

## 26. Role of the *Avatars*

*Like a feast to a starving man,  
Like rain for the parched earth,  
Like a child to one yearning for a son  
The Lord comes to protect Dharma  
And save the virtuous and the good.*

*SAHASRASIRSHA Purusha Sahasraakshas-sahasrapaad.* The Lord has a myriad heads, a myriad eyes and a myriad feet. The entire cosmos and every living being in it are reflections of the Divine.

Oblivious to the presence of this sacred Divine within himself, man embarks on the quest for God. He behaves like a man who goes to his neighbour for milk, forgetting the wish-fulfilling cow in his backyard. *Avatars* are of two kinds: One, *Amsaavatar*; two, *Purnaavatar*. All human beings are *Amsaavatar* (partial incarnation of the Divine). "*Mamaivaamso jeevaloke jeevabhutah-sanaatanah*" (A part of My eternal soul Self has become the *Jiva--individual* soul--in the world of living beings), says Krishna in the Gita. These partial incarnations, caught up in *Maya*, develop egoism and possessiveness and lead worldly lives. The *Purnaavatars*, however, subduing and transcending *Maya*, manifest their full divinity to the world in their lives. The *Purnaavatar* may behave, according to the circumstances, as if He were subject to *Maya*, but in fact He is free from *Maya* at all times.

### **The Lord manifests in different *Avatars***

In the Rama *Avatar*, for instance, Rama conducted himself as if he was subject to *Maya*, but upheld *Dharma* for promoting the welfare of the world. The Krishna *Avatar* was different. Keeping *Maya* under control, He manifested His *leelas* (miraculous deeds). This was why Vyasa, in his *Bhagavatha*, characterised Krishna as "*Leelaamaanusha Vighraha*" (The Divine manifesting as man for performing His *Leelas*). The *Bhagavatha* has described in detail the *leelas* of Krishna and proclaimed His glory to the world.

In the Krishna *Avatar*, Krishna not only performed many marvellous deeds, but also taught the Supreme Wisdom to the world. He was one who had transcended the *gunas*, but, for the sake of regeneration of the world, behaved as if He was influenced by the *gunas*, and delighted the world by His deeds. Sanjay Sahani (who had spoken earlier) said that whatever Krishna did was for the welfare of the world. Krishna did everything, whatever He spoke or whatever action He did, for the good and well-being of the world. But some people, not understanding this truth owing to their own limitations, attributed wrong motives for some of Krishna's actions. In this they reflected their own feelings.

### **The *Parama Bhakti* of the *gopikas***

*Prema* (Love) is nectarine in its sweetness. *Bhakti* (Love for the Lord) was the highest expression of devotion among the *gopikas* (the cowherdesses of *Gokulam*) because they were saturated with the sweetness of Divine Love. They did not seek liberation or higher knowledge. The ecstasy they derived from merely seeking Krishna, they did not get from any other source. Narada coined the phrase, "*Parama Bhakti*" (Supreme Devotion) to describe the devotion of the

*gopikas*. These supreme devotees regarded the Lord as their companion and most precious treasure. So intense was their devotion that they used to go about as highly intoxicated persons who were unmindful of the world. Leaving their homes, on hearing the music of Krishna's flute, they rushed to the forest in search of Krishna, oblivious to everything.

The *Gopikas* realised that *Jnana* (supreme wisdom) consisted in experiencing oneness with the Divine and that all other knowledge was only mundane and related to the physical. Krishna was everything for them. In their feeling of oneness with the Divine, they made no distinction between the animate and the inanimate. They saw the Divine in everything. Pothana (author of the Telugu *Bhagavatham*) has beautifully described the feelings of the *gopikas* when they went in search of Krishna in the forest. (Bhagavan recited the poem in which *the gopikas* describe Krishna and ask the jasmine creepers to tell them whether Krishna is hiding in any of their bushes). Having tasted the nectar of the devotion of Krishna, the *gopikas* would not think of seeking anything else.

Krishna is said to have stolen butter from the houses of the *gopikas*. The butter which He stole was the pure, milk-white hearts of the *gopikas*. Butter is pure and soft. The hearts of the *gopikas* were like butter. (Bhagavan recited poems in which Yasoda tells Krishna about the complaints she had received from the *gopikas* against Him and says she will tie Him to a mortar so that He may not go to other houses for stealing their butter). Yasoda did not realise the divinity of Krishna, though even in small things Krishna used to reveal His Divine powers.

### **From Rama and Krishna to Sathya Sai**

In the *Treta Yuga*, Rama came as the very embodiment of *Sathya* and *Dharma* (Truth and Righteousness). In the *Dwapara Yuga*, the Lord incarnated as Krishna, the embodiment of *Santhi* and *Prema*. Today the *Avatar* has come as the embodiment of all the *four--Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema*.

The world cannot so easily understand how the Love principle works. The *Bhagavatha* has clearly expounded the connection between *Samsara* (family life) and the world. Family life is concerned with the bringing up of a family, the acquisition of properties, the enjoyment of comforts and other material benefits. Nature provides all that a man needs, air to breathe, land for shelter, water to drink, and food to eat. But man is forgetting how to live in harmony with nature according to Nature's laws. Man craves for all kinds of artificial comforts. This was the teaching of *Suka to Parikshit* (in the *Bhagavatha*).

The world is full of egoism and acquisitiveness, lust and hatred. When man tries to utilise Nature to get rid of these bad traits, then he will be able to experience peace, love, and forbearance. Love can be got only through love and by no other means. Hence, spiritual aspirants should develop Divine love. Love is Divine. It seeks no return. Its only aim is to realise God.

### **The Lord incarnates to protect *Dharma***

It may be asked whether it is possible in the contemporary world to practise such love. As declared by Krishna in the *Gita*: "The Lord incarnates from age to age to protect *Dharma*." Every human being takes birth to pursue *Dharma*. The human body is given for practising *Dharma*. In this context, it should be noted that protection of the body takes priority over the protection of *Dharma*. It is only when the body is taken care of that, *Dharma* can be protected. This is the rationale of the statement: "Health is Wealth."

It must be realised that the protection of the body is solely for protecting *Dharma*. What is *Dharma* ? It is the harmony of thought, word and deed. This is the mark of true humanness. What kind of man is he whose thoughts, speech and actions are not in accord with each other? Today man must strive for this triple unity.

*Dharma* cannot be destroyed. But what is happening is the decline in the practice of *Dharma*. Today, the practice of *Dharma* is itself true *sadhana*. For the practice of *Dharma*, the triple purity--purity of thought, word and deed---is essential.

*Embodiments of the Divine!* Do not think that celebration of the birth of Krishna relates to what happened some millennia ago in the *Dwapara Yuga*.

Everyone has to cherish the Krishna consciousness in one's heart every moment ceaselessly.

### **The advent of Krishna**

Who is Krishna? When was He born? Krishna was born in the month of *Sraavana*, in the *Krishnapaksha* (dark fortnight), on *Ashtami* day, in a dark room, as a dark child. *Sraavana* means that which gives *sravanam* (hearing), delight to the ear. It is significant that among the nine forms of devotion, the first place is given to *Sravanam*, listening to the glories of the Lord, and the final stage is *Atmanivedanam* (total surrender). Today men tend to listen to all kinds of evil things, but do not lend their ears to hear what is pure and holy. What you should *hear---* *sravana* is all about God and not other trivial gossip.

Unfortunately, it is a sign of the *Kali* age that people are eager to listen to bad tales about others and do not seek to listen to the holy name of the Lord. You are given eyes to seek a vision of the Lord of Kailasa. You are endowed with the feet for going to the Lord's temple and not to loiter in alleys and bylanes. All organs and limbs have been given to man for adoring the Lord.

*Dharma*, in essence, means making use of every limb for the sacred purpose for which it is intended. See good; think good; speak good; go to good places; do good deeds. What do we mean by the use of the word "good"? It is not what someone else advises you to do. The Divine is not somewhere outside. He is within you. The consciousness of what is good must arise from within you. That is the voice of Conscience. Act according to the dictates of your Conscience.

When the question is asked, "Where is God?" the answer is given (in the *Gita sloka*):

*"Aham Vaiswaanaro bhutva  
praaninaam deham Asritah;  
Prana-Apaana Sa-maayuktah  
Pachamyannam Chaturvidham."*

(As *Vaiswanaara* I have entered every living being and I digest all the four kinds of food). The Lord thus declares that He is within everyone as the digesting agent, who supplies nourishment to all parts of the body. God is present in everyone as *Vaiswaanara*. Therefore, while taking food, you should offer it to the Divine first by reciting the *sloka*:

*Brahmaarpanam Brahma Havih,  
Brahmaagnau Brahmanaahutham  
Brahmaiva thena Ganthavyam*

*Brahma Karma Samaadhinaa.*

(*Brahmam* is everything: the offering is *Brahmam*, the sacrificial fire is *Brahmam*, *Brahmam* is the goal and the means).

### **From darkness to light**

Krishna was born during the *Krishnapaksha*, the dark fortnight of the month. The effulgence of the Lord is seen with greater effect, when it is dark. In a world of disorder, Krishna was born to establish order. He was born *on Ashtami* day. *Ashtami* is associated with trouble and difficulties. When do troubles arise? When Righteousness is forgotten. Krishna's advent signifies the dispelling of darkness, the removal of troubles, banishing of ignorance and teaching mankind the Supreme Wisdom.

Krishna's primary role was that of teacher. He taught the *Gita* to Arjuna. He told Arjuna: "Be only My instrument!" Krishna thereby declared: "Using you as an instrument I am reforming the whole world." All the teachings of the Divine are related to *Dharma* and *Prema* (Divine Love).

*The gopikas* prayed to Krishna that He should never leave their hearts in which they had installed Him. Mira also sang in the same strain. "I dived deep into the ocean and found a pearl. Will you let me slip it out of my hand?" (Swami sang the song in Tamil).

*Samsara* (worldly life) is a vast ocean. Desires are like the waves. Our feelings constitute the depth of the ocean. In this deep ocean there are crocodiles, whales and sharks in the form of attachments and hatred. It is not easy for ordinary beings to cross this ocean. The *gopikas* declared that only with the help of the Divine name can people save themselves.

People tend to look upon the devotion of the *gopikas* in worldly terms. Their minds never turned towards any sensory objects. They were completely free from sensual desires. All their desires were concentrated on God. They viewed the entire universe as the manifestation of God.

### **Key to inner peace is within you**

*The gopikas* did not concern themselves with the question whether the Divine was attributeless or full of attributes. They preferred to worship the Divine in the form of Krishna and they wanted their forms to merge in the Divine. "Thereby we shall be formless," they declared.

It is when we forget our form that we can merge in the Formless. The Divine cannot be experienced through *Dhyana* (meditation) or *japa* (reciting Lord's name). This is a delusion. These practices may give momentary peace of mind. To experience permanent joy and the Knowledge of the Spirit you have to develop your Divine nature. For this, the environment must also be congenial. Such an environment can be secured only in a place with pure and Divine vibrations. This was the reason why the ancient sages sought the solitude of the forests for their penance in divinely charged atmosphere. They betook themselves to the forests because they felt that the happenings in the villages were not conducive to mental purity. This was sign of weakness. It is not necessary to go to a forest if you can concentrate on the Divine *Atma* dwelling in the heart. The forest is remote. Here you have "For rest" your heart. The key to inner peace is within you and not outside. In the atmosphere of a sacred Divine presence, you can promote more effectively your quest for peace.

### **Each Avatar has its own relevance**

In the understanding of the role of *Avatars*, the easiest, and the sweetest means was revealed by Krishna *Avatar* to the largest extent. This does not mean that the *other Avatars* are irrelevant. *Each Avatar* is appropriate for the time of its advent. This may be illustrated by a small example. When there is a petty quarrel in the street, a policeman's intervention is enough. When there is riotous crowd, a Police Inspector may be necessary to deal with it. In an insurgency, the Inspector-General of Police will have to take charge of the situation.

When *Dharma* was showing signs of decline, Rama appeared to protect *Dharani* (the earth), *Dharma Patni* (his consort) and *Dharma* (Righteousness). It was for these three-fold purposes that Rama *Avatar* took place.

By the time of Krishna *Avatar*, the forces of wickedness had grown to greater proportions. Krishna was not concerned much about the earth or the wife. His main concern was with *Dharma*. When *Dharma* is firmly established, the earth and the *Dharma-Patni* are also duly protected.

In this context, Rama is described as "*Maya maanusha vigraha*" (*Maya* in human form). In the story of Rama, it is related that Rama lamented over the loss of Sita. In Krishna *Avatar* the picture is different. Women were in distress for the sake of Krishna.

In Rama *Avatar*, Rama was provoked to take arms against evil-doers. In Krishna *Avatar*, Krishna provoked the conflict and fought the evil-doers.

In Rama *Avatar*, Duty comes first and joy later. In Krishna *Avatar*, Joy comes first and then duty.

### **Bhagavan is always in a state of bliss**

Looked at in this way, the difference between the *Mayaavatar* of Rama and the *Leelaavatar* of Krishna will be apparent. Krishna was always immersed in bliss. Whether it was a burial ground, or a battlefield or a haven of peace, he remained the same. Krishna was standing between two immense opposing armies and He sang a song. That is the *Gita*, which means song. Would it be possible for anyone to sing in such a situation? One sings only when one is happy. Krishna, because He was the embodiment of joy could sing even on the battlefield.

I do not know whether you are aware of Swami's nature. When someone comes to Swami and says that he is suffering from an unbearable stomach ache, Swami says: "*Anandam, Anandam*" (Happy, happy). When a woman comes wailing over the loss of her husband, Swami says: "*Chaalaa santhosham*" (Very happy). Swami is always in a state of bliss. Happiness is the very nature of the Divine.

What is the use of lamenting over anything? All things are passing clouds. Nothing is lasting. Why then, bewail over any loss? You should not bother about them. This is the teaching of the *Avatar*. Don't feel distressed over anything that may happen. Every pain is followed by some pleasure. Pleasure is an interval between two pains. It is on this basis that you should lead your lives.

### **Where there is God there is victory**

There is a vast difference between Divine bliss and momentary pleasure. What is called happiness is incidental to a situation and is not permanent. But *Ananda* (bliss) is different. It is

lasting. When you are hungry, you go to the canteen and feel happy after taking food. But that does not last long. Permanent happiness can be got only through devotion to the Divine. *Avatars* make their advent only to confer Divine bliss on mankind.

The petty difficulties met with in everyday life can be overcome by love. Once you cultivate love, you can overcome any difficulty. Strive for God's grace. But do not regard God as different from you. He is within you. Where there is God, there is victory. That is the inner meaning of the last stanza in the *Gita*: "*Yathra Yogeswarah Krishno Yathra Paartho Dhanurdharah Tatra Sri Vijayo Bhutir-Dhruvaa nitir-mathir mama.*" The esoteric meaning of this *sloka* is: "The heart in which the Lord of *Yoga* dwells and where there is the courage and strength represented by Arjuna, there all prosperity and success are assured."

### **The meaning of the term "Krishna"**

We must understand properly the meaning of the term Krishna. The word has three meanings. One is "*Krishyathi iti Krishnah*" (The one who cultivates is Krishna). What is it that has to be cultivated? The *Hridayakshetra* (field of the heart). Krishna cultivates the field of our hearts by removing the weeds of bad qualities, watering it with love, ploughing it with the use of *sadhana*, and sowing the seeds of devotion. This is how Krishna cultivates our hearts.

The second meaning of the word is: "*Karshathi iti Krishnah.*" (The one who attracts is Krishna). Krishna attracts you by His eyes, His speech, His sports, and by every action of His. By His words, He softens and calms the hearts of even those filled with hatred and makes them rejoice.

Krishna displayed these qualities even as a small child. Once He had entered the house of a *gopika* at night, climbed a pillar to get at the butter that was kept in a pot suspended from the ceiling. The *gopika* woke up, caught Him in the act and held fast His legs, saying that she would now expose Him before His mother Yasoda. She asked Him what he was doing at the top of the pillar. Krishna, in the most innocent manner, answered that he was searching for the calf that was missing from His house. The *gopika* could not contain her laughter at the answer. And as she laughed, she let go Krishna's feet and this gave Him the chance to jump down and make good His escape.

A third meaning of the word Krishna is "*Kushyathi iti Krishna*" (one who is always blissful). Krishna was always in a state of bliss.

It was because He had these various qualities, the sage Garga named Him Krishna. The ordinary meaning of the word Krishna is "one who is dark." But people think only of this meaning and forget the deeper and truer meanings of the Lord's name.

### **Krishna delighted the world by His *Leelas***

The essence of Krishna's life is, He proclaimed the Truth to the world, propagated the eternal verities and delighted the world by His *Leelas*.

When Balaram told Yasoda that he had found Krishna eating mud, Yasoda questioned Him about it. In reply, Krishna said: "Oh mother, am I a child, a miscreant or a madcap to eat mud? See for yourself whether there is any mud in my mouth." And when He opened His mouth, Yasoda was awe-struck to see the fourteen worlds of the Cosmos in that Divine mouth. She could not believe her eyes and exclaimed: "Is this a dream? Or is it the *Maya* of Vishnu? Is it an

illusion produced by someone? Is it true? Am I Yasoda or someone else? I am totally bewildered."

Yasoda had no faith in herself and hence could not recognise Krishna's divinity. Confidence in one's self is the prerequisite for the recognition of Divinity. The reason in Yasoda's case is that she always looked upon Krishna as her son and the maternal attachment clouded her understanding.

Every episode connected with Krishna is a marvel. That was why Vyasa declared that all the stories relating to the *avatars* of Vishnu are full of wonder and beauty.

Every *Avatar* is an amazing phenomenon. Not to recognise the Avatar is equally a matter for amazement. Even more astonishing is the incapacity to experience the presence of the *Avatar*. Most astonishing of all is to be in the presence of the Lord and feel miserable. To be in the proximity of the *Avatar*, to move about with the *Avatar*, to sing and sport with the *Avatar* and yet fail to understand the truth of the *Avatar* is indeed a remarkable phenomenon. When the *Avatar* principle is understood, you experience real bliss.

When you have faith in the Divine, life becomes a victorious journey.

*Discourse in the Prashaanthi mandir on 14-8-1990, Krishna Janmashtami day.*

*If everything is dedicated to the Lord, there will be no room for worry or sorrow or even joy. If you rid yourself thus of attachment, Santhi can never be disturbed. I, my, mine, my own, your, yours, when these ideas take hold of the mind Santhi suffers a set-back. To get the attitude of sincerely offering all to Him, Prema is essential. Prema combined with faith in oneself. That is what is called Bhakthi. Cultivate it steadily every day and derive joy therefrom.*

*BABA*