

CHAPTER 40

FROM MRITHA TO AMRITHA

The King, who was listening to the thrilling narrative of the gratitude of Krishna towards His Guru, suddenly opened his eyes, and seeing the Sage before him, he said, “Ah the Leelas of Krishna! His wonder-filled acts exceed each other in miracle and mystery. God is prepared to assume any burden, in order to correct and improve the World. By this means, He proclaims His genuine Majesty and Might. But the dark smoke of Maya settles hard on the eye of Man and renders him incapable of recognising Divinity. Therefore, he misses the inner significance of these ‘Leelas.’”

Suka understood the working of the King’s mind. He replied, “King, the confusing influence of Maya is the consequence of the accumulated activities in previous lives.

One can escape Maya through good consequence. One succumbs to it if the consequence is deleterious. If good activity has marked previous lives, any sinful tendency will be overwhelmed by virtuous tendencies in this life and one will have faith in Divinity. One will attach himself to the Divine and spend his life on the basis of the Divine.

“On the other hand, those who have committed horrible crimes in past lives have the dreadful darkened vision, which prevents one from seeing the Divine. Such a one never reminds himself of God and His handiwork, never yearns for his own ‘good’ and the good of others. He sees things in false perspective. He revels in wickedness, and engages in vicious acts. Faith in God is the harvest of the seeds planted in previous lives. It cannot be grown and harvested, on the spur of the moment.”

Hearing these words, the King grew anxious to know more about the Punya (merit acquired by means of good activity), and Papa (demerit acquired by means of evil activity) and their impact on the lives of men. So, he prayed the Sage Suka to tell him one more incident from the career of Krishna, which deals with a curse and its cure, illustrating the principle of destiny.

Suka laughed at this request. “King! Countless are the cures which Krishna effected on those affected by curses! The Rakshasas whom He killed while He was yet a child, and later, as a boy, as I have told you, were all cursed to be born so, as a punishment for some evil deed; and when

they met with death at His hands, they were liberated from the curse.” The King put in a suggestion, at this stage. “I have heard that the ‘uprooting of the tree’ was an amazing incident of outstanding importance. If you elaborate on that, I can derive deep joy therefrom.” On this, Suka who was ever ready to oblige him, began the story:

“King, though there was no paucity of servants, it was Yasoda the mistress of the house who, according to traditional custom, did all the chores of the household. Boiling the milk, curdling it, churning it and preparing butter—all these activities were personally done by her. One day, she woke up as usual, at the beginning of the Brahma Muhurtham (4:30 A.M.). She took her bath and went through the early morning duties. Later, placing the milk pot before her she started churning the contents, vigorously pulling the ropes which kept the churn-rod steady in the liquid—all the while singing sweet hymns on God.

“Meanwhile, Gopala (Krishna) came forward with slow but steady steps to the place where the mother was churning and singing and gave a sudden sharp pull at the end of her sari. Yasoda was startled at this unexpected pull. She turned round and was most pleasantly surprised, when she found it was the mischievous child, Krishna! Putting a stop to the churning, she took Krishna into her arms and fondled Him ‘Dear Son, ’Tis not dawn yet! Why have you got up from bed so soon? Go, my darling! Sleep again for a few minutes!’ But the Divine Child lisped most entrancingly that It was

hungry, and began sobbing pathetically to confirm its yearning for being fed. The mother’s heart melted. She placed the churning rod on one side and covered the pot with a lid. Then, she took Krishna on her lap, sitting just where she was. While she was feeding Him at her breast, she stroked His head gently and softly. Just then, she heard the noise of a pot rolling down from the oven in the kitchen inside. She suspected it was the mischief of the cat. She lifted the Child from her lap and placed it on the floor. For she had to run in to examine what had happened! When Yasoda disappeared into the next room, Krishna was incensed at her behaviour, dropping Him in the middle of His feed. He saw the pot, before His eyes, and turned all His anger towards it. He gave it a hard blow with the churning rod, and when the curds flowed along the floor, He collected the butter and stuffed it into His mouth, and hastened out of the room, lest He be admonished. When Yasoda came into the room, she saw the pot broken, the curds on the floor, the butter gone. And Krishna had made Himself scarce! Knowing this to be the handiwork of Gopala, she searched for Him in every nook and corner.

“She could not find Him anywhere. She went into the neighbouring houses and inquired whether He was found by anyone there. Everyone declared that they had not come across the Child. They did not know where He was. Yasoda was really frightened. ‘He must have run away dreading punishment for having broken the pot and letting flow the contents! Poor Child! It has run out into the darkness,’ she

thought. She searched house after house, in the street. At last she caught Him in the act of taking down a pot of butter, from a sling, where the mistress of the house had kept a series of pots full of milk, curds and butter. Krishna was standing on an upturned mortar so that He could lift the butter pot and bring it down safe, to be shared with His comrades!

“Seeing Him, Yasoda shouted, ‘You thief! Are you behaving like this, in every house? When the poor gopis complained to me about your thefts, I used to blame them without verifying their charge, and send them away. I have now seen it with my own eyes! Yes, I can scarce believe my eyes! Oh, how mistaken I was all these days! I cannot let you escape hereafter. No! If I let you off, on the plea that you are a child, later it will lead you on to calamitous crime. I must punish you effectively now, and not pardon you at all. When the child of a great family turns thief, it is a disgrace to the entire clan. This ill fame cannot easily be wiped off. The reputation of our family will suffer.’ Her agony was beyond expression. She had not suffered so much humiliation before. She yielded to a great rush of anger. She brought a long thick rope, and went near Him with intent to tie Him fast to the heavy mortar.

“Gopala, knowing her intention slipped in and out of every door, and dodged her attempts to catch Him. The Mother ran behind Him, through every lane and street. She was well on the side of the fat; she had never before run so fast. So she was soon exhausted. Her gait was slowed down

soon. She started gasping for breath. Men, women, and children began laughing at her vain pursuit of the little child. They enjoyed the fun, and derived all the more merriment from the prank of Krishna, and the foiled attempt of His mother to bind Him.

“Gopala is omniscient, nothing is hidden from Him. So, he realised that the mother was too tired to move forward, and He allowed Himself to be caught. Yasoda could not lift her hand to beat Him. She caught Him firmly by the hand and saying, ‘Come home, you thief! It won’t be nice, if I beat you in the bazaar. I shall teach you a lesson, at home,’ she drew Him home. There, she dragged Him to the side of a huge stone mortar so that He could be bound to it by means of a strong rope. The rope she brought was found too short; so, she went in and brought another, for being knotted on to the first. She had to do this again and again. For however long the rope, Krishna seemed to grow so big that it would not reach round Him. Just a bit more length was always wanted to admit His being tied! The mother wondered at this amazing development. To what was this miracle to be ascribed? She did not know. At last, she could somehow tie a knot, leaving Him bound to the mortar. Yasoda went into the house and engaged herself in regular household duties.

“Meanwhile, He drew the mortar along, went into the garden, with the mortar rolling behind him. There, a tree grew with twin trunks side by side, very near each other. The mortar was caught between the twin trunks and when

the Divine Child gave a slight pull to overcome the obstacle, the tree was uprooted! It fell with a great resounding noise. The noise attracted everyone to the house of Yasoda where the tree fell, though there was no rain or storm! Yasoda hurried to see what had happened. She was astounded at what she saw! She saw Gopala in the midst of the fallen foliage, between the enmeshed branches. She groaned aloud and went near the Child. Unloosening the rope, she carried away the Child and felt quite relieved that He had escaped another terrible calamity.

“My child! Did you get a fright? Oh, how wicked I was!’ the mother wailed aloud. But while she was lamenting thus, two Divine Forms, both male, emerged from the tree! They fell at the Feet of Gopala. They stood with folded palms, and said, ‘Oh Lord! We are the sons of Kubera. We are twin brothers, Nalakubura and Manigriva. Through the curse of Sage Narada, we were turned into this tree and existed as such. This day has seen the end of that curse, through Your Grace. If you permit us, we shall go back to our own place.’ Thus saying, the two Divine Forms disappeared. At the sight of those strange Divine Forms, the people of Gokul were taken aback. They were filled with great joy.

“Though they listened to the glorification of Gopala as God, though they had concrete evidence of His Divinity, they relapsed into Maya (delusion) and resumed their conversation about Gopala being the son of Nanda and

Yasoda and felt He was their cowherd friend. They were caught up in the coils of illusion.”

When Suka said thus, the King interposed with the question, “Master! How did this Maya acquire such overwhelming Power? Who endowed Maya with the capacity to hide the glory of Madhava (God) Himself? What exactly is the real nature of Maya? Please tell me.” Then Suka explained, “King, this Maya is not anything separate, with its own Form. God is discernible only with the sheath of Maya. He is evident, because He has worn the accoutrement of Maya. It is His Upadhi. That is to say, Maya obstructs the Reality. Its nature is to hide the reality and make it appear as the unreal. Only he who removes It, destroys It, beats It off, cuts across It, he alone can have a vision of God. He alone can attain God. Maya makes you feel that the non-existent exists. It shows water in the mirage. It makes you see what is imagined and desired, as Truth. Delusion cannot affect a man if he is able to give up desire or imagining and planning.

“Or else, how could Yasoda who has seen with her own eyes, on many occasions, the Divinity of Krishna, slide back into the belief that He was her son? The imagining, the desire, that was the cause of this delusion. The body is of the son and of the mother; but the real core, the *dehi*, the Embodied—that has neither son nor mother! The mother-body is related to the son-body but there is no mother-dehi, no son-dehi! If one gets this faith firm in himself there can

be no more desire for external pleasures. Inquire and investigate; you will know this Truth. Without that inquiry, delusion will grow and intellect will be slowly subdued.”

Ah! The role that Divinity takes upon Itself brings about results that are really momentous! The Vedanta teaches that one should penetrate behind the role into the Reality. This is its inner meaning. Deluded by the role, man pursues desire! Believing the body that is assumed to be real and true, man falls into Maya. For those whose attention is concentrated on the Body, the Person within will not be visible, isn't it? When ashes cover, the red cinders will not be visible. When clouds gather thick, the sun and the moon cannot be seen! Moss floating thick upon the waters of a lake give the illusion that it is hard ground, over which there is vegetation. When the eye has cataract over the pupil, one cannot see anything at all. So too, when the notion of the body being the Reality is predominant, the Resident in the Body is not noticed at all. “Master, this day, in truth, the veil has fallen off from my mind. Your teaching has, like a gust of wind, shaken off the ash over the live cinders. The illusion that this composite of five elements, namely, this Body, is the Reality has been totally exploded and exterminated. I am blessed, I am indeed blessed.” With these words, Maharaja Parikshit fell at the feet of the Guru, Suka.

Meanwhile, the gathering of Rishis, sages, and common citizens fell into animated conversation. When time clicks fast towards the end, the body too has to get ready to drop,

isn't it? The body drops when the vital airs stop flowing in it; but the mind will not leave off. For this reason, newer and newer bodies have to be assumed until the mind is rendered empty, devoid of content, vacant of wants. “This day our Maharaja has differentiated the mind from the body! Now, he is in such bliss that even vital airs can't make any impact. When the mind is merged ever in Madhava (God), the body will be all Divinity; its humanness cannot be identified.”

The teaching conferred by Suka today is not directed to Parikshit alone. It is for all of us, they said; it is for all who are afflicted by the delusion that they are the Body in which they are encased. This type of delusion is the cause of bondage; but the other type, the belief that we are the Atma, that is the means of Liberation. This is what the Vedas and the Sastras declare. The mind which welcomes the delusion or which entertains the idea of the Reality is therefore the instrument, for both bondage and liberation. ‘*Mana eva manushyanam karanam bandha mokshayoh.*’ This statement of the Sruthi is the Truth. Ruminating thus for some time, the people sat with eyes closed, lost in prayer. When the sun was about to set, the sages walked towards the bank of the sacred Ganga, holding the water pot (*kamandalu*) and stick (*danda*) in their hands so that they could perform the evening rites.