a good devotee. However the one who only worships the deities for self gain knows nothing about true devotion

Prithivi vayurakashamapohagnishchandrama rabih.

Kapotahajagaroh sindhuh patonga madhukridagajah. 11/7/33

Madhuha harino minoh pingala kurarharbhabah.

Kumari sharakrit sarpa umabhih supeshkrit. 11/7/34

Ete me gurobo rajan chaturbingshatirashritah.

Shiksha brittibhireteshamanwashikshomihatmanah. 11/7/35

See the chapter about 'Avadhuta and his 24 teachers'. We don't learn from the earth, wind, water, sky and everyone, our education remains incomplete.

Tadeba ramyam rucharam navam navam

Tadeba shashwanmanaso mahotsabam.

Tadeba shokarnab shoshanam nrinam

Jaduttamah shloka yashohanugiyate. 12/12/50

The hymns about Sri Krishna are always new, always in good taste and always pleasant to ears. Its a celebration that clears the sorrow from people's mind.

Bhabe Bhabe yatha bhaktihi padoyo stab jayate.

Tatha kurushwa debesha, Natham stwam no yatah prabho.
12/13/22

Nama sankirtana yasya sarba papah pranashanam.

Pranamo duksha shamanam tam namami harim param. 12/
13/23

O dear lord! Please bless me so that I am devoted to you in my every birth. You are our ruler. Singing your hymns clears all sins, and bowing down to you clears all sorrow. Almighty Sri Hari I bow down to you.

ANNEX

BHAGWAT EXPRESSED IN FOUR SHLOKAS

Ahameba samebagre nanyad yat sadsatparam.

Pashchadaham yadetachcha yohabashishyate sohsmyaham.

Hritehartham yat pratiyeta na pratiyeta chatmani.

Tadbidyatmano mayam yatha bhaso yatha tamoh.

Yatha mahanti bhutani bhuteshu chabcheshwnu.

Prabishtanya prabishtani tatha teshu na teshwaham.

Etabadeb jigyasyam tatwajigyasunatmanah.

Anway vyatirekabhyam yat syat sarbatra sarbada. 2/9/32-35

See translation in Second Skanda, second chapter.

The End