

## CHAPTER 42

### CONSUMMATION IN NANDA - NANDANA

**T**he Sage started narrating the most glorious event revealing the Reality of Krishna incarnation. He said: “Devaki and Vasudeva, who spent their days in prison, were indistinguishable from mad persons. They sat with unkempt hair, lean and lanky through want of appetite and the wherewithal to feed their bodies. They had no mind to eat or sleep. They were slowly consumed by grief over the children they had lost. When their prison life entered its second year, Devaki conceived for the eighth time! Oh, it was wondrous! What a transformation it brought about! The faces of Devaki and Vasudeva, which had drooped and dried up, suddenly blossomed like lotuses in full bloom. They shone with a strange splendour.

“Their bodies which were reduced to mere skin and bone, as if they had been dehydrated, took on flesh, became round and smooth, and shone with a charming golden hue. The cell where Devaki was shut in was fragrant with pleasing odours. It cast a wondrous light and was filled with inexplicable music and the jingle of dancing feet. Amazing sights, amazing sounds indeed! Devaki and Vasudeva became aware of these happenings, but they were afraid to inform Kamsa, lest in his vindictive frenzy, he might hack the womb into pieces. They were anxious about the strange future of the son that will be born and were restless with weird foreboding.

“And what of Kamsa? He knew his time was fast rushing towards its end. He was torn by the greed to continue as unquestioned Emperor of the Realm. He was overcome by conspiratorial inclination. He overran the territories of the Yadu, Vrishni, Bhoja and Andhaka principalities and added them to his domain. He was so intent on establishing his dictatorial regime that he threw his own aged father, Ugrasena, into prison; thereafter, his will was sovereign.”

When Suka related this story, Parikshit interrupted him with the words, “Alas! What folly is this? Knowing full well that his end was drawing near, knowing, that in the eighth pregnancy, the Person who was to destroy him was growing fast, knowing that the Voice that spoke from the Sky cannot be untrue, did Kamsa resolve upon these acts of inordinate greed and unspeakable wickedness? This is indeed unbelievable!”

Hearing these words, Suka burst into laughter. He said, “Maharaja! evidently you think that all those who know their end is drawing near, will, like you, utilise the time at their disposal, in seeking to realise the Vision of Him who is the embodiment of Time! But such yearning as yours can arise in the mind, only as a consequence of a favourable balance of merit, acquired in previous lives. It cannot arise all of a sudden. Consider the vast difference between what you are engaged in, when you knew that the allotted span of life is hastening to its finish, and the undertakings Kamsa was engaged in, when he knew that his end was in sight! These two attitudes are named Deva and Asura, Divine and Demonic. For those who are equipped with the Devi or Divine virtues of eagerness to do good acts, and to have good thoughts, faith in God, compassion towards all beings, contrition for swerving from the straight path, truth, non-violence, and love, only thoughts of God and urges to do sanctifying deeds will emerge during the last days.

“Instead, those who are immersed in selfishness, egotism, greed, vice, violence and unrighteousness will suffer from evil urges in their last days and destroy themselves. The former attain Kaivalya, or beatitude; the latter achieve only hell, Naraka.

“The eye of the onlooker sees the same consummation—death. But the goal reached by either is distinct. It is invisible to those around them. The goal is determined by the thoughts that arise in the mind of the

dying. Destruction of life is common. the Darsan of God is something to be won, and earned. That is unique. Hence the proverb, ‘*Vinaasa Kaale, vipareetha buddhi*’: when disaster is immanent, the intellect turns against! Only those who are about to be destroyed will get and welcome such evil intentions. Those who are to be blessed with the vision of God will hold fast to the pure and the elevating, in their last thoughts.”

When Suka spoke thus, in all sincerity, Parikshit Maharaja said, “No, this is not the result of my effort, or the consequence of the merit acquired by me in previous lives. The fruit of the goodness of my grandfathers and father is directing me along the correct path. More than all, the illumination shed by gems of wisdom like yours and the consecrating effect of the Grace of Krishna—these are heightening the devotion and dedication, that rise within me. Of course, the association one is privileged or compelled to share has a promotional (or adverse) effect.

“But luckily, since the moment of birth, the Grace of God has been guide and guardian to me. I have been shaped and sustained by association with good men, comradeship with just and moral personages, acquaintance with great scholars, and the inspiration of the magnanimous deeds of my illustrious grandfathers. I must also acknowledge the help rendered by wise and discriminating ministers, who served as my right hand, and earned and enjoyed the love and reverence of my subjects. All this could never be the

consequence of my efforts. However, excellent the seed, if the field is infertile can the harvest be plentiful? However high my ideals are, if my kingdom had no high tradition laid down by my ancestors, no sages and scholars to instruct and inspire, no ministers to execute and elaborate in action, no subjects to appreciate and act the ideals, they can only be like the vessel of milk spoiled by drops of acid curd, isn't it?

“Had it not been for them, my ideals would have evaporated and I would have imbibed the vices of people who flatter me, and become another hard-hearted Kamsa! Therefore, I conclude that the sinful acts of Kamsa have to be attributed, to a certain extent, to the vices inherent in the scholars, elders, ministers, and subjects of Kamsa's kingdom.

“Of course, you are most competent to pronounce upon the correctness of this inference. Well, why should I waste the few remaining hours of my life in seeking faults in others or analysing their causes and consequences? It is best I sanctify every second. Tell me, Master, about the holy moment of Birth, when my very Breath, Gopala, appeared upon the earth.” Praying thus, Parikshit fell at the feet of Suka and sat up, with eyes closed, eager to listen. He was yearning in happy expectation, to learn from Suka the amazing mystery of the Birth.

Suka related the story thus: “Maharaja, the foetus of the seventh pregnancy was taken and transferred to the

womb of the wife of Vasudeva, Rohini by name, who was in Gokula, under the protection of Nanda. This was done in order that the child may grow into a companion and helpmate for Gopala. Rohini gave birth to a son, who was named by Garga, the family Preceptor, as Balarama, since he was extraordinarily strong in body and he charmed everyone by his innocence and intelligence. Since he was transferred from the womb of Devaki to that of Rohini, he was also named Samkarshana (He who was attracted, drawn).

“Meanwhile, the eighth pregnancy completed nine months. Devaki and Vasudeva held their lives in the grasp of their palms, for they were agonising over what might happen any moment—when the delivery will take place? What Kamsa will do to punish them or to destroy the enemy he feared! They sat helpless, in great anguish, without food or sleep. When Kamsa learnt that the nine months had passed, he took extra precautions to see that the child does not escape him. He ordered that Vasudeva and Devaki be shackled with chains, on hands and feet. He locked the doors of the prison with even more formidable contrivances. He placed larger numbers of even more alert and able guards around the prison. He arranged that, once every five minutes, the guards must examine and satisfy themselves that the inmates are within the prison walls. Kamsa was ceaselessly worried and anxious about the birth and what might happen to him, therefrom.

“But who can hinder the inscrutable operation of the Will of God? Can the Divine Mystery be penetrated and

unravelling? Fools who cannot grasp the Truth, who cannot recognise Divinity and measure the Power of God, who have no faith in God, live in the delusion that their petty plans will save them and that they can triumph through their own efforts! The fact is, not even the smallest success can be won, without God's Grace.

“Though this is true, we should not sit with folded hands, believing that a thing will accomplish itself if and when God wills. Human effort is essential, and man must himself make a trial. He must use the strength and skill that he is endowed with, and resolve to proceed with the work, laying the responsibility for success on God. For without the Grace of God, every effort will be rendered fruitless.

“One night, lying on the floor of the prison room, Devaki developed labour pains. She fixed her mind on God, and looked intently at the flame of the little oil lamp, anxiously asking herself, ‘What is to happen to me? What lies in the future for me?’ Suddenly, the flame went out, and darkness filled the cell. Just then she beheld an effulgent Form, casting a strange splendour, standing before her. She wondered who it might be, she called on Vasudeva, afraid that it might be Kamsa in that shape. She was lost in confusion and doubt about the identity of the phenomenon before her.

“Suddenly the Form became clear! It was armed with the Conch, the Discus, and the Mace; the Fourth Hand was held in the Abhaya pose (the pose that indicates that one need have no fear). It said softly and sweetly, ‘Do not grieve.

I am Narayana. I am to be born in a few moments as your son, with intent to wipe off all your travails, in answer to the promise I made, when you visualised Me as a result of your earnest asceticism. Do not be anxious about Me. Be but witnesses of the drama that is about to be staged. In all the fourteen worlds, there is no one born or to be born who can inflict on Me the least harm. Be assured of that. Even when some little anxiety affects you as a consequence of affection for the child you bore and of delusion fogging the mind, you will be able to witness immediately miracles that will reveal My Nature.

“No sooner am I born than the shackles will fall off from your hands and feet. The doors of the prison will open by themselves. Take Me from here without anyone's knowledge to the home of Nanda in Gokula, and place Me by the side of his wife, Yasoda, who is having labour pains, this very moment. Bring from her side the baby girl that she has delivered, back into this prison and keep her with you. Then send word to Kamsa. Until he gets the news, no one either in Mathura or Gokula will notice you, or apprehend you. I shall arrange it so.’ He shone in Divine Splendour, and blessing Devaki and Vasudeva, He entered the womb of Devaki as an Orb of Light. Within minutes, the Child was born.

“The time was 3:30 a.m., the auspicious hour of Brahma Muhurtham. The Vishnu Maya (Divine Power to Delude) brought sleep, sudden and log-like on all the guards and on all the watch and ward. They fell in their places and

were caught in sleep. The thick iron chains that bound the hands and feet of Vasudeva fell off, in a trice. The doors and the gates flew open. Though it was the darkest hour of the night, the cuckoo was cooing with a sudden spurt of joy. Parrots were announcing the heavenly happiness they felt. The stars were twinkling, for each of them was smiling in inner joy. The Rain-God was showering flower-drops of rain on the earth below. Around the prison flocks of birds clustered in happy song, twittering sweet melody.

“Vasudeva realised that all this was the manifestation of the charm of God. He turned his eye towards the new born child and was astounded at what he saw. Was it true? he asked himself. Or, was it a mental illusion? He was fixed to the spot, like a pillar. For, Maharaja! encircling the Babe was a brilliant halo of Light! The Babe laughed outright, seeing the mother and the father. It appeared the Babe was about to speak out something! Yes. They heard the words, ‘Now, without delay, take Me to Gokul.’

“Vasudeva did not tarry. He spread an old dhoti on a bamboo matlet, and placed the Babe on it, he tore the scarf of an old sari of Devaki and covered the Babe with it. Then, he moved out of the open doors and gates, past the sleeping guards.

“He noticed the little drops of rain that fell from the sky, and was sad that the new-born Child would soon be soaked. But when he turned back, he found the snake, Adishesha following his footsteps, preventing the rain from

wetting the Babe, holding the ribbed umbrella of its broad hoods over the Child! At every step along the road, Vasudeva noticed auspicious and favourable signs. Though the Sun had not risen yet, the lotus bloomed in all the tanks and leaned on its stalk towards Vasudeva. Though it was a night with no expectation of moonlight, perhaps through the yearning to have a look at the Divine Babe the full moon peeped through the clouds, its cool rays illumining only the bamboo matlet on which the Babe lay, along the entire route! The Babe which attracted all this auspiciousness was placed in Nanda’s home and the child that had just then been born there was brought and placed into the hands of Devaki. No sooner was this done, than Vasudeva burst into tears. He could not stop his weeping.”

Even while these words came from his lips, Parikshit exclaimed aloud, “Krishna! Krishna!”; everyone turned towards the King and hastened towards him. They saw a snake, crawling away fast, after biting the right toe of the Maharaja!

It was clear to all that the end had come. Everyone echoed the words of Parikshit and repeated, “Krishna! Krishna!” and “Oh Dwarakavasa! Brindavana-vihara!” The vast gathering had no other thought than that of God, no other word than the Name of God.

The Maharaja fell on the ground, repeating “Krishna! Krishna!” Men learned in the Vedas recited Vedic prayers. Bhakthas sang the Glory of God in chorus. Ascetics and sages were sunk in Japa and Dhyana.

Suka shed tears of inner Bliss. He announced, “The Maharaja has reached Gopala!” He wanted the funeral rites to be undertaken and went away, without being noticed.

The word Suka means a parrot. Yes, he was the Parrot that plucked the ripe nectar-filled fruit called Bhagavatha from the Tree of the Vedas and enabled the World to taste it and be nourished by it. May the world relish the Fruit and strengthen itself through it, and derive the Atmic Bliss that it can confer.

May Humanity attain Nanda-nandana!