

# Kṛṣṇa's Vṛndāvana Sport Based on the 10th Canto of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa

Neal Delmonico (Nitai Das)  
(A work in process. No citey Please.)

April 7, 2005

The story of Kṛṣṇa's descent as it is given in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* begins with the image of a demon-burdened earth who assumes the form of a cow and goes Brahmā, the creator god, to complain. He and the other universal gods in turn pray to Viṣṇu for help and learn that he will soon make a descent to earth himself. They are all instructed to take birth there before him in order to assist him in ridding the earth of its heavy burden of evil kings and demons. The scene then switches to the kingdom of Mathurā on earth, ruled by Ugrasena. Vasudeva and Devakī have just been married and the crown prince Kaṁsa is driving their wedding chariot (Devakī is his cousin). A voice from the heavens warns Kaṁsa that the eighth son of Devakī will kill him and he immediately wants to kill her. Vasudeva pleads for Devakī's life and ultimately agrees to deliver their children to him as they are born. An immediate crisis is averted and Kaṁsa spares his cousin's life. Vasudeva, true to his word, delivers all of his children to Kaṁsa who at first decides to spare them since it is only the eighth son who is a threat to him, but he has a change of heart. Instead, he seizes the throne, imprisons his own father (Ugrasena) as well as Vasudeva and Devakī, and kills their first six children as they are born. As the seventh pregnancy progresses, Kṛṣṇa instructs the goddess Māyā to transfer Devakī's child, a descent of Kṛṣṇa's facilitator named Ananta or Saṅkarṣaṇa, from her womb into the womb of another of Vasudeva's wives, Rohiṇī, who is living safely in a community of cowherders miles from the capital. Thus, Devakī's seventh child appears to be miscarried. After that Kṛṣṇa enters Devakī's womb as her eighth child.

Kṛṣṇa was born at midnight in the prison chamber of his parents as all of nature celebrated the divine event. He first appeared in his four-armed form, but then assumed his two-armed, human form. As Kṛṣṇa was born the doors of the prison mysteriously opened and the guards fell into a deep sleep. Vasudeva knowing the real danger for his child picked him up and carried him out of the prison into the rainy night and across the River Yamunā to the cowherding village of his friend Nanda. Nanda's wife had also just given birth that night to a daughter who was a descent of the goddess Māyā. He he found everyone asleep in the village so he exchanged his child Kṛṣṇa for the sleeping baby girl and returned to the prison unnoticed. As he entered his prison chamber all the doors locked again and the guards awoke. Kaṁsa, hearing that the eighth child was born, rushed to prison, grabbed the baby by the leg as was about to bash her against a stone when she slipped out of his hands and flew up in the air assuming the eight-armed form of the great goddess. She laughed at him mockingly, announced that his death had already been born somewhere else, and then disappeared. Kaṁsa convened a council of his advisers and demonic friends and told them what had happened. They reassured him of their support and urged him with their help to systematically kill all babies who are about ten days old. They warned him to act in haste lest his enemies gain strength in his indecision. Kaṁsa agreed and the demons spread out through the capital and the surrounding countryside to carry out their brutal plan.

Back in Vraja, the whole cowherding community rejoices over the birth of Nanda's son. Nanda is the chieftan of the cowherders and, thus, the whole community shares in his joy. After giving away lots of gifts and celebrating, Nanda has to leave for Mathurā to pay his taxes to King Kaṁsa. After completing his official business there he meets with Vasudeva who congratulates him on his new son and asks about the welfare his own son (Rohiṇī's son, Balarāma) and the other residents of Vraja. Vasudeva also urges Nanda to return to Vraja quickly because he fears trouble may strike there. While Nanda is away a beautiful woman arrives in Vraja. It is the wicked demoness Pūtanā on a mission of infanticide for Kaṁsa. She enters Nanda's house and while the Mother Yaśodā and the other women are overwhelmed by her beauty she takes baby Kṛṣṇa on her lap and begins to breast feed him. Though her breasts are covered with a dangerous poison, Kṛṣṇa sucks from them without harm and instead sucks the very life out of the demoness. She screams and as she dies assumes her natural gigantic and hideous form. The women are shocked and at the same time happy

that Kṛṣṇa is somehow unharmed. A number of other miraculaous events occur in Vraja during Kṛṣṇa's babyhood and childhood. Mother Yaśodā places him under a heavy cart for protection and then doesn't hear him cry. Seemingly in anger he kicks the cart with his small foot causing it to tumble over. On another day there is a windstorm and he is carried off on a whirlwind. It turns out to be casued by another of Kaṁsa's demons, Trṇāvarta, who is trying to kill Kṛṣṇa. Suddenly Kṛṣṇa becomes very heavy and the demon is dragged back to earth and crushed under the weight of the baby. Another time Mother Yaśodā glances into baby Kṛṣṇa's mouth as he yawns and sees the whole universe there.

In a few days the sage Garga arrives, sent by Vasudeva, to perform the naming ceremonies for both Kṛṣṇa and and Kṛṣṇa's older brother, Balarāma. Knowing the suspicious nature of Kaṁa who might come to hear of the naming ceremony of Nanda's son and suspect that the son is really his nemesis, Vasudeva's eight son, Garga is reluctant to perform the ceremony. Nanda suggests that the ceremony be performed in secrecy in his cowshed. Garga agrees and gives them the names by which the two boys become famous, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. While describing Kṛṣṇa he notes that the baby has come before in the previous ages with different colors of complexion, that he has many names and forms, and that he is "equal" to Nārāyaṇa.<sup>1</sup> As time passes the boys begin to crawl and then to walk. Kṛṣṇa in particular makes something of a menace of himself, untying the calves before their mothers have been milked, stealing milk and curds from the neighbors and either eating it or distributing it to the monkeys and then breaking the pots in which the curds were stored. Once when the other boys accuse Kṛṣṇa of eating dirt, his mother looks into his mouth to see if it is true. There in his mouth she sees the whole universe. She is overwhelmed by the vision and wonders if she is dreaming or if her son is really the lord on whom all depend. Kṛṣṇa extends his enchanting power and suddenly the cowherd lady forgets all she has seen and thought in that moment of extraordinary vision and becomes his affectionate mother again.

On another day, Mother Yaśodā was busy churning curds when Kṛṣṇa, hungry for her breast milk, stopped her in order to suckle. While she was feeding him, some milk on the fire began to boil over. Yaśodā immediately put Kṛṣṇa down and ran to save the milk. Kṛṣṇa became angry, broke the curd container, ate some butter, and left carrying away more butter. When Yaśodā came back she saw what her son had done and that he was gone.

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<sup>1</sup>Bhāg. 10.8.13,15,19.

Outside she found him standing atop a large mortar for grinding grain feeding butter to a monkey. She chased after him with a stick and eventually caught hold of him by the hand. She decided to tie him to the big mortar and brought some rope to do it with. The rope turned out to be two inches too short, so she brought some more rope, but that too turned out to be too short. Finally she brought all the rope she could find in the house and still that was too short. Seeing her laboring so hard to tie him up, Kṛṣṇa took pity on her and finally allowed himself to be tied to the mortar like an ordinary boy. She then returned to her household chores. Kṛṣṇa seeing a pair of trees nearby began to drag the mortar towards them. When he reached them he went between them catching the mortar sideways between them. With a quick tug he pulled down the trees with a loud crash. Out of the two trees came two ethereal beings, two sons of Kuvera who previously had been cursed to stand naked as those trees by the sage Nārada. Seeing Kṛṣṇa, they offered him their homage and thanks for releasing them from their curse. After praying to him, the two beings disappeared. Meanwhile, hearing the loud sound of the falling trees, the cowherds came running and seeing the two fallen trees wonder how it happened. Some of the other cowherd children who witnessed the event tried to tell them that it was Kṛṣṇa himself who pulled the mortar between the trees and made them fall. They dismissed their story as childish make belief and freed Kṛṣṇa from the mortar, happy that whatever happened, he was not hurt. Shortly thereafter Nanda and the other cowherders decided to shift their settlement to the forest of Vṛndāvana with its sandy banks along the Yamunā. There had been too many near tragedies in their current abode. Before that however a fruit seller came by one day. Kṛṣṇa went running to her to buy fruit, his little hands filled with grain to pay for the fruit that diminished as it slipped between his fingers as he approached. She filled his hands with fruit anyway and in return the fruit remaining in her basket turned into jewels.

After their move to Vṛndāvana, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma became old enough to begin herding the calves in the nearby fields with the other boys. While minding the calves they would also play with the other boys in a number of ways. One day while they were herding the calves by the bank of the Yamunā another demon came to kill Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Vatsāsura had assumed the form of a calf in order to mix in with the herd. Kṛṣṇa spotted him and, sneaking up behind him, grabbed him by the hind legs, spun him around forcing the life out of him, and threw his dead corpse to the ground in front of a wood apple tree. His body regained its naturally huge demonic

form. On another occasion they went to a pond to water the calves. There they saw a huge crane, the form that the demon Bakāsura had assumed. It suddenly attacked and swallowed Kṛṣṇa with its bill. Seeing that the other boys fell down as if deprived of their lives. Just as suddenly, the huge crane spit Kṛṣṇa out because Kṛṣṇa had begun to generate heat causing his throat to burn like fire. The crane then attacked Kṛṣṇa with its beak and Kṛṣṇa took hold of its lower and upper halves and handily tore the crane in two. Hearing of those deeds later the cowherd men of the settlement were astounded.

One day Kṛṣṇa wanted to have a picnic in the forest. He called all of his friends together and they went herding the cows in front of them. As they went through the forest some played flutes and others blow horns. They danced like peacocks and raced each other to be the first to touch Kṛṣṇa when he went off alone to look at the beauty of the forest. At that time the demon Agha spotted them. He was a follower of Kaṁsa and the younger brother of Pūtanā, the witch who tried to poison Kṛṣṇa with her breasts, and Bakāsura, the crane demon. He vowed to avenge his sister and brother's death and kill Kṛṣṇa and all the boys. He took on the form of a huge python and lay across the path of the boys with his lower jaw on the ground and his upper jaw high in the clouds. His fangs looked like the peaks of mountains and his tongue stretched out like a path. Seeing these things in front of them the boys thought it was all part of the beauty of Vṛndāvana and were amused by how much it looked like the gapping mouth of a python. Hearing their words, Kṛṣṇa marvelled at how easily something real can be made into something false and determined to prevent them from entering the mouth of the python. Seeing that the boys and cows had already entered into the gapping mouth of the python, Kṛṣṇa entered, too, in order to protect them. Once in Kṛṣṇa expanded in size in the throat of the snake and blocked the passage of air through the snake's throat. The python twisted this and that, his eyes rolling in his head, and finally the air blocked by Kṛṣṇa burst open his head and came out of the python that way. When Kṛṣṇa got all of the boys and calves out of the serpent, with a glance he brought them all back to life. While the boys and calves were recovering, a great light rose up out of the thick body of the dead serpent and, lighting up all directions, entered into Kṛṣṇa. Though this happened when Kṛṣṇa and the other boys were five, the boys did not tell about the event until they were six.

The reason the story was not told for a year is the following. After killing Agha, Kṛṣṇa brought the boys and calves to the bank of the Yamunā

and suggested they have their lunch there in that beautiful setting while the calves graze nearby. Thus, they untied their sacks sat down in circles around Kṛṣṇa, like petals around the whorl of a lotus, and began to enjoy their food. While the boys ate the cows wandered off into the forest in search of more grass. Seeing that they had wandered and were lost, Kṛṣṇa told his friends to continue eating and went off to find them and bring them back. While Kṛṣṇa was away looking for the strayed calves, Brahmā, the creator god, who had been watching Kṛṣṇa's killing and liberation of the demon Agha, wanted to see more of Kṛṣṇa's greatness. He thus stole away all of the boys and calves and disappeared from sight. Not finding any of the calves, Kṛṣṇa returned to the river bank and found all of the boys missing, too. He searched for both the boys and calves in the forest and not finding any of them realized suddenly what had happened. In order to please the mothers of the boys and the calves Kṛṣṇa made himself into both groups. He became exactly like each of the boys and each of the calves down to the smallest detail. Kṛṣṇa then returned to the village with all of the calves (who were actually him) and all of the boys (who were also actually him), playing among themselves as they were when they left. The mothers of the boys and the calves responded to them with even greater affection and love than usual, considering, as they were (though without knowing it), Supreme Brahman to be their offspring. Because of this, their affection for their offspring increased enormously and they developed feelings for him as his mothers. This situation continued for a year.

After a year Brahmā returned to see how his trick worked out and was amazed to see all of the cows and boys that he thought had stolen playing with Kṛṣṇa in the forests of Vṛndāvana. He checked and saw that the boys and cows he had stolen were still lying under his power. As Brahmā was observing all of the boys and cows playing with Kṛṣṇa suddenly he saw them all as Kṛṣṇa with dark complexions and yellow silk clothes. Then he also saw all the living beings and all the elements of the cosmos take forms and worship those many forms of Kṛṣṇa. He saw Kṛṣṇa as the supreme Brahman who lights up the whole the world. For a moment he was stunned and silent and then Kṛṣṇa removed his power and Brahmā found himself in Vṛndāvana again with that supreme Brahman before him in the form of a cowherd boy surrounded by calves and boys. He descended from his vehicle and bowed at Kṛṣṇa's feet over and over again. Brahmā then began to offer prayers to Kṛṣṇa honoring him as the supreme being and begging his forgiveness for his trick. Concluding his prayer, Brahmā returned to his abode and Kṛṣṇa restored the boys and calves just as they were on the

bank of the Yamunā a year earlier. Though a year had past they thought only half a moment had gone by. They welcomed Kṛṣṇa back and invited him to finish his meal. Then together they all returned to the village and the boys told their parents and relatives the story of the killing of the huge python Agha.

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were now old enough to herd the cows instead of the calves and this they did each day in Vṛndāvana with their friends, enjoying the natural beauty of the forest and surrounding pasture lands. Sometimes they would sing with the bees, honk with the geese, and dance with the peacocks. Kṛṣṇa's voice, deep like the sound of thunder, could be heard calling stray cows by their names. When they were tired from their play they would lie down under the trees massaging each others' feet and fanning each other. One day a boy named Śrīdāmā told Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma about a forest near by called Tālavana where there were many delightful types of fruit, but which was guarded by a terrible demon named Dhenuka who had the form of a donkey. Humans were afraid to go there because of that demon and the others like him who ate humans when they caught them. Encouraged by the other boys who were desirous of the fruit there, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma decided to visit the forest. The brothers went to the forest and Balarāma began to shake the date trees to make the fruit fall. The demon Dhenuka heard the noise Balarāma made and came running to attack him. Dhenuka kicked at Balarāma with his hind legs and Balarāma caught his legs, spun him about, and threw him down. The donkey lost his life when he was spun around and his body crashed into a tree knocking it into another and another. Dhenuka's relatives heard the commotion and came running to kill the brothers, but Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma easily dispatched them all. The nearby villagers were then free to eat the fruit and their cows to graze in the forest that once belonged to Dhenuka and his kind. Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and the boys returned to the herders' village driving the cows before them.

One day Kṛṣṇa went with his friends and the cows down to the bank of the Yamunā. The boys and cows feeling hot and thirsty went to the water to drink. The place they approached happened to be a deep pond in the river that was polluted by the poison of a powerful snake who lived in it. When the boys and cows entered the water to drink the poison overcame them and they all fell down dead. Seeing his dead friends and cows, Kṛṣṇa immediately glanced upon them and brought them all back to life. They rose up and left the water of the river amazed. Kṛṣṇa then decided he wanted to purify the poisonous waters of that pond and drive the serpent away. He

climbed a tree on the bank of the river and jumped into the middle of the poisonous water causing waves to spread across the pond. The noise and disturbance aroused the serpent whose name was Kāliya. The serpent seeing a young boy swimming around in the water of his pond without any fear, became filled with anger and wrapped his body around him. Kṛṣṇa's friends and the cows on the bank began trembling with sadness and fear when they saw the huge snake wrapping itself around him. Noticing the signs of inauspiciousness on the earth, in the sky, and in their hearts the villagers, too, suddenly became fearful. They knew that Kṛṣṇa had gone herding the cows without Balarāma and they thought he might be in trouble. They all came running, following Kṛṣṇa's footprints to the river bank to see if anything had happened. When they saw Kṛṣṇa in the water in the grips of the serpent they all began to cry. Seeing his friends and family on the verge of death from their grief, Kṛṣṇa slipped out of the grip of the serpent. The serpent, now very angry indeed, raised his many hoods and glared at him with his forked tongues licking about in the air. Kṛṣṇa playfully moved around him looking for his opportunity. When the serpent lowered one of his hoods as he turned to keep his gaze on Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa jumped on top of it and began to dance. He danced on all the serpent's one hundred heads, battering them and causing them to sink down with the kicks of his feet. Kāliya weakened, his eyes began to bulge out of his heads and he began to vomit blood. Seeing him thus on the verge of death, Kāliya's many wives rose up out of the waters and began to pray to Kṛṣṇa for the life of their husband. Pleased with their humble prayers, Kṛṣṇa spared the serpent's life. When Kāliya, who had by then become unconscious, came back to consciousness again, he too prayed to Kṛṣṇa, asking him to do with him as he will. Kṛṣṇa sent Kāliya back to the island in the sea that he had come from and assured him that his eagle servant Garuḍa, from whom Kāliya had fled that island in the first place, would not harm him. The serpent then with his wives departed and the waters of Yamunā became again like nectar.

Kāliya had taken up residence in that pond in the Yamunā in the first place because he wanted protection from Garuḍa, Viṣṇu's servant and vehicle. The snakes generally made regular offerings to Garuḍa for protection, but Kāliya became arrogant and stopped making those offerings. A vicious battle ensued between Garuḍa and Kāliya in which Kāliya was severely rattled by a powerful blow from Garuḍa's left wing. He slipped into the pond in the Yamunā where he knew Garuḍa could not pursue him because of a prior curse cast by the sage Saurabhi who wanted to protect



the fish in that pond from Garuḍa. Now that he had been granted safety by Kṛṣṇa he was glad to return to his home. Meanwhile, all the members of Kṛṣṇa's community who had watched in horror as he fought the serpent decided they were too tired to return to the village that night, so they spent it on the bank of the Yamunā. They woke in the middle of the night to find themselves surrounded by a forest fire. To protect his family and friends Kṛṣṇa swallowed up the fire before it did any harm.

Then summer arrived, a season ordinarily difficult for living beings, but because Kṛṣṇa was present it seemed more like spring. The sounds of mountain waterfalls remained loud and the trees remained moist from their sprays. The residents of Vraja did not feel the heat of the sun because of the moist breezes scented with the pollen of white lotuses and lilies and the poison like rays of the sun were not able to dry up the ground and the grasslands. Kṛṣṇa with Balarāma by his side entered the forests then, surrounded by the cowherd boys and cows, playing on his flute. They danced, wrestled, and sang, sometimes Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma dancing while others sang and played and sometimes Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma singing and playing while others danced. At that time a demon named Pralamba joined the group in the form of a cowherd boy in order to kidnap Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Kṛṣṇa recognized him and, thinking of how to kill him, permitted his friendship. He suggested that the boys divide up into two groups, one lead by Balarāma and the other by Kṛṣṇa, the groups competing with each other in various games. The winners of the competitions were to be carried around on the shoulders of the losers. Playing in this way they came to the foot of a fig tree called Bāṇḍīraka. There the group led by Balarāma defeated the group led by Kṛṣṇa. Thus, Kṛṣṇa carried Śrīdāman, Bhadrāsena carried Vṛṣabha and Pralamba carried Balarāma. Pralamba, seeing his opportunity, quickly carried Balarāma a distance away, but Balarāma's weight, like that of the fabled cosmic mountain, slowed Pralamba down and he was forced to change back into his own form. Seeing Pralamba's hideous form Balarāma was momentarily frightened. Then coming back to himself he struck that demon on the head with his fist like a bolt of lightning striking a mountain. Demon's head separated from his body, blood poured from his mouth and he fell down dead. Seeing the slain body of the demon Pralamba, the cowherd boys were astounded.

While the boys were playing, cows had wandered far off in search greener pastures. When the astonishment of Pralamba's killing passed, the cowherd boys realized that the cows were gone and started searching for anxiously for them. After much searching the cows were found wandering in lands

covered by tall grass. The joy of finding their cows was short-lived, however, for the boys soon realized that they were surrounded by a raging grass fire. They called to Kṛṣṇa for help and he asked them all to close their eyes for a few minutes. When their eyes were closed Kṛṣṇa swallowed up the fire and freed them all from danger. When they opened their eyes again they found themselves back at the base of the huge fig tree. Seeing themselves and the cows thus spared they were amazed and began to think of Kṛṣṇa an immortal. Then, Kṛṣṇa returned with Balarāma and all the boys to the village. There the cowherd girls, for whom a moment of Kṛṣṇa's absence was like a hundred ages, became filled with joy at the sight of him. All of the elders were amazed to hear the boys' accounts of the killing of Pralamba and their mysterious salvation from the wild fire.

Shortly, thereafter the rainy season began with its dark blue clouds, bright flashes of lightning, and deep, rumbling thunder. After eight months of drinking the earth's watery wealth, the rain clouds began to return it to the earth. Kṛṣṇa with Balarāma entered those rain-washed forests to enjoy them with the cowherd boys. The slow-moving cows, their udders filled, would come quickly and affectionately to him when he called them. He saw the pleased forest tribes, the trees dripping with honey, the streams running briskly from the hills and the caves near them echoing their sounds. Sometimes he enjoyed sitting in the laps of the trees or in caves while it rained, munching on fruit, tubers, and roots. Or, sitting on a rock near the water he ate rice and yogurt with Balarāma and the other boys. Seeing the beauty of the rainy season Kṛṣṇa was very pleased.

Gradually the autumn arrived with its clear waters and subdued fires. The rivers and ponds lost their rainy season muddiness; the skies became clear and the earth dry. The clouds, having delivered their all, became radiant white. The streams and ponds became still and silent with the coming of autumn. When the moon was full it ruled the clear heavens surrounded by the bright stars like the king of the Yadus surrounded by the the Vṛṣṇis on earth. In the autumn, as the breezes picked up the sweet fragrance of the lotus ponds, Kṛṣṇa entered the forest with the cows and cowherd boys playing his flute. Hearing the sounds of his flute the girls of Vraja became aroused and some secretly described the sounds of Kṛṣṇa's flute to their friends. They said things like: there is no higher achievement for those who have eyes, we think, than seeing the faces of those two sons of the lord of Vraja (Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma) as they follow the cows with their friends, their flutes pressed to their lips, casting loving, sidelong glances here and there. Another said: what good things has this bamboo flute done such that

it enjoys the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's lips, which belongs to the cowherd girls. Its parents, the streams and trees, seem to be horripilating and shedding tears [at their child's good fortune]. In ways like this the cowherd girls expressed their strengthening desires for Kṛṣṇa.

In the first month of winter, the unmarried girls of Nanda's village performed a ritual vow for the goddess Kātyāyanī, eating offering food (rice mixed with ghee). After bathing in the Kālindī they worshipped an image of the goddess made of sand on the bank of the river. Offering fragrances, garlands, incense, lights, fruit and other gifts, they each prayed: "O Kātyāyanī, great power, great yoginī, o goddess, please make the son of Nanda my husband. Obeisance unto you!" In this way they performed the vow for a month, their minds fixed on Kṛṣṇa, so that Kṛṣṇa would become their husband. One day the cowherd girls rose early and went to take their baths in the river usual. They left their clothes on the bank as did before, and entered the water singing Kṛṣṇa's name. Kṛṣṇa came to know of this and he went to the river that day with his friends to fulfill the cowherd girls' desires. He gathered together their clothes and, climbing a nearby tree, said with a smile on his face: "Come here, dear girls, and get back your clothes. I am not joking with you since you are worn from your vow. Nor have I ever told you anything untrue before. Therefore, one by one or all together come and get your clothes, slim-waisted girls." Hearing his playful words the cowherd girls were filled with love for him and at the same time embarrassed. They looked at one another with smiles, but did not leave the water. Then, shivering a bit in the cold water they replied: "Don't do this; it is wrong. You are the son of Nanda. We love you and you are praised by all of Vraja. Give us back our clothes; we are freezing. Śyāmasundara, we are your servants. We will do whatever you say. Give us back our clothes, otherwise we will report this to the king." Kṛṣṇa replied: "If you are my servants then you should follow my orders. Come here sweetly smiling and get back your clothes, otherwise I will not return them. What can your angry king do?" Then they all came out of the water shivering, covering their genitals with their hands. Seeing them defeated, Kṛṣṇa took their clothes on his shoulders and said with a smile: "Since bathing naked while undertaking a vow is disrespectful to the gods, you should fold your hands on your heads and bow them in respect in order to remove that sin as you come to get your clothes." So advised by Kṛṣṇa, the girls of Vraja fearing that their vows would become fruitless bowed their heads as instructed. Seeing them before him with with folded hands and bowed heads, Kṛṣṇa returned their clothes to them. They came forward in

shame like puppets operated by another and took back their clothes. They, in love with Kṛṣṇa, did not hold any of his tricks against him. However, putting on their clothes they did not leave immediately, but instead looked at him bashfully. He then told them that he knew what they wished for and that their wishes will be fulfilled shortly. They then returned to the village pleased.

Shortly after returning the cowherd girls' clothes to them, Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd boys herded the cows a distance away from Vṛndāvana. They sought shelter in a shady grove of trees and Kṛṣṇa praised the trees as examples of selfless generosity, examples of lives well lived. After they watered the cows and refreshed themselves in the cool Yamunā river, the boys complained to Kṛṣṇa about being hungry. He sent them to beg some food from some *brāhmaṇa* who were performing a long sacrifice nearby. The boys asked the *brāhmaṇa* in the names of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma for some of the food prepared for use in the sacrifice, but the *brāhmaṇa* were arrogant and narrow-minded and refused to spare any. When the cowherds returned disappointed, Kṛṣṇa smiled and sent the boys to the wives of the *brāhmaṇa*, instructing them to tell the wives of his presence nearby and ask them for some of the food. They affectionate towards him will give plenty of food. This the boys did and when the wives heard that Kṛṣṇa was nearby and that he was hungry, they became anxious to go see him and bring him food. They put four types of delicious food into containers and started out to go to him. Though they were forbidden by their husbands, brothers, friends, and sons, they went to visit Kṛṣṇa anyway surrounded as he was by Balarāma the cowherds in a grove of Aśoka trees by the Yamunā. Seeing that they had given up all other desires to come see him, he said with a smile: "Welcome fortunate ladies. Please be seated. What can we do for you?" He praised them for coming to him, for recognizing in him the source of the dearness of all things, and then sent them back to their husbands so that they would be able to complete their sacrificial rites successfully. They responded by suggesting that he was being cruel to them and stated that all they wanted was to be his servants. Their husbands, they said, would not accept them back now and thus he was their only hope. Kṛṣṇa nevertheless sent them to their homes saying that their husbands, fathers, brothers, sons, and so forth would not despise them. He added that the best way to attain him is by fixing one's mind on him, not by personal physical contact. The wives returned to their homes and their husbands completed the rites successfully without despising them. Then Kṛṣṇa fed the cowherds with the food brought by the wives and then he himself ate. Meanwhile

the *brāhmaṇa* themselves had a change of heart and began to curse their own arrogance, the pride they had in their high births, in their cultivation of knowledge, and in their achievements in austerity. Because of that pride they had refused a request from the lord himself (Kṛṣṇa) and so had failed to please him. They marveled at how their simple wives, without any of their high qualifications, had shown such love and affection for Kṛṣṇa and they regarded their lives blessed because of their wives. Finally, however, though they wanted very much to go see Kṛṣṇa personally, out of fear of what Kaṁsa might do to them, they stopped themselves from going to visit him.

Shortly after the incident with the *brāhmaṇa* and their wives, Kṛṣṇa noticed his father and the other elder cowherds preparing for a sacrifice in honor of Indra. He asked his father Nanda what the sacrifice was for. Nanda replied that it was a sacrifice to please Indra who supplies the world with rain. Humans offer sacrifices to Indra and he in turn supplies the world with the waters of life. Those who neglect such offerings do not fare well in the world. Kṛṣṇa in reply said that the world is really dependent on karman (past action) and that Indra had no control over that. He could not change a living being's karman into another kind of karman. In other words, Indra was not really the controller of anything and did not need to be appeased. It is karman itself that is the guru and the controller. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa advised his father instead to honor the people and things in their lives that were important to their welfare: the cows, the *brāhmaṇa*, and the mountain (Govardhana) all of which directly impact their lives. Moreover, he said, let food be offered to all no matter what their social standing. Nanda, taking the advice of his son, brought offerings to Mount Govardhana and with the cows in front circumambulated the mountain. Kṛṣṇa then expanded into another enormous form which, saying "I am the mountain," ate all the many offerings. Then Kṛṣṇa with all the other people of Vraja offered respect to that form, saying: "See how the mountain has taken form and shows us his mercy. Taking any form he likes, he kills those who neglect it. Let us honor him, then, for the good of ourselves and our cows." When they, thus, had honored the mountain and made offerings to the cows and the *brāhmaṇa*, the cowherds all returned to Vraja.

When Indra realized that his worship had been stopped he became very angry with Kṛṣṇa and all of the cowherds. He sent his most fierce clouds and in anger said: "See the greatness of arrogance. Those cowherds listening to that mortal Kṛṣṇa have disrespected the gods. Leaving aside reason they think they can cross the ocean of existence with those weak actions and

rites. They have displeased me by listening to that talkative fool Kṛṣṇa who thinks he is learned. Knock down the pillar of their arrogance and carry of their animals. I will go the Vraja myself on my elephant Airāvata with the desire to destroy the pastures of Nanda with my powerful winds." By the order of Indra the clouds were released and they pounded Nanda's cow settlement with powerful rains. The torrents of rain were lit up by lightning and brought down by intense winds. The clouds rained down pillars of water and the earth quickly became flouded. The animals shivered in the fierce winds and the cowherds and cowherd girls, suffering from the cold, took shelter of Govinda.

Seeing the people being struck almost unconscious by the hail-stones falling in the rain Kṛṣṇa recognized it as the work of a very angry Indra. Thinking "I will remove the arrogance of these petty lords who think they are almighty," he vowed to protect the cow settlement with his own power. Then with one hand Kṛṣṇa easily lifted Mount Govardhana and held it up like an umbrella. He addressed the cowherds: "Mother, Father, People of Vraja! Please enter the trench beneath this mountain with your cows. Don't be afraid of the mountain slipping from my hold. Fear not the wind and the rain. You will be safe from them." Reassured by Kṛṣṇa the cowherds and their families and cows entered the trench. Without regard for hunger or thirst Kṛṣṇa held the mountain for seven days without moving a foot, watched by the residents of Vraja. When Indra heard of the power of Kṛṣṇa he was amazed and humbled and, having lost his will, he halted his destroyer clouds. The sky became clear, the sun appeared, the wind and rain ceased and Kṛṣṇa said to the cowherds: "Go on out. Don't be afraid. The wind and rain have stopped. The streams have gone down." They gradually left with shelter of the mountain with their wives, children and cows. The lord replaced the mountain where it was in before while all the creatures watched. All of the people of Vraja came near to Kṛṣṇa and each person according to that person's relationship with him expressed his or her love for him. Yaśodā, Rohiṇī, Nanda, and Rāma (Balarāma) all embraced him affectionately. The gods showered flowers from the sky.

When the cowherds saw this amazing act of Kṛṣṇa, they began to wonder who he really was and how he took birth among them. How can a seven year old boy lift up a mountain like an elephant holding up a lotus? Even when he was a baby he sucked the very life out of the demoness Pītanā. When he was barely a month old he kicked over a heavy cart. When he was a year old he killed the demon in the guise of a twister. Then tied to the heavy mortar he pulled down the two Arjuna trees. Herding the

calves in the forest with his brother Balarāma he killed the Crane demon. Then there was the demon in the form of a calf who snuck into the herd and with whose body he easily knocked down some wood apple trees. Then he killed the donkey demon and his friends and made the Palm forest safe again. And through Balarāma he killed the demon Pralambha and saved the cows and boys from the forest fire. Taming the poisonous king of serpents he drove him from the Yamunā and made the river's water safe again. All the residents of Vraja seem to have an unstoppable attachment to him. They asked Nanda: "How was such a one born among us? How can a seven year old boy lift such a big mountain?"

Nanda replied by telling them what the sage Garga had told him during the Kṛṣṇa's name-giving ceremony, that in previous births he had three other complexions, white, red and yellow, but now he was dark (*kṛṣṇa*). Previously he was the son of Vasudeva and thus he is now known as Vāsudeva, but he has many names and many forms and, though Garga knew his qualities, actions and forms, people in general did not know them. Moreover, Garga said: "He will bring about your well being and by him you will cross over all difficulties. Previously he protected the good and they defeated the thieves. Those fortunate ones who love him are not conquered by their enemies. This son is equal to Nārāyaṇa in quality, fortune, fame. Don't be surprised at what he is able to do." Thus, Nanda told the cowherds: "I think this Kṛṣṇa is a portion of Nārāyaṇa." Hearing Nanda's words recounting Garga's statements, the cowherds of Vraja became overjoyed, they honored Nanda and became reassured about Kṛṣṇa.

When the mountain Govardhana had been lifted and Vraja thus protected from the raging storms, the divine cow Surabhi came from Goloka along with the king of the gods, Indra. Indra in shame came to Kṛṣṇa and touched his feet with his crown and, his pride as the lord of the three worlds crushed, addressed him with folded hands: "Your abode is one of pure goodness, of the power of austerity, free of the qualities of passion and ignorance. The influences of the qualities of *māyā* do not exist here. Therefore, the flaws created by them like greed and so forth are also absent. Still you take up the rod of punishment in order to protect dharma and chastise rogues. You are the father, the teacher, the lord of the universe, unsurpassable time, the raised rod. To benefit the world you assume many forms and to destroy the pride of those who fancy themselves as lords of the universe." In this way Indra prayed to Kṛṣṇa and asked his forgiveness and for the blessing that his understanding not be confused again. He concluded by saying: "I have been blessed by you. My arrogance destroyed;

my wicked efforts frustrated. I surrender to you, the self, the teacher, the lord." Kṛṣṇa replied: "I stopped your sacrifice in order to remind you of me, you who had become so intoxicated with the opulence of being Indra. One blinded by the pride of lordly affluence cannot see me. Therefore I separate one from his fortune whom I wish to bless. Return to your place. Good luck to you. Just follow my guidance and may you remain in your proper office free of arrogance." Then the divine cow spoke: "Kṛṣṇa, great yogin, self of the world, source of the world, by you are we protected. You are our highest deity, not Indra. Take care of the cows, the *brāhmaṇa*, and the gods and those who are good. You are our Indra" Then she sprinkled Kṛṣṇa with her milk and Indra sprinkled him with the water of the heavenly Gaṅgā. Thus they anointed him with name 'Govinda.' The streams became full of water, the trees full with honey, the herbs and plants ripe without cultivation, and the mountains full of jewels. Then Indra and Surabhi returned to their homes.

One day not long after the lifting of Govardhana, Nanda, after observing Ekādaśī and worshipping Janārdana, went early the next day to bathe in the Kālindī (Yamunā). As he entered the water he was grabbed by the servants of Varuṇa and taken to him. Without realizing it he had entered the water during the demonic period of the night. Kṛṣṇa, hearing that his father had been arrested by Varuṇa, went to see him. Seeing Hṛṣīkeśa [Kṛṣṇa] arrive, the world protector [Varuṇa] and his companions first honored him and then addressed him thus: "Today at long last my body has achieved something really valuable, Lord. Those who worship your feet complete the path. Obeisance to you, lord, brahman, the higher self, on whom the power māyā who creates the worlds has no effect. My foolish servant, not knowing what he was doing, brought your father here. Please forgive him. Please show me your mercy, too. Govinda, please take your father home." Kṛṣṇa then took his father and returned home bringing joy to his family. Nanda, however, having seen the invisible protector of the worlds honor his son was amazed and told his relatives of it. They with joyful minds began to consider him the supreme being and to think that he will deliver them to their supreme goals. Understanding what they hoped for, Kṛṣṇa thought of a way to fulfill their desires. Thinking to himself "a person in this world wanders to so many destinations, both high and low, because of that person's ignorance, desires, and actions and thus doesn't know her own true destination." Therefore the most compassionate Kṛṣṇa showed the cowherds his own abode beyond darkness. That real, cognizant, unlimited, Brahman, light eternal that the sages, their minds fully concentrated,



see beyond the material qualities, they, too, led to the lake of Brahman, immersed and raised up again by Kṛṣṇa, saw that world of Brahman where Akrūra previously had gone. Nanda and the others seeing that world were infused the highest joy and seeing Kṛṣṇa there being praised by hymns they were simply awestruck.

Kṛṣṇa saw the fragrant autumnal nights and set his mind to taste love. The moon rose dispelling the suffering of the people and coloring the face of the eastern sky red with its rays like a lover who anoints the face of his beloved on his return after a long separation, Seeing the full moon like the face of a woman reddened with fresh kumkuma and the forest lit by its light he played a soft song with his flute. Hearing that song, their sexual desires were aroused and the women of Vraja, whose hearts were stolen by Kṛṣṇa, went to where he was without knowing each other was upto. Some were milking at the time, but they left without finishing; others had just put milk on the stove and without taking it off the departed. Some were serving meals, some breast-feeding their children, some serving their husbands, and some eating. Some were anointing their bodies, some bathing, some decorating their eyes. Some went to Kṛṣṇa with their clothes reversed or in the wrong place. Though they were forbidden by their husbands, fathers, brothers, and family members, their hearts had been stolen by Kṛṣṇa and they did not stop. Some who were inside their houses and were not able to get out began to meditate on him with their eyes closed. The results of their inauspicious past deeds were burned up by the fire of separation from their loved one and the results of their auspicious past deeds diminished by the joy of embracing Kṛṣṇa in their meditations. Gone to that supreme self [Kṛṣṇa] as their paramour, they suddenly gave up their bodies, made of the material qualities.

When Kṛṣṇa saw the cowherd women arrive he said: “Welcome, fortunate ones! What can I do for you? Tell me the reason for your auspicious arrival here? This night, though, is fearful and filled with frightful things. Therefore you should return to the village and not stay here. Your mothers, fathers, sons, brothers, and husbands, not finding you anywhere, will be worried. Don’t cause trouble for your relatives like this. You’ve seen the flower-filled forest, illumined by the light of the moon, and beautified by the branches of the trees swaying in the breezes of the Yamunā. Therefore, go back to the village now and serve your husbands. The calves and children are no doubt crying. Go comfort them. Indeed, your coming here out of affection for me is fitting for you. Living beings are very affectionate towards me. The highest duty of wives, however, is guileless service

to their husbands, bringing goodness to family, and nourishing all the living beings. Even a husband who is ill-behaved, unfortunate, old, dull, ill, or poor is not to be abandoned by women who desire the best, unless he is a sinner. Infidelity is not conducive to heaven or good reputation; it is useless, mean, wicked, fearful, and always disgusting. From hearing about me, seeing me, meditating on me, and praising me, love for me arises, not by physical contact. Therefore, go back to your homes.”

Hearing these unpleasant words of Govinda, the cowherd women became despondent and felt that their hopes had been dashed. Their faces became sad; their lips became dry because of their sighs. They scratched the ground with their toes and their tears caused the kumkuma on their breasts to run. They stood there silently filled with sadness. Then wiping their eyes they began to speak, stuttering a bit at first. They said: “Lord, you should not say such cruel things. We have given up everything for you. Don’t reject us. Accept us, your servants, the way the primal person accepts those desiring liberation. Your instruction about how women’s true duty is the service of their husbands, children, and friends is fine, but you are the beloved, the friend, and the self of all living beings. When some fortunate ones give their love to you, the eternal lover, what need is there for husbands, sons, and so forth who just give pain? Therefore, be kind to us, lord. Don’t smash the hope we have placed in you for so long, Lotus-eyes. You have stolen the minds and hands that we have engaged in our houses and in household chores. Our feet do not move one step away from your feet. How can we then return to Vraja? What can we do? Sprinkle with the ambrosia of your lips, dear one, our fires of love ignited by your smiles, glances, and soft songs. Otherwise, friend, we will offer our bodies in the fire of separation, like yogīs [burning their bodies] through meditation, and will travel the path to your feet.” With these words and others like these the cowherd women appealed to Kṛṣṇa. Hearing their forlorn words Kṛṣṇa, the lord of the lord of yoga, smiled and began to enjoy with the cowherd women, though he was satisfied in himself. Kṛṣṇa surrounded by the cowherd women, their faces radiant from his glances, looked like the full moon surrounded by the stars. Being sung of and himself singing, Kṛṣṇa, wearing his Vaijayantī garland, ornamented the forest at the head of hundreds of women. Arriving with the cowherd women at the bank of the river, made of cool sand and served by soft breezes laden with the fragrance of lilies, Kṛṣṇa aroused the sexual desires of the beauties of Vraja with his outstretched arms, embraces, hand-holding, touches on their thighs, buttocks, and breasts, playful scratches, glances and smiles

and thus he enjoyed with them. Having in these ways captured the attention of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the great one, the cowherd women became proud and began to think of themselves as better than all the women in the world. Seeing them so intoxicated with their good fortune and full of pride, Keśava suddenly disappeared from among them to bring them back to their senses and to show them his grace.

When Kṛṣṇa suddenly disappeared, the women of Vraja became distressed, like female elephants who have lost sight of their lord. Their minds, disturbed by the recollection of his way of walking, his gestures, his smiles, his glances, his charming words, and his games, they identified with him and took on his various actions. His lovers, identifying with him, began to imitate their beloved in his movements, smiles, glances, and ways of speaking. Thinking "I am him," the women began to enact the various sports of Kṛṣṇa. Singing loudly they searched for him from forest to forest as if they were mad. They asked the tress about that person who like space exists inside and outside of all beings. They asked the tall trees like the *aśvattha*, *plakṣa*, and the *nyagrodha* if they had seen the son of Nanda who had stolen their hearts with his loving smiles and glances. They asked the flowering tress like *karavaka*, the *aśoka*, the *nāga*, the *pannāga*, and the *campaka* if they had seen the younger brother of Rāma whose smile steals away the pride of even conceited women. They then asked the sacred basil plant (*tulasī*) if she had seen that Acyuta, so very dear to her, who likes to carry her along with him with the bees attracted to her fragrance trailing behind. They told the *mālatī*, the *mallikā*, the *jāti*, and the *yūthikā* that they must have seen Mādhava since by the touch of his hand as he passed had pleased them. They asked other trees as well, those standing on the bank of the *Yamunā* and by nature kind to others, to show them the path that Kṛṣṇa took. They asked the earth what great auterities she performed in order to always be in contact with the feet of Kṛṣṇa. They informed some does that they came across that they knew Kṛṣṇa had been there with his beloved, bringing joy to their eyes, because they could smell the aroma of his garland mixed with the *kumkuma* from her breasts. Addressing some trees that were bowed low, their branches laden with fruit and flowers, they asked if Kṛṣṇa with his arm on the shoulder of his love and a lotus in his hand, pursued by intoxicated bees, had been pleased with their respectful bows. They inquired about Kṛṣṇa's whereabouts of some vines they saw clinging to trees because they were sure Kṛṣṇa had touched them since they were all in the process of budding. In this way the cowherd girls, speaking as if they were mad and pained by their unsuccessful search for Kṛṣṇa,

again identified with him and began to imitate the events of his life.

One girl became Pūtanā and another became Kṛṣṇa and suckled at her breast. Another became an infant and while crying, struck with her foot another who had become a cart. One became a demon and stole another who had become Kṛṣṇa. Another crawled around on all fours to the ringing sound of ankle bells. Two became Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma and others became their cowherd friends. One cowherd girl became the demon Vatsa, another the demon Baka, and yet another pretended to kill them. Another, imitating the way Kṛṣṇa calls cows that have wandered far away, playing the flute and sporting was praised by others saying "well done, well done." One placing her arm on another walked around saying "I am Kṛṣṇa. Look at my playful gait." "Don't be afraid of the wind and the rain. I have saved you." Saying this a cowherd woman raised up a cloth with one hand. One climbed on the head of another and said to her "Evil snake! leave this place. I am born to punish rascals." Another said "Hey cowherds! Look at the fearsome forest fire. Quickly close your eyes so that I may take care of it." One bound by another with a garland to a pretend mortar pretended to be afraid covering her face with her hands.

As they were questioning the vines and tress of Vṛndāvana about Kṛṣṇa, they spotted the footprints of the supreme lord in one part of the forest. Those footprints were clearly the footprints of the son of Nanda because they showed the markings of the flag, lotus, thunderbolt, goad and so forth. As the women went forward searching for his path by means of those prints they spotted the footprints of a woman close by his and feeling troubled said: "Whose footprints are these of someone walking with the son of Nanda with her arm on his shoulder like a female elephant walking with her bull elephant? Lord Hari is certainly pleased with her since Govinda has left us behind and taken her off to be alone. Fortunate are these particles of dust from Govinda's feet; even Brahmā, Śiva, and Ramā sprinkle them on their heads to destroy sin. Those footprints of hers are disturbing to us since she alone from among the women has been singled out and enjoys privately the lips of Acyuta. Her footprints are not visible here. Her lover must have lifted her up because her soft feet are tortured by sharp blades of grass. Ladies, note the deeper footprints of that lusty, more heavily burdened Kṛṣṇa, as he carries the woman. Here his beloved was put down by the great one because of these flowers. Here he gathered blossoms for her. Notice this; in going to get them his prints are incomplete. The lover arranged the hair of his beloved here; here is surely where he sat as he placed the flowers in lover's hair. Here he, lover of the

self, self-satisfied, unfragmented, made love to her showing the depravity of lust-laden men and the baseness of women." Seeing that the cowherd women wandered about almost senseless. The cowherd woman whom Kṛṣṇa took with him leaving behind all the others in the forest began to think of herself as the best of all women because her lover had rejected all the other desirous cowherd women and accepted her. Then going to some other part of the forest the proud woman said to Keśava: "I am unable to walk anymore. Carry me wherever you want." He said to her: "Climb up on this branch." Then when he disappeared, that woman began to cry out: "Lord, lover, dearest! Where are you? Where are you, great-armed? Show yourself to me your poor servant, friend." As the cowherd women were searching for Kṛṣṇa they saw from afar their sad friend who was bewildered by separation from lover. Hearing what she said and about the respect she received from Mādhava and then her abandonment because of her weakness they were thoroughly amazed. They entered the forest as long as there remained moonlight. When they saw darkness setting in the women came out of there. Their minds on him, their conversations about him, acting like him, fully absorbed in him, they sang of his qualities and forgot about their own homes. Contemplating Kṛṣṇa they arrived at the bank of the Kālindī and gathered together they sang of him, desiring his return.

The cowherd women sang: "This Vraja is more glorious because of your birth. The goddess of fortune always resides here. Beloved, just see how your lovers whose very lives rest on you search for you in all directions. Lord of love, granter of wishes, you are killing your poor servants with your eyes that defeat the beauty of the inner whorls of best, most highly cultivated lotuses that blossom in the autumn. Isn't that a kind of murder too? You have saved us repeatedly from the flow of poisonous waters, from wicked demons, from rain and wind, from lightning and fire, from bulls disguised as sons, from fears all around, best one. You are certainly not the son of a cowherd woman. You are the seer of the inner selves of all embodied beings. Friend, at the request of the creator (Brahmā) you have appeared in the family of the Sātvata to protect the universe. Chief of the Vṛṣṇis, place your wish-fulfilling, lotus-like hands on our heads, the hands by which you bestow freedom on those who seek shelter at your feet, fearing of cycle of worldly existence. Hero, destroyer of the troubles of the people of Vraja, smiler of the smile that wipes out the smiles of the families of women, accept us, your servants; show us your beautiful lotus-like face." With these and similar sentiments of love the cowherd women

sang to Kṛṣṇa and asked him to return to them quickly.

In that way the women sang, chattered madly, and cried sweetly, all desirous of seeing Kṛṣṇa. At that moment he suddenly appeared among them, his lotus face smiling, wearing a yellow cloth and forest garland, the very enchanter of the enchanter [Cupid] himself. Seeing that their lover had appeared, their eyes abloom with love, all the women rose up suddenly as if life had returned to them. One of them joyfully took his lotus-like hand with her folded hands; another held his arm, decorated with sandalwood, on her shoulder. Yet another slim woman accepted his chewed betel nut in her folded hands. One overheated woman placed her breasts on his lotus-like feet. One, overcome by the anger of love, arching her brows into a bow and biting her lips, glared at him as if to kill him with her sidelong glances. Another drinking in his lotus-like face with her unblinking eyes was not able to find satisfaction, though she drank deeply, like the holy ones who are never satisfied when glancing at his feet. Someone else, taking him into her heart through her eyes and then closing them, embraced him there, her body covered with goose bumps, like a yogī flooded with bliss. All of the them thrilled by the great pleasure of seeing Keśava gave up their suffering born of separation like people who had found wisdom. Lord Acyuta, surrounded by those women whose sadness had disappeared, looked more like the Primal Person surrounded by his powers. Taking them he went to the bank of the Kālindī which was filled with bees and breezes fragranced by blossoming kunda and mandāra flowers, where the darkness of the night was destroyed by the light of the autumn moon, and where the auspicious soft sands were piled up by the quivering hands of the Kṛṣṇā.

The pain in their hearts washed away by the sight of Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd women reached the end of their desires like the Vedas. They made a seat for their dear friend with their own upper garments marked with the rouge of their breasts. The Lord seated there, the controller seated in the hearts of the best of yogīs, was radiant surrounded and honored by the cowherd women and he assumed a form in which all the opulence of the three worlds was concentrated. Paying him, the awakener of erotic desire, due respect they, with smiles, playful glances, and restless eyebrows, praised him by touching his hands and feet and then, slightly annoyed, spoke. "Some honor those who honor them, some honor those who don't honor them, and some honor neither. Explain this to us, sir."

Kṛṣṇa replied: "Those who only honor those who honor them, friends,

are interested only in their own benefit. There is no friendship there; their dharma is for their own benefit not otherwise. Those, however, who honor those who do not honor them are like parents, compassionate. Here their dharma is blameless and theirs is real friendship, too, beautiful hipped girls. Some do not honor those who honor them nor those who do not honor them. They are the self-pleased, those who have achieved their desires, the ungrateful, and those who despise their elders. But I, friends, do not honor creatures who honor me in order to encourage them to search for me, like a poor man who has lost his wealth. Filled with the thought of that, he knows nothing else. Thus, ladies, in order to fix your hearts on me, you who have given up society, the Veda, and your own selves for my sake, though honoring you from afar, I disappeared. You must not hate the one you love for that, dear ones. I am not able to repay you who are blameless, even with a lifetime as long as that of a god, since you have cut the ever strong chains of the household and honored me. May that good deed itself be your reward.”

Hearing those charming words of the Lord the cowherd women gave up their sufferings born of separation, their desires increased by [the closeness] of his body. There Govinda began his circle dance (*rāsa-kṛīḍā*) in the company of those jewel-like women, who were pleased and who joined hands with one another. The festivity of the circle dance got underway adorned by the circle of cowherd women with Kṛṣṇa, the lord of yoga, entering in between each pair of them holding each around the neck such that each woman thought that he was with her. The sky above was filled with hundreds of the vehicles of the gods with their wives, their minds carried away with anticipation. Then drums sounded, flowers rained down, the lords of the Gandarvas with their wives sang of his pure fame. The sound of the bangles, ankle-bells, and other bell ornaments of the women with those of their lover became loud in the circle of the dance. There the Lord, the son of Devakī, was radiant among them like a great emerald among so many golden jewels. With their foot movements, the trembling of their arms, their smiles, the playfulness of their eyebrows, their gyrating middles, the slipping of the shawls covering their breasts, their earrings swinging across their cheeks, their faces glistening, their braids and girdles coming undone, the lovers of Kṛṣṇa shined brightly like flashes of lightning on a background of clouds.

They sang loudly, the red throated dancers, lovers of love-making, pleased by touching him, and by their song all the world was filled. One woman led an unmixed melody with Mukunda and being pleased he honored her

with “Well done, well done!” Then she led the refrain and again he gave her great honor. Another woman tired by all the dancing rested her arm on the shoulder of that bearer of a club [Kṛṣṇa] who was close by her side, her bangles and flowers hanging loose. She smelled the sweet lily fragrance that arose from one small part of Kṛṣṇa’s arm and with her hair standing on end she kissed him. Another placed her cheek, beautified by her earring which was tossing back and forth from the dancing, on his cheek and gave him her chewed betel nut. Another one, dancing and singing, her ankle and girdle bells ringing, became tired and placed on her breasts the auspicious, lotus-like hand of Acyuta who was by her side. The cowherd women having attained as their lover, Acyuta, so completely precious to Śrī, enjoyed being with him, embraced by his arms and singing his praises. The cowherd women danced with the lord in the circle dance, their faces beautified by the blue lotuses in their ears, curly locks of hair, perspiration on their foreheads, garlands slipping down from their hair, to the loud ringing of their bracelets and ankle bells. In this way, the Lord of Rāmā took pleasure with the beauties of Vraja through embracing, fondling with his hands, passionate glances, uninhibited amorous foreplay and laughter, like a child bemused by his own reflection. The senses of the women of Vraja were so overwhelmed by the joy of physical contact with him that they were unable to rearrange their hair, their skirts, or the cloths covering their breasts and their garlands and jewelry had fallen off.

Seeing the play of Kṛṣṇa the wives of the gods, overheated with desire, fainted. The Moon with his companions was also astonished. Expanding himself into as many as there were women, the Lord playfully enjoyed love play with them even though he is self-satisfied. Compassionate, he lovingly wiped their faces, exhausted as they were by the exertions of love play, with his cool hand. The cowherd women, seeing his smile made sweeter by the illumination of his cheeks and hair by his shining golden earrings, became filled with respect and began to sing of the lord’s pious deeds, overjoyed by the touch of his fingernails. In order to take away their fatigue, he entered with them into the water, which became littered with garlands crushed by their closely pressed bodies and colored by the red powder from the women’s breasts, chased by singing bees, like an unrestrainable bull elephant surrounded by his female elephants. In the water, being splashed by the laughing women from all directions and gazed at lovingly and being honored by those in sky with showers of flowers, he whose water play was like that of a king of elephants enjoyed splashing them back himself. Then they wandered into the groves of the Kṛṣṇā (Ya-



munā) on the bank filled with breezes bearing the fragrances of water flowers (lilies), surrounded by groups of female bees, like an elephant oozing with rut with his female elephants. In this way he, whose every wish comes true, with whom the women were ever enamoured, and who withheld his love inside himself, relished all those nights which were lumined by the light of the moon and which were filled with feelings like those found in stories from autumnal poetry.

The king (Parīkṣit) then asked his informant (Śuka): “the Lord, master of the universe, descended with a portion (of himself) in order to establish the Law and to quell its opposite. How could he, the speaker of the institutes of Law, the Agent, the Protector, do something the reverse (of the Law), o brahman, sexual contact with the wives of others? For what purpose has the King of the Yadus, whose desires are all fulfilled, done something disgusting? Destroy this doubt of mine?

Śuka responded by saying that transgression of the Law is sometimes seen among masters; cruelty is not a fault for the powerful, like with fire which consumes everything. One who is not a master should never perform such deeds even in his mind. He who out of foolishness drinks the poison produced from the ocean like Rudra is destroyed. The statements of the masters are true and so sometimes are their actions. A wise man should perform the deeds that are in agreement with their words. A good work does not benefit nor does its opposite produce an ill-effect for these who are without egotism. What to speak of the master of all beings, animal, human, and divine; what connection can good and bad have with his powerful acts? When even sages who are satisfied with the mere dust from his lotus feet, whose bonds of action have been destroyed by the power of yoga can wander about freely without being affected, taking their bodies at will, how can one speak of his (Kṛṣṇa's) bondage? He who moves inside the cowherd women, their husbands, and all embodied beings is the overseer who takes a body here for amusement. He takes a human body to show mercy to all beings and performs the kind of play which when heard of makes one devoted to him. The men of Vraja did not envy Kṛṣṇa since they, charmed by his māyā, were thinking that their respective wives were by their sides. When Brahma-rātra<sup>2</sup> arrived, encouraged by Vāsudeva (Kṛṣṇa) the cowherd women, so dear to the Lord, not wanting to return to their homes, departed. One who listens with respect to this play of Viṣṇu with the wives of Vraja and who describes it obtains the highest bhakti to

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<sup>2</sup>The night of Brahma, aka. Brahma-muhūrta, the last half of the last period of the night.

the Lord and easily and quickly destroys the disease of the heart, lust.

Once on the holy day Devayātrā the cowherds went happily to Ambikāvana in carts pulled by oxen. There they bathed in the Sarasvatī and worshiped the god Paśupati (Lord of Domesticated Beasts, Śiva) with offerings and also the goddess Ambikā (Śiva's wife). They gave cows, gold, cloth, honey, and sweet food to the brāhmaṇas and all prayed "May God be pleased with us." The greatly fortunate, Nanda, Sunanda, and the others spent that night on the bank of the Sarasvatī drinking only water. By chance an enormous, hungry snake arrived in that grove and seized Nanda as he was lying down. He cried out when the snake took hold of him "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, this great snake is swallowing me, son; free your surrendered one." Hearing his cries the cowherds jumped up quickly and seeing him being swallowed, they became frightened and struck at the snake with touches. Though burned by the firebrands the serpent did not release Nanda. Then the Lord, Master of the Sātvat, came and touched him with his foot. His inauspicious past karman was destroyed by the touch of the Lord's foot and he gave up his serpent's body and took the form of a Vidyādhara. Hṛṣīkeśa (Kṛṣṇa) asked him as he bowed with his shining body wearing jewelry of gold: "Who are you who are amazing to behold shining with such wealth and how have you been brought to this deplorable condition?"

"I am some Vidyādhara by the name of Sudarśana. With luster, personal beauty, and opulence I wandered about in all directions in my sky chariot. Proud of my beauty I laughed at some ugly Aṅgiras seers and they put me into this (snake) womb provoked by my own sin. That curse was initiated by compassionate souls to show me their grace, since I was freed from my wickedness by being touched by the foot of the teacher of the worlds. Freed from that curse by the touch of your foot, I bid you now farewell, destroyer of afflictions, who removes the fears of those frightened by mundane existence who are surrendered to you. I too am surrendered, great yogin, great being, master of the good. Allow me to go, lord, controller of the controllers of all the worlds. I am suddenly freed from the punishment of the *brāhmaṇas* by unflinching sight of you. By simply repeating your name all hearers and oneself are suddenly purified; how much more by the touch of your foot?" Making this submission he mounted a chariot and praising him Sudarśana went to heaven and Nanda was freed from danger. Hearing about Kṛṣṇa's personal might the residents of Vraja were astounded. Then completing their observances they returned to Vraja, discussing that respectfully.

Then sometimes Govinda and Rāma, whose prowess was awe-inspiring, sported in the forest at night in the midst of the women of Vraja. Being praised by the women who were bound to them by love, the two were well adorned, perfumed, garlanded and dressed in spotless clothes. Honoring the beginning of the night, with its rising moon and stars and filled with bees intoxicated by the fragrance of jasmine and lily-breezes, they sang songs simultaneously that were auspicious to the minds and ears of all of the beings of the universe, creating rising and falling modulations in the cycle of notes. The cowherd women hearing their songs became faint and did not know that their clothes were slipping off and their hair and garlands had fallen down. While they were thus playing freely and singing as though intoxicated, a follower of Dhanada (Kuvera) known as Śaṅkhacūḍa arrived there. While they were looking on he fearlessly drove the women, for whom they the protectors, crying for help to the northern direction. Seeing their loved ones crying out 'Kṛṣṇa, Rāma,' the two brothers chased after them as if they were cows taken by a thief. Shouting out 'don't be afraid,' with Śāla sticks in their hands, and moving very rapidly they quickly caught up with that lowest of Guhyakas. Seeing them closing in on him like time and death, he became afraid and, releasing the women, the fool ran away to save his life. Govinda chased after him wherever he ran desiring to take his crown jewel and Balarāma stayed to protect the women. Catching up with him not very far away, Lord took off the scoundrel's head, along with its crown jewel, with his fist. Killing Śaṅkhacūḍa in that way and taking the shining jewel he gave it to his older brother with love while the women looked on.

When Kṛṣṇa has gone to the forest (to herd cows), the cowherd women, their minds chasing after him, sing songs about his sports and thereby pass the day with difficulty. They say: "When Mukunda, his left hand placed on his left cheek, his eyebrows twisting and turning, flute at his lips, his soft fingers in their places, agitates (with his playing) the cowherd women, the women in the sky vehicles with the Siddhas hearing that become astonished and bashful and with their minds running down paths of sexual desire they fall into a swoon, the loose state of their clothes forgotten. Isn't it wonderful ladies! Listen to this: when this son of Nanda whose necklace is like a smile, on whose chest abides stationary lightning, who gives relief to people who are pained, plays his flute, the herds of bulls in the pasture, of deer and cows, their minds carried off by the sound of his flute, become like an etched picture, chewed grass sitting in their mouths, ears erect, and standing still as if asleep. Friend, sometimes when Mukunda, who resem-

bles an athlete's companion, adorned with flowers, gold ornaments, and peacock feathers, calls the cows with Balarāma and the cowherd boys, the rivers, who like us are short on pious acts, interrupt their flowing, desiring the wind-born dust from his lotus feet, their arms trembling with love, their waters stilled. When he, whose prowess is described by his followers like the primal person whose majesty is undiminishing, while wandering in the forest calls with his flute the cows that are moving about on the slopes of the hills, the forest vines and trees as if manifesting Viṣṇu in their selves become filled with flowers and fruit and bowing down under their burdens, their bodies in the thrill of love, rain down showers of honey. When he whose sandalwood markings are worth seeing imitates with his flute the loud, pleasing songs of the bees who are intoxicated by the honey of tulasī and the divine fragrance of his forest garlands, the cranes and birds on the ponds come forward, their hearts stolen by the beautiful songs, and worship Hari, their minds controlled, their eyes closed, maintaining strict silence. Ladies of Vraja, when, filled with joy, he with Bala, garlanded and diademed, on the peaks of the mountain causes the world to resound joyfully with the sound of his flute, the clouds, afraid of drowning out the great one, thunder very softly, sprinkle flowers on their friend, and with their shadows create an umbrella for him.

“Chaste lady (Yaśodā), when your son who is clever in the various skills of cowherds places his flute to his lips and plays tunes, that he has learned completely by himself, from time to time the lords of the gods headed by Indra, Śiva, and Brahmā, who are themselves great artists, hear them and, uncertain of their principles, their necks lowered and minds humbled, become confused. When he, playing his flute, walks about with that gait of an elephant, overcoming the pains of Vraja's hoofprints with his own lotus-like feet, marked by flag, thunderbolt, lily, goad and various other marks, then we, the force of our desires given to watching him playfully, are brought to the same condition as the trees (motionlessness); in our confusion we know nothing about our braids or garments. Sometimes that wearer of gems counts the cows with a garland of tulasī, whose fragrance he loves, and when, placing his arm on the shoulder of a dear friend, he plays his flute the does who are wives of the black deer, their hearts stolen away, come to serve the Dark One (Kṛṣṇa), following that ocean of good traits around like cowherd women, freed from their interest in homelife. O sinless (Yaśodā), when your dear child, the son of Nanda, whose dress is made festive by jasmine flowers, surrounded by cows and cowherds, plays on the Yamunā, giving joy to those who love him, a slow breeze blows

caressing him making all pleasant with a touch of sandalwood and semi-divine beings, honoring him, surround him with music, songs, and offerings of flowers. The benefactor of the cows of Vraja who lifted up the mountain and whose feet are praised by the elders (Brahmā, etc) on the path, after collecting together the entire wealth of cows at the end of the day, playing his flute and being praised by his companions, causes joy to the eyes even when fatigued, his garland covered with dust from the hooves of the cows. He comes desiring to fulfill the wishes of his friends, born of the womb of Devakī, king of the stars (the moon). His eyes slightly fluttering with joy, honoring his own and his friends and wearing a forest garland, face pale like a jujube, soft cheeks adorned by the beauty of his gold earrings, the Lord of the Yadus, moving like the king of elephants, comes close at the end of the day, his face filled with pleasure, freeing the cows of Vraja from the harsh heat of the day like the king of the night (the moon).

Then a bull-demon named Ariṣṭa came to the cow settlement in the body of a huge buffalo, shaking the earth which was cut by its hooves. He roared harshly, scratched the earth with his hoof, raised up his tail, lifted up embankments with the tip of his horns and passed urine and stool, his eyes fixed and unmoving. By his piercing roar the embryos of both cows and men out of fear fell before their time and were aborted. Thinking the buffalo a mountain the clouds gathered about him. Seeing his sharp horns the cowherd men and women became frightened and the animals, also frightened, ran off leaving behind the herd. Calling “Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa,” they all took shelter with Govinda. “Hey dummy, what do you want with these frightened cowherds and animals, phoney, when I am here, the chastizer misbehaved rascals like you?” said Acyuta clapping loudly and angering Ariṣṭa with sound of his claps. Hari stood there with his arm on the shoulder of a friend and stretched out to his full stature. Ariṣṭa, thus provoked, pawed the earth with his hoof, and waving about his raised tail, the angered ram charged toward Kṛṣṇa. With his horns placed directly in front, his blood red eyes unmoving, he, throwing a sidelong glance, charged Acyuta rapidly like a thunderbolt thrown by Indra. Grabbing ahold of his horns, the Lord threw him back eighteen steps like an elephant tossing back an opposing elephant. He, being thrown down by the Lord, rose up again quickly and charged him again, his whole body covered with sweat, breathing heavily, blinded by his rage. He (Kṛṣṇa) grabbed the charging buffalo by the horns and, throwing him to the ground and stepping on him with his foot, wrung him out like a wet cloth. Then he struck the demon with the demon’s own horn and the demon collapsed. Vomiting blood and

passing urine and stool, thrashing about with his legs, his eyes unsteady, he painfully went to death's destruction. The gods showered Hari with flowers and praised him. After thus killing the buffalo and being praised his family, Kṛṣṇa with Balarāma entered the cow settlement, he who is the joy of the eyes of the cowherd women.

When the demon Ariṣṭa had been killed by Kṛṣṇa, whose actions are amazing, the fortunate Nārada, sage of the gods, spoke this to Kaṁsa: "The daughter of Devakī was really Yaśodā's daughter and Devakī's Kṛṣṇa and Rohiṇī's Rāma were placed by fearful Vasudeva with his friend Nanda. They are the ones who have killed your people. " Hearing that, the lord of the Bhojas out of anger, his senses being churning, took up a sharpened sword with the intent of killing Vasudeva. He was stopped by Nārada. Knowing his (Vasudeva's) sons to be his death, Kaṁsa instead had him (Vasudeva) put in chains along with his wife. When the sage of the gods (Nārada) had departed Kaṁsa spoke to Keśin and sent him off saying "May you kill Rāma and Keśava." Then the King of the Bhojas called his companions, Muṣṭika, Cāṇūra, Śāla, Tośala, and the rest, and his elephant keepers and said: "Hey all. Listen to this. Cāṇūra and Muṣṭika, in Nanda's pasture reside the two sons of Ānakadundubhi (Vasudeva), Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, my death is revealed to me. When they arrive here, please kill them through the sport of wrestling. Let various rings be constructed for the contests of wrestling so that all the citizens and towns' people may freely watch. Good Minister! Let the elephant Kuvalayāpīḍa be brought to the gate of the arena and kill my two enemies with him. Let the Sacrifice of the Bow begin on the fourteenth according to rule and immolate some choice animals for the king of ghouls who grants sons."

Having given his orders, the knower of science of diplomacy called for the best of the Yadus and taking his hand in his own spoke to Akrūra: "Greetings, Lord of Gifts, do me a friendly turn. There is no one other than you who is so respected and well-disposed among the Bhojas and Vṛṣṇis. Therefore I seek your help, excellent man, who are able to undertake weighty charges just as great Indra sought out Viṣṇu and thus achieved his goal. Go to Nanda's pasture. There live the two sons of Ānakadundubhi. Bring them here with this chariot right away. My death has been sent forth by the gods sheltered by Vaikuṅṭha. Bring them here with the cowherds headed by Nanda bearing gifts. I will kill those two with an elephant equal to death and if they escape I will kill them by means of the wrestlers who are like the fires of lightning. When they have been killed I will kill their friends, the Vṛṣṇis, Bhojas, and Daśārhas, beginning with Va-

sudeva, who will be suffering from their loss, and also my old father who wants the kingdom, his brother Devaka and anyone else who are my enemies. Then this earth will be freed of its thorns. Jarāsandha is my teacher, Dvidida my dear friend and Śambara, Naraka, and Bāṇa are my friends. With them I will kill the kings who are partisans of the gods and will enjoy the earth. Knowing this bring the boys, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa here quickly to attend the sacrifice of the Bow and to see the beauty of Yadupura.”

Akrūra replied: “King, you should perform your desired action, clearing away your death, remaining completely equal in success or failure. The provision of results is up to fate. A person strives intently for his desired goals even though they are controlled by fate and is met with either joy or sadness. I shall do your bidding.” Having thus ordered Akrūra and sent away his ministers Kaṁsa entered his house and Akrūra went to his home.

Sent by Kaṁsa, Keśī, in the form of a huge horse, wearing out the earth with his hooves, as fast as the mind, breaking up with his mane the crowds of clouds and vehicles in the sky, by his whinnies frightening all, went to Nanda’s pasture, wishing to help Kaṁsa, his eyes large, a huge gaping cavity in his monstrous face, large-necked, looking like a huge blue cloud and filled with ill-intent. The Lord called him who was scaring his cow settlement with his neighing, churning the clouds with his tail, and hunting for him and his older brother to fight and then he (Kṛṣṇa) roared like a lion. Hearing that, he (Keśī) faced towards him and as if drinking the sky raced towards him thoughtlessly and then the indomitable, frightfully quick, and difficult to approach horse struck at the lotus-eyed one (Kṛṣṇa) with his hooves. Dodging them, Adhokṣaja<sup>3</sup> angrily grabbed ahold of his legs with his arms and swinging him about threw him with contempt a hundred bow-lengths away like Garuḍa throwing away a snake. When Keśī regained consciousness he again rose up and, opening his mouth, charged quickly towards Hari. Smiling, he pushed his left arm into his mouth like a snake going into a hole. Keśī’s teeth, touched by the arm of the Lord, fell out as if they had been struck by iron. The great soul’s arm inside the horse’s body swelled up as if it had dropsy. His breath blocked by the enlarging arm of Kṛṣṇa, kicking his legs, his body in a sweat, his eyes rolling about, he passed stool and fell to the ground dead.

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<sup>3</sup>He who is beyond the senses.

## 1 Reworked Beginning

The story of Kṛṣṇa's descent as it is given in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* begins with the questions of King Parīkṣit to his informant Śuka: "You have described lineages of the families of the Moon and the Sun, the highly amazing careers of the kings of both families, and [the lineage] of the Law-respecting Yadu. Tell us now about the heroic deeds of Viṣṇu who descended with a portion of himself there (among in the descendents of Yadu).<sup>4</sup> Tell us in detail what actions the Lord, the creator of beings, the very Self of the Universe, performed after descending in the family of Yadu. What person can become detached without the recounting of the qualities of Uttamaṣloka (Kṛṣṇa) which are pleasing to the ear and mind, which are a medicine for material existence and which are sung even by those whose thirsts (for material pleasure) have been quenched, except for a killer of animals? He was the boat on which my grandfathers crossed, as if it were a small calve's hoof, the dangerous ocean of the army of the Kauravas which was filled with death-conquering, super warriors, like Devavrata (Bhīṣma) and others, who were like whale-swallowing monsters in that ocean. He entered into the womb of my mother, who had sought shelter, with his discus in hand and hid this body of mine, the source of the descendents of the Kurus and Pāṇḍavas, as it was being burned by the weapon of the son of Droṇa. Tell us about the powerful deeds of this illusory man who is inside and outside all embodied beings in his forms as personal god and time, giving them death or immortality.<sup>5</sup>

"Rāma, who is Saṅkarṣaṇa, you said is the son of Rohiṇī. How is he connected with the womb of Devakī, then, if not in some other body? Why did Lord Mukunda go from his father's house to Vraja? Where did the Lord of the Sātvats along with his family live? While living in Vraja and in Madhupurī (Mathurā) what did Keśava<sup>6</sup> do? Didn't he kill Kaṁsa, the brother of his mother, who was not worthy of such treatment? How many

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<sup>4</sup>An interesting comment is found in Śrīnātha Cakravartin's commentary. He and the author of the *Bṛhat-krama-sandarbhā* take the word *aṁśa*, part or portion, to be *āṁśa* instead which they define as *aṁśānāṁ samūhah*, the collection of all the parts, ie. the whole. Thus, Kṛṣṇa is not just a partial descent among the Yādavas, he is a full descent. Kṛṣṇa is thus believed to be the fullest self-revelation of deity.

<sup>5</sup>Māyā-manuṣya, illusory man in the sense that he is not like an ordinary man. Sanātana gives a variety of meanings for the word *māyā* in this verse: power of will (*icchā-śakti*), play (*līlā*), full of tricks (*kaitava*), and compassion (*dayā*).

<sup>6</sup>Ka is Brahmā and Īśa is Śiva. Va means he pervades them with his own greatness. Keśava is thus he who pervades Brahmā and Śiva with his own greatness. (Sanātana)



years in human form did he live with the Vṛṣṇis in Yadupurī and how many wives did the Lord have? This and everything else that the Lord did you should describe in detail to someone faithful like me. This difficult to tolerate hunger does not impair me who have also given up water while I am drinking the nectar of stories of Hari fallen from the lotus of your mouth.”