

CHAPTER 34

KRISHNA AVATARA

Hearing this prayer, Suka said, “Oh King, truly, the Leelas of Krishna are, as you said, amazing, wondrous; but yet sweet and meaningful. They are not tainted by the desire to show off the Divine Nature. The common man is drawn by external pomp, and apparent motives. So he judges the Leelas as common and even low. The inner meaning and purpose are not easily patent to all. But the Lord can never engage Himself in purposeless and paltry activities. His advent is for the uplifting of the world from the morass of wickedness and unrighteousness, for fulfilling the needs of those devoted to Him, for the re-establishment of right and morality and for the revival of the Vedas. He has to take into account the merit acquired by each in previous lives and shower His Grace accordingly. He makes Himself available through the granting of boons.

His Leelas or Divine activities are so shaped that they suit the time, the person, the aspiration and the compassion which cause each shower of Grace. Therefore, who can comprehend correctly and interpret aright these Leelas?

“‘The amazing Leelas of Hari are known to Hari alone,’ it is said. He can be interpreted by Him alone, not by another. One observation however, can be made with confidence. The Manifest Incarnations of God will not engage themselves in the least, for their own sake or for the sake of fulfilling any personal likes! All activity is for the good of the world! Though without Them, the world cannot exist and survive, They move and act as if the world has nothing to do with them. In every word and deed of Theirs, one can observe the underlying current of total renunciation. For Them who hold the worlds in the palm of Their hands what can the world give or withhold? They can shape it as they like.

“Fools, persons without faith, persons who deny God, persons caught in the coils of ignorance, those who do not learn anything—these may see the Leela’s of God as self-centred and even motivated by delusion, like the actions of ordinary mortals. But genuine Bhakthas will cherish them as significant and sustaining examples of Grace. How can *Thath* (That) be grasped by those who are engrossed in *Thwam* (this, the individual being)?

“King, the actions of Rama, Emperor of Kosala, and of Krishna are, you should remember, wide apart. When

the wicked and cruel enemies of righteousness were about to overwhelm the good, Krishna and Balarama, the two brothers were born, the one black and the other white (as a head of hair, both black and white), and by their acts that transcended the comprehension of man, astounded the world.

“The Leelas of Krishna are beyond the comprehension of anyone, however, scholarly or wise. His movement, his walk, his talk, his smile, his laughter, his gesture, his speech, his song—each is charming with a unique artistry.

“Wherever He went, He created some strange mischief or other. Like a typhoon sweeping over the land, He left behind in every home that He visited a series of upheavals, quarrels, wailings and tears!

“There was no need to invite Him ceremoniously into any house. He would enter, uninvited, unannounced. Every house belonged to Him. He would get in and take whatever He desired from wherever it was hidden, and eat to His heart’s content.

“He was everyone’s dearest kinsman, fastest comrade. So, He could take anything from any house with impunity. But He was not content with that. He took away much more than His own need, for He gave away large quantities to His companions too. And they were quite a large number! The owners might bewail the loss, and condemn the theft, but He did not care. He gave the things away as if they were His

own! No one could hinder His sport. No one could go against His word. If any dared oppose or threaten, the sufferings that will be heaped on his head were indescribable.

“But the truth must be told. The smallest act of His was saturated with supreme sweetness. Even the sufferings He inflicted on those He wanted to punish were sweet. So, no one felt the least anger towards Him. Instead, they yearned to meet Him more often, to play with Him longer, to talk with Him and stay with Him as much as possible. Whatever His pranks and practical jokes, the victims never felt annoyed at Him.

“The reason was: the Prema, the undercurrent of Love, that motivated all His words and acts. The cowherd maids rushed towards Him with sticks to beat Him off; but when they neared Him and cast their looks at Him, their hearts were filled with Prema, and they came away, with a prayer on their tongues. Whatever He did, appeared as Divine sport, Leela.

“And the manner of His Speech! It was so pleasing and so clever. It was mostly intended to mislead! He put sand into His mouth, before all His companions; but when His mother took Him to task for it, He denied it and put out His tongue to prove His denial! He rendered true statements false and false statements, true! He went daily to Vrishabhendrapura, the village where Radha lived. Many people saw Him on the road, while going and returning. But yet, when His mother accosted Him and challenged Him

saying, ‘Why are you trekking every day such long distances? Have you no comrades here, in this place itself, to play with?’ He replied, ‘I do not know that road at all!’ He caused confusion in every home, created factions between mothers-in-law and the daughters-in-law, set them one against the other, and enjoyed the fun. He was seldom stationary in one place, from dawn when He rose from bed till the hour when He went to sleep. This little bundle of mischief roamed from house to house, without rest.

“In spite of all this, the villagers could not bear His absence, even for an instant! If He did not put in His appearance any day, the milkmaids watched for His visit, peeping at the road through the windows or looking into the distance from the terrace. Such was the charm of the Divine Love that Krishna showered on them and the Love that the people had towards Him. His pranks were so heart-warming. They were so inspiring and meaningful.

“The blue Boy was the Master of subterfuge and diplomacy. He saw through every artifice, however cleverly camouflaged. When the ogress Puthana approached Him as Mother to feed Him at her breast, He pretended to be taken in by that stratagem. He sucked her life out and felled her to the ground. Many an *Asura* (demon) came near Him to destroy Him, some assuming the familiar forms of the cowherds and milkmaids of the village; but He discovered their identity and despatched them to the City of Death. One Asura took the form of a calf, and moved among the

calves and cows which Krishna was tending, awaiting an opportunity to kill Him. But the three-year-old Divine infant saw through the device. He caught him by the tail, raised him, swung him around and beat him on the ground, so that he breathed his last.

“Such strength and skill were quite out of proportion with that Infant Form. But He demonstrated His Divinity in a million ways, in order to convert and convince men. He taught everyone, whether they were elders, women, or crooks, or His own kinsmen and well-wishers. He advised them into good ways. He entangled some of them in dilemmas. His maternal uncle, Kamsa, was drunk with imperial power and heroic audacity. He caught him by the tuft of hair, pulled him down from the throne, fisted him to death, and dragged the body along the main thoroughfare right down to the bank of the Yamuna! The entire population of the City of Mathura saw in every act of His a wondrous mixture of the amazing, the astounding, the sweet, the charming, the enticing, the beautiful and the simple.

“While yet an infant, He ended the lives of Puthana, Thnavartha, and Sakatasura. He was then, a tiny thief in search of butter in every home! When His mother tied Him to a wooden mortar, He dragged it behind Him, and with it, He pulled down two giant trees, growing together. He curbed the conceit and fury of the serpent Kalinga, which poisoned the waters of the Yamuna and made them disastrous for men and cattle. When His mother attempted to tie Him up

with a rope round His waist, he revealed to her His Universal Form, the Form in which the entire Universe was found to be but a part of Him. The parents and the people of Gokula were wonder-struck at the remarkable experience of His Divinity. Through His yawn, He showed them the macrocosm and the microcosm, both!

“He showed His dear cowherd comrades His Paradise, which knew no grief or loss (Vaikunta). He persuaded Nanda to stop the usual Puja for Indra and to offer worship to the Govardhana Hill, instead. When the Rain-God Indra, stung by this neglect, poured terrible rains on the village, Krishna held aloft on his little finger, the Govardhana Hill inviting the entire village to take shelter under it!

“He raised the cowherd boys and maids into ecstatic moods, by means of His playful pranks and His melodious music on the flute. To interpret this as low and sensuous is a sign of foolishness.

“When Krishna danced in the moonlight, with the maids, each maid having a concrete Krishna by her side, it is interpreted by low-minded persons as laxity of morals and as a vulgar pastime. There is no basis for such inference at all. Krishna was only five or six years old when these miraculous incidents took place. How then can the experience be condemned as lascivious? The Lord has no attributes or qualities. The Rasa Kreedha, as this incident is called, is but a means of rendering the gopis worthy of Grace, an example of Devotion and the fruit of Devotion,

Dedication. The Lord was showering on them the Grace they had earned by their meritorious acts. It was a boon, a blessing.

“When that superhuman Divine Manifestation is taken to be merely human, lasciviousness and thievishness may be attributed; but consider which human can achieve even an iota of what He did? He saved the world from the harassment of such monstrous evildoers as Pralamba, Dhenuka, Kesi, Banasura, Arishta, Mushtika, Kuvalayapida, Kamsa, Naraka, Poundraka, Dwividha, Jarasandha, Dantavakra, Sambara, Kambhoja, Kuru, Matsya, Kailaya and many such powerful heroes. Can it be said that all this is within the capacity of a mere man?

“In this unique Avatar, every act is an amazing miracle. Even when angry, He could not but evince His overflowing Prema. In Love His compassion flowed unhindered. Through His Darsan (seeing), *Sparsan* (touching) and *Sambhaashana* (conversation), one could earn Liberation. He granted immortality to those who reminded themselves of His Name. The cowherds among whom He lived and moved tasted the nectar of ecstasy whenever they witnessed His deeds or remembered them.

“Oh King! The Bhagavatha is not merely the narrative of the Lord’s story, in the background of Mathura, Brindavan, Gokula, the banks of the Yamuna, Nanda-Yasoda, Vasudeva-Devaki and others. Bhagavatha includes the stories of all the incarnations of Bhagavan or the Lord. All

incarnations were the manifestations of the selfsame Gopala, Krishna, from Go Loka or Vaikunta. The story of each is but the story of Vaasudeva, emerging from Him and merging in Him. That Divine Power is the sustaining factor for all incarnations as well as all living beings.”

The sage’s eyes closed again. He was in Samadhi, tasting the sweetness of the Krishna Incarnation. There was a beautiful smile beaming on his lips. Parikshit was astounded at the sight of the waves of joy that overpowered the great sage, whenever he allowed his mind to dwell on the Divine career of Krishna. He too yearned with enthusiastic impatience to listen to those enrapturing incidents and activities of the Lord.

When Suka resumed, Parikshit too lost all consciousness of his surroundings. He was so struck with wonder, that he could not believe that some of the incidents could ever have happened! This gave him immense pain, and caused unbearable agony at the thought of his own inconstancy. So, he placed his problem before the Sage and won peace of mind, after hearing his explanation and elaboration. While proceeding thus, on one occasion, the King developed serious doubts about the Bhakthi (devotion) of the gopis. He argued within himself and sought remedial assurances through his own understanding and faith. But the doubts would not vanish. Nor had he the courage to ask the Sage who might consider them as too childish. So, he was suffering and smothering the suffering. This became evident to the Sage, and so he asked the King with a smile,

“It is evident that some insane idea is distracting you. In this crisis, it is not beneficial to suffer from repressed emotions. If some doubt is simmering in you, or if a thirst to know about something is hurting you, do not hesitate to ask me. I shall resolve the doubt, I shall quench the thirst and ensure joy and contentment of mind.” When the Sage encouraged the King in this manner, the King spoke, “Master! You know the Past, the Present and the Future. You have the vision and the capacity to cure me of the doubt that is pestering me. Therefore, please do not misunderstand me. Hear me and resolve the doubt. Cure me of the anguish I have on account of it. Restore the peace of mind I had before it entered my heart.” The King fell at the Sage’s Feet and continued, “Master, I have heard much, in various versions, of the sport and pranks, of the *Rasakrida* (the *Raasa* Dance) of Krishna, with the cowherd maids (the gopis) of Brindavan. They appear to be sensual pastimes of ordinary mortals. If such incidents had happened in truth, how can they be interpreted as Divine? Are they not disapproved by the world? These incidents at Brindavan, on the Yamuna banks, where such loose sensual lascivious play was enacted, besmirch the Divine Nature of Krishna, I am afraid. It is said that ultimate release or Moksha can be attained only by those who transcend the Gunas or qualities. These gopis were afflicted with qualities and the desires born out of them, mostly sensual, and objective. When it is said that the gopis too were able to attain Moksha, it causes amazement. Indeed, it appears ridiculous! If however, these immoral activities have some inner significance which justifies their being accepted as praiseworthy, please enlighten me.”

When Parikshit prayed thus, Suka had a hearty laugh. He said, “Oh King, do not think that you are afflicted by a doubt, it is much worse! For, those who have realised that Krishna is the Lord Himself, will not entertain such doubts. This is the final period of the Dwapara Age. The Kali Age is beginning soon. It is the Kali spirit, the spirit of the Age of Wickedness that has entered into you, that has prompted you to lodge such ideas in your mind. Or else, you have unshaken faith that Krishna is the Sovereign Supreme God. Every incident in His Career shines in your heart with Divine Brilliance. The moment you recollect His name, you are overcome by joy and your thoughts merge in Him. So these doubts cannot arise in such as you! You are defiling your personality by them. Again, consider what type of a person I am. You know that there is no place in my heart for activities born out of Gunas or the impulses created out of those qualities. Just consider how such a one as I is overpowered with supreme joy when I contemplate the Divine Sport of Krishna with the gopis! Consider how I praise the good fortune of the gopis who got that precious Companionship. Can they be ordinary sensual sport? Or are they the pure and genuine exuberance of Divine intoxication? Think a while. Sensual exultation and Divine exhilaration might appear the same, in their external manifestations, to the untrained eye. But when the senses are transcended, when the Individual and the Universal have merged into one Thought and Consciousness, when all awareness of the body has been negated—to interpret these

activities as objective and sensual is sheer stupidity, to say the least.

“A knife in the hands of a murderer is fraught with danger to all. A knife in the hands of a surgeon confers freedom from pain, though in both cases there is a hand that holds the knife. So too, the acts of those whose self is centred in the body are to be condemned. Those of people whose self is centred in the Atma or Inner Reality are highly beneficent and praiseworthy.

It all looked so peculiar, so extraordinary. Very often, it resembled lawlessness and sheer mischief. While walking in the eastern direction, his attention was fixed in the western direction! He conversed through His eyes; the flash of His eye spoke out His plans and intentions. He did not care for human limitations and disciplines. He did not recognise the distinction between new and old acquaintances. He treated both alike. He did not respect kinship or yield to the demands of convention.

“Next, the mystery of the Krishna incarnation! That embodiment of sweetness is most captivating! Exquisite charm, unrivalled sweetness, incomparable love—the Krishna Form was the concretisation of all these! That Form was the treasure house of bliss. It was the Ocean of Virtue. Oh, what Innocence! What Superhuman Excellence! The mere sight of Him is enough. Listening to His words is enough. Merely touching Him is enough. One’s life will find its goal! All rituals, all sacrifices, all scriptural ceremonies

have as their goal only this; this sight, this listening, this touch. The gain that accrues from the rites are nothing when compared to the gain from the sight and the touch and the listening to His voice. No, they are nothing at all. Ah! What immeasurable sweetness!” Contemplating on that Form, recollecting the charm and the loveliness, the sage started shedding profuse tears of joy. He was so full of inward bliss that he stopped his narration and lost all consciousness of himself and his listeners.

The ascetics around him and the King himself were overcome with wonder at the rare sight of the sage’s Samadhi. The illumination on his face had an overpowering impact on all. They sat like statues, afraid to disturb the sage, immersed in their own amazement and joy.

After some time, Suka opened his eyes and exclaimed, “How fortunate were the gopas and the gopis (the herdsmen and maids) who lived then. How their bodies must have shone with the Divine Joy they experienced when they moved in His Company, played with Him, talked with Him, sang with Him and shared supreme Ananda with Him! Gods envied their luck, for it was a chance they could not secure. Those simple illiterate folk could get the singular good fortune as a consequence of the merit acquired by them in many previous lives. Those gopas and gopis were not just common men and women. No. At first sight they struck one as simple, unlearned folk, that was all. But they had, with them, a vast treasure of revealed wisdom, which only a few could

appreciate and understand. Or else, how could they secure the Bliss of the Lord’s Touch, which even Rukmini and Sathyabhama could not win so easily! The gopas and the gopis can be said to be more fortunate than those Queens. Their good fortune was the fruit of the good deeds done by them during, not one, but three previous lives!”