

# Life Story of Lord Krishna:

From birth to His ascendancy to Vaikunth.  
(Stories)

By

**Dalip Thukral**

(Adapted from classics of Hindu literature)



**Lord Krishna and Arjuna in the War of Mahabharata**

**It is the story of a man Who was also God  
and of God Who was a man. There is no  
tale comparable to it in all times.**

Devi Vanamali in 'Sri Krishna Lila.'

# Life story of Lord Krishna:

(Stories)



I bow to Lord Ganesha.  
May He remove all obstacles and  
grant us the highest spiritual perfections.

With best wishes and compliments from:

**Dalip Thukral,  
11663 Tahiti Dr., Sterling Heights,  
Michigan-48312, USA.**

In loving memory of my wife

# Janak Thukral

(April 8, 1937 to September 2, 2014)



She left us for her heavenly abode  
on September 02, 2014.

**Dalip Thukral,**  
11663 Tahiti Dr., Sterling Heights,  
Michigan-48312, USA.

Fondly remembered and missed by -

1. Dalip Thukral: Husband.
2. Rohit Thukral and Sonia Thukral:  
Son and daughter-in-law.
3. Poonam Dua and Annu Sapra: Daughters.
4. Saahil Thukral, Sunny Dua, Vidur Sapra &  
Gautam Sapra: Grand sons.
5. Sonal Thukral, Nidhi Aravapalli and Pearl Dua:  
Grand daughters.

Hare Rama, Hare Rama,  
Rama Rama, Hare Hare.  
Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna,  
Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare.

# Life story of Lord Krishna:

From birth to His ascendancy to Vaikunth

(Stories)

<b>Introduction:</b> .....	<i>x-xi</i>
<b>Year of important Events in the life of Lord Krishna:</b> .....	<i>xii-xiii</i>

## C O N T E N T S

<u>Story</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. <b>Birth of the Unborn;</b> ..... Birth of Lord Krishna.	1
2. <b>He is named KRISHNA.</b> .....	7
3. <b>Krishna shows His cosmic form to Yashoda;</b> .....	9
The baby is capable of looking after himself.	
4. <b>First Birthday;</b> .....	11
With the touch of Krishna's leg, the cart tumbled. Shakata demon is killed.	
5. <b>Puttna Masi goes to Gokul.</b> .....	13
6. <b>Trinavrit</b> .....	16
Forest dweller sent to Gokul to kill Krishna gets killed.	
7. <b>Is He GOD?</b> .....	18
Devaki's faith in the divinity of her son.	
8. <b>Krishna buys fruit</b> .....	21
and pays with.....	
9. <b>Krishna eats the mud;</b> .....	23
Yashoda sees the Universe inside Krishna's mouth.	

<u>Story</u>	<u>Page</u>
10. <b>Aghasura: Puttna's brother;</b> .....	26
Asura dies by suffocation.	
11. <b>Prank with Brahma;</b> .....	27
Brahma steals the calves and the <i>gopals</i> .	
12. <b>Killing of Dhenukasura;</b> .....	30
Donkey asura.	
13. <b>How <i>gopis</i> feel about missing clothes?</b> .....	32
14. <b>Gopis' complaints to Yashoda;</b> .....	34
Krishna gave a pinch to my little daughter, complains one <i>gopi</i> .	
15. <b>New complaint;</b> .....	37
Krishna is caught.	
16. <b>Butter thief;</b> .....	39
Mother ties Krishna to a mortar with the rope.	
17. <b>Miracle of the twin-trees;</b> .....	41
Radha meets Krishna, for the first time.	
18. <b>Arrival at Vrindavan;</b> .....	45
Krishna & Balaram along with their parents leave Gokul and arrive at Vrindavan.	
19. <b>Raas Leela;</b> .....	47
<i>Gopis</i> and Krishna	
20. <b>Mad calf;</b> .....	51
Arishta demon meets its end.	
21. <b>Killing of Bakasura</b> .....	53
22. <b>Pralambasura;</b> .....	54

**Story**

**Page**

Demon who disguised himself as a *gopala*.

23. **Blessing the Brahmins' wives**..... 56
24. **Devouring the forest fire.** ..... 58
25. **Narada's revelation to Kamsa;**..... 60  
Demons Kesi and Vyomasura are killed.
26. **Liberation of Vidyadhara:** ..... 62  
A demi God.
27. **A dangerous adventure;** ..... 64  
Krishna tames Hastin: a mad bull  
and rides it along with Radha.
28. **Demon Sankhacuda is killed;** ..... 67  
Krishna gets the valuable jewel.
29. **Kaliya of Poisonous Pool;**..... 68  
Krishna subdues Kaliya Naag.
30. **Krishna pleads for marriage with Radha;** ..... 70  
Is it right for me to forsake dharma? asked Krishna.
31. **Govardhan Puja and Annakoot;** ..... 73  
Indra, the god of heavens is humiliated  
and a new tradition is started.
32. **Releasing Nand Maharaj from the**..... 77  
clutches of Varuna.
33. **Radha, Aiyyan and Krishna.** ..... 79
34. **Mystery solved;**..... 82  
Devaki's 8<sup>th</sup> child is Krishna.

<u>Story</u>	<u>Page</u>
35. <b>Kamsa's summons.</b> .....	84
36. <b>Day before departure to Mathura;</b> ..... Krishna meets Radha and reveals the secret of his birth.	87
37. <b>Krishna's departure to Mathura;</b> ..... Krishna and Balarama leave Vrindavan to go to Mathura.	91
38. <b>Krishna's arrival at Mathura;</b> ..... Confrontation with Kamsa's washerman.	94
39. <b>Krishna - the Healer;</b> ..... Trivakra (thrice crooked) is healed with the touch of Krishna.	96
40. <b>Krishna meets Rukmini;</b> ..... First meeting.	99
41. <b>The Sacred Bow;</b> ..... Krishna breaks the Bow; Kamsa is worried.	102
42. <b>Kamsa is killed; prophecy fulfilled;</b> ..... With the killing of Kamsa, Krishan comes to the forefront of Yadavas.	105
43. <b>Who should be the king of Yadavas?</b> ..... Krishna rejects the throne.	111
44. <b>Eternal friends - Krishna &amp; Arjuna;</b> ..... From Krishna's promise was born a sacred kinship.	113
45. <b>Secret of Arjuna's success;</b> ..... Arjuna confides to Krishna.	116
46. <b>Krishna - the Brahmchari;</b> ..... A page from the life of Krishna.	118
47. <b>Guru Dakshina;</b> ..... Krishna's search for Guru's son, and securing <i>Panchjanya</i> conch.	122
48. <b>Krishna recovers Guru's son and restores him to Guruji.</b> .....	126



<u>Story</u>	<u>Page</u>
<b>49. Gopis visit Mathura to see Krishna;</b> .....	<b>130</b>
Gopis & Gopas in the palace of Krishna.	
<b>50. Jarasandha's march on Mathura;</b> .....	<b>132</b>
Krishna and Balarama flee; Mathura is saved.	
<b>51. On the way to Gomantaka Hill</b> .....	<b>135</b>
<b>52. Jarasandha is humiliated;</b> .....	<b>138</b>
Krishna saves him from death.	
<b>53. Shrigalava, the king of Karavirapura is killed by Krishna</b> .....	<b>143</b>
<b>54. Krishna returns to Mathura;</b> .....	<b>149</b>
On the way, Balarama wins a bride.	
<b>55. Jarasandha's strategy &amp; Rukmini's Resolve;</b> .....	<b>153</b>
Rukmini's protestations against marrying Shishupal.	
<b>56. Rukmini's Swayamvar;</b> .....	<b>156</b>
Krishna disturbs Rukmini's swayamvar and frustrates Jarasandha's plan.	
<b>57. Yadavas' departure from Mathura to Dwarka;</b> .....	<b>159</b>
Amazing leadership of Krishna.	
<b>58. Caves of Muchukunda;</b> .....	<b>167</b>
I want life to be lived as it is, so long as it is lived in Dharma ..... said Krishna.	
<b>59. Krishna and Kashmir;</b> .....	<b>173</b>
Gonand, the ruler of Kashmir gets killed by Balarama.	
<b>60. Krishna marries Rukmini;</b> .....	<b>175</b>
Krishna abducts Rukmini from swayamvar, carries her to Dwarka and marries her there.	
<b>61. Rukmini's unparalleled love for Krishna;</b> .....	<b>181</b>
Krishna – a perfect householder.	
<b>62. Krishna's sister: Subhadra;</b> .....	<b>185</b>
Marriage by self-abduction.	

- 63. Krishna's son: Samba; ..... 188**  
Marriage with Duryodhana's daughter.
- 64. Krishna is worried;..... 191**  
Where are Pandava Brothers?
- 65. Why Krishna declined to marry Draupadi? ..... 195**  
Don't you like me? Am I so unfit to be your wife? asked Draupadi.
- 66. Night before Draupadi's swayamvara;..... 202**  
Krishna at the height of his divinity. Unaided and unarmed, he enters the tent of king Jarasandha, his enemy and makes him abandon the idea of kidnapping Draupadi.
- 67. Krishna promises throne of Hastinapur to Duryodhan and he fulfills his promise. .... 211**
- 68. Killing of Jarasandha;..... 216**  
For the success of Rajsuya Yajna, it was necessary that Jarasandha be killed.
- 69. Yudhishtira's Rajsuya Yagya;..... 219**  
Shishupala is killed.
- 70. Killing of king Salva;..... 223**  
With the death of king Salva, Krishna became he foremost defender of dharma in Aryavarta.
- 71. Game of Dice;..... 227**  
Yudhishtira loses his kingdom, brothers and wife at the game of dice with Duryodhana. He wins back his freedom when he invokes the blessings of Sri Krishna.
- 72. Krishna meets Pandava brothers in exile; ..... 232**  
He gives solace to Draupadi saying that the women of Kuru clan will weep as she is weeping now.
- 73. Krishna on Peace Mission; ..... 236**  
Duryodhana wanted to imprison Krishna.
- 74. Krishna's Virat Roop in Kurus' court;..... 242**
- 75. Arjuna and Duryodhana..... 245**  
seek Krishna's help.

<b>76. Lord Krishna</b> and the <b>War of Mahabharata.....</b>	<b>248</b>
<b>77. Krishna is Lord Narayan;.....</b> Krishna saves the Pandavas army from annihilation.	<b>261</b>
<b>78. Krishna saves Yudhishtira; .....</b> Arjuna with his sword drawn, advances toward Yudhishtira, but Krishna saves the situation.	<b>265</b>
<b>79. Punishing Asvatthama; .....</b> Bhima wanted instant death as a punishment to Asvatthama but Krishna pronounced punishment which was worse than death.	<b>268</b>
<b>80. At the End of War; .....</b> i) Krishna's immortal words to Arjuna; ii) Krishna saves Pandavas from death.	<b>274</b>
<b>81. Gandhari curses Krishna;.....</b>	<b>277</b>
<b>82. Death of the Deathless;.....</b> Last days of Lord Krishna.	<b>279</b>



Blessed are they who read and/or listen to the life-story of Lord Krishna - The Supreme Personality of Godhead.

## **Life story of Lord Krishna:**

From birth to His ascendancy to Vaikunth.

### **Introduction:**

The advent of Lord Krishna came at a time when the common man in Bharathavarsha was without a simple religion that would satisfy his emotional wants and elevate him spiritually without taxing him too much intellectually.

The Bhagavatha Dharma provided a devotional gospel in which action, emotion and intellect played equal parts and proclaimed KRISHNA as Ishvara (God) WHO had incarnated Himself for the sake of humanity. He could be communed with, through love and service and responded to the earnest prayers and deepest yearnings of the ordinary person. Thus, Lord Krishna was not only a precocious child, an invincible hero, and a Mahayogi, but He was that Supreme Immaculate, whose contact transforms even sinners into saints, ignorant men into sages, sense-bound beings into spiritual ecstasies, and even animals into devotees. Krishna is the human version of the metaphysical Satchidananda Brahman (existence - consciousness - bliss) of the Upanishada, Who took on a human form, to help the ordinary mortal to attain union with the formless Brahman (the Indivisible Absolute) through bhakti or devotion alone, and not merely through the path of meditation and samadhi (super-conscious state), as advocated in the Upanishads. All His human actions during the span of His early life were meant, not only to bless His contemporaries and establish righteousness on earth, but to provide a spiritually potent account of His earthly deeds, for the uplifting of the future generations. By meditating on

these stories, one can establish a devotional relationship with Him, similar to that which His great devotees had during His lifetime. He is the expression of the redeeming love of God for humanity, which manifests itself in different ages and in different lands, bringing spiritual enlightenment and bliss into our otherwise dreary life

..... Devi Vanamali in Sri Krishna Lila

\*\*\*\*\*

The stories on the life of Sri Krishna are innumerable and are deep buried in the pages of scriptures and classics of Hindu literature. In this small book, I have made a humble attempt to write down some events from Lord's birth to His ascendancy to Vaikunth. A reading of His life will not only be a rewarding treat, but will also charge the reader's personality with an energy and vigor. May His grace flow into us, inspire and enlighten us, and lead us to eternal bliss.

I do not claim any originality or research in the writing of these stories. These have been written based on the material found in 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Devi Vanamali, 'KRSNA' by A.C .Bhaktivedanata Swamy Prabhupada, ' Krishnavatara' by K.M.Munshi and other classics of Hindu literature. I hope that the readers will like them.

May I be found worthy of His grace to write more about Him.

February 18, 2015.

Dalip Thukral,  
(Retd.) Regional Provident Fund Commissioner,  
Gujarat, India.  
Now at: 11663 Tahiti Dr., Sterling Heights,  
Michigan-48312, U.S.A.

Note:- A limited number (copies) of this book is available for free distribution in the USA. For your requirement, write to: Dalip Thukral at the above address.

# Year of important Events in the life of Lord Krishna

**Date of Birth:-** July 21, 3228 B.C. is generally accepted as the date of Lord's birth. However, in his book HISTORY OF ANCIENT INDIA (A New Version), the historian J P Mittal has reckoned the Lord's date of birth as: in or about 3192 B.C.

**Date of Death:-** February 18, 3102 B.C.

## Year of Event as noted from the above book

<u>Year (B.C.)</u>	<u>Event</u>
3174	Kamsa is killed by Krishna who was 18 years old. (According to 'Krishnavatara' by K.M.Munshi, the Lord was 16 years old.)
3170	Yadavas vacate Mathura and migrate to Dwarka. Barbarian king Kala Yavan is killed. Jarasandha razes Mathura to ground.
3167	Laksagraha is burnt. Krishna in search of Pandava brothers.
3165	Draupadi's Swayamvara. Krishna, Balaram also attend Swayamvara. Arjuna wins Draupadi's hand.
3164	Hastinapura kingdom is divided in 2 parts: Hastinapura and Indraprastha. Pandavas depart to Indraprastha.
3156	Subhadra's marriage with Arjuna. Marriage by self-abduction.
3155	Jarasandha is killed by Bhima. (Jarasandha was 70 and Bhima 40 years old).

- 3153 Yudhishtira's Rajsuya Yagya. Shishupal is killed.
- 3152 Game of Dice (gambling) between Duryodhan & Yudhishtira. Pandavas' 12+1 years exile starts.
- 3140 Jaidharta (king of Sindhu) abducts Draupadi; Pandavas go to Matsya kingdom (Virat) for hiding, being the last year of their exile.
- 3139 Kichaka, the Chief of Virat forces, tries to molest Draupadi, and is killed by Bhima. Pandavas' 13-years exile is over, and they are recognized. Pandavas are given a village (Upaplavya) by the king of Virat to settle, and work out their strategy for future.
- 3138 Sri Krishna's Peace Mission fails in Kurus' court. War between Kurus and Pandavas becomes a certainty. Preparations start.
- 3138 War of Mahabharata starts on Nov. 18. Krishna's Message of Gita to Arjuna.
- 3137 Bhishma passed away after 58 days from the beginning of War. Pandavas performed his last rights at river Ganga on January 18.
- 3102 Lord Krishna ascends to His heavenly abode. Kaliyug started hereafter.
- 3101 Pandavas lost all attachment to life. They went out on pilgrimage, visiting holy places and finally reached the Himalayas where one by one, all fell and died.



# **Birth of the Unborn;**

Birth of Lord Krishna.

Date of birth: July 21, 3228 BC.

Whenever virtue declines and unrighteousness prevails, I manifest Myself in order to protect the good, destroy evil and to establish Dharma. For this, I am born in every age.

.....Shrimad Bhagvad Gita

This was the solemn promise made by the Lord and for this, He incarnated Himself in the city of Mathura as the son of Devaki and Vasudeva.

.....

## **Prevailing conditions:**

Vasudeva was the chief of the Shooras, a Yadavas tribe. Ugrasen was the chief of Andhakas, another tribe of Yadavas and his first born son was Kamsa who was bold, crafty, haughty, revengeful and obstinate; he was a terror to friends and foes alike, and respected no law - human or divine. The loveliest Devaki was the daughter of Devaka, the brother of Ugrasen. She was just sixteen years old.

There was strife between the Shooras and the Andhakas. And the elders of two tribes decided that Devaki should be wedded to Vasudeva so that they could live in peace. The marriage took place in the palace of king Ugrasen. The Yadavas were happy for they had never seen so fine a man (Vasudeva) and woman (Devaki) matching in such perfect harmony.

At the time when Devaki was being united with Vasudeva in wedlock, Narada, the ancient sage happened to come. In welcoming the sage, the prince Kamsa offered worship and asked for his blessings. While bragging of his might, Kamsa asked the sage in scorn: Who can dare touch me? Narada replied, 'Prince. Proud though you are of your might, I know that He has willed your destruction. The eighth child of Devaki will slay you.' So saying, the sage vanished before Kamsa could reply.

Angrily and fiery-eyed, Kamsa strode towards the palace gates, walked up to the bridal chariot and seized Devaki by the hair and pulled her out of the chariot. When Ugrasen, Devaka and others laid a restraining hand on Kamsa, he said, 'I had a warning from the gods; they say that Devaki's eighth child is going to kill me. I am going to see that that does not happen. I will not let her live. She shall die.'

Vasudeva knew that no one could stand between Kamsa and his fiery will; he strode forward and said to Kamsa, 'The gods never said that there was danger to you from this poor girl - Devaki. I solemnly promise you that I will present you every son of hers, the moment he is born. Then you can do to him as you like. Let Devaki live.' Kamsa was a little reconciled and said, 'Take the wedding procession back to the palace. It will be guarded day and night by my trusted men. Vasudeva! I shall hold you to your promise. I will not let a single child of yours live, whatever happens.'

In due course of time, when Devaki was delivered of her first son, Vasudeva, true to his promise, brought his first-born son to Kamsa. All pleadings by Vasudeva to spare the child were in vain. Kamsa stood up, snatched the child from the hands of Vasudeva and dashed its head against the ground. Six of Devaki's sons had been killed by Kamsa, one by one, over the time.

## **Birth of Balarama:**

Six of Devaki's sons had already been killed by Kamsa and the people were horrified. It was the time when Devaki was expectant with her seventh child. When the boy (Balarama) was born, he was secretly exchanged with a still-born girl, and was thus saved from the cruelty of Kamsa.

## **The eighth Child:**

As the time for Devaki to give birth to a child drew nearer, Kamsa began to take great precautions. He withdrew all the servants from the palace in which she and her husband were held captive. This time, no midwife was to be allowed in attendance as before, except Puttna, his trusted cousin. Orders were issued that no one could see Devaki and Vasudeva except Gargacharya, the family priest, who attended to the daily rituals which could not be denied to Vasudeva.

As the days passed, Kamsa became seized with panic. The reports which came every day of how the people were expecting the Deliverer to be born soon, strained his nerves. He grew excited over small things. Often, he was absent-minded. He lost his sleep and dreamt of terrible things.

It was the eighth day of the dark half of the month of Sravan. Throughout the day, there was thunder and lightning, and the rains came in; showers and the wind lashed the streets. About noontime, in spite of the foul stormy weather, Gargacharya came to perform the daily rituals at the prison-palace. After these were over, the old priest embraced Vasudeva and whispered a message in his ear.

The rains continued to pour heavily and, even before sunset, darkness fell over the town. Puttna who had gone to her house in the morning, could not return to her post as the roads had been flooded. The palace guards, shivering to the bones, shut themselves

up in their rooms leaving the gates open for her to come in.

The palace was wrapped in darkness. All of a sudden, the sky was lit up by a lightning flash. The next moment, Devaki took hold of Vasudeva's hand in her effort to keep down the pains. Her joyful eyes were brimming with tears as she looked at her husband and said, 'Lord. He is coming,' quelling the pangs of the moment. Vasudeva, with great tenderness, led her into the adjoining room.

### **Lord is born:**

It was midnight. The rains continued to fall and the lightning flashed. Devaki, tingling with ecstasy, gave birth to a child almost effortlessly when the auspicious constellation of *Abhijit* was on the eastern horizon. The boy was perfectly formed and colored like a sky-blue lotus. He did not cry as is the wont of new-born babies, but a beatific smile was on his tiny lips. Vasudeva was in a trance of delight, for he saw before him that divine form which had shone in his heart ten months ago and which had throbbed in Devaki's womb ever since. Realizing the child was to be none other than the Supreme Being, Vasudeva prostrated himself before Him and sung a song of praise. And Devaki exclaimed, 'You are verily Vishnu, the light spiritual, the un-manifest, the vast and aluminous.'

Vasudeva shook himself awake; now, he had to act his part. He left the baby with Devaki for a while, took two oil-lamps in his hands, walked up to the balcony and waved them as if performing *aarti*. From across the river came the response, a torch moving in a circle.

Vasudeva returned to Devaki and washed the baby clean. He gave it a lump of wool, soaked in honey to suck and put it in a basket. Then he said to her, 'Devaki. I must go now.'

'But how will you go? It is raining stormily and the Yamuna is

in spite.’

‘His will be done,’ replied Vasudeva and went to discover what the guards were doing. And there were the guards lying asleep behind the closed doors of their rooms. Puttna had not returned from her home and the gates of the prison-palace were unlocked.

Vasudeva wrapped the child in a shawl and covered it with a small mat. Thereafter, lifting the basket on his shoulders, he stepped out of the palace.

Two furlongs away, the river flowed over a stony ledge, formed in the bed, which provided a natural ford for going across to Gokul. He made his way to that point, with the basket on his head and the new-born babe sleeping quietly with its great toe in its mouth. And there was a miracle. The rain stopped. A dark low cloud - like the hood of a cobra - formed a canopy over the basket. Vasudeva went on and crossed the Yamuna hurriedly. On the opposite side stood Gargacharya and Nanda waiting for Vasudeva.

Garga relieved Vasudeva of his burden and handed him another basket saying, “Yashoda gave birth to a daughter this morning.” Vasudeva, full of joy and gratitude, said to Nanda, “Nanda! How can I ever fulfill my obligation to you?” Nanda touched Vasudeva’s feet and then took the basket from Gargacharya’s hands. The mat which covered it slipped away. Lightning flashed and he beheld the blue, beautiful baby, his little eyes open and close, and a giant wave of affection surged in the old cowherd’s heart.

Vasudeva hurried back to his prison-palace with a new-born girl in the basket over his head.

**The Deliverer has arrived.**

**Your destroyer is elsewhere, already born:**

Some light stole into Kamsa’s room. It was day, though the

sky was overcast and the rains had not stopped. Soon Putna came, bowed low with folded hands and said, “Mighty Prince. Devaki has given birth to a daughter.” Kamsa, however, was not sure. The eighth child was to be a boy if the prophecy was true. Immediately, he got into his chariot and drove to the palace where Vasudeva and Devaki were kept in prison. ‘Where is the child? Give it to me,’ He shouted.

‘Prince. It is a girl, not a boy. Why do you want to kill her?’  
Asked Vasudeva.

‘Boy or girl. It shall not live, so saying, Kamsa drew the cradle in which the child was sleeping. He took the girl, lifted her by the legs, head downward. Suddenly, he felt unsure of himself. His hands began to tremble. The hand which held the child and was raised to dash it to the ground, grew numb and the child slipped out of his hand. A shriek followed - poignant and terrifying. The room swam before him. Everything grew dark and he heard a supernatural voice saying: **Your destroyer is elsewhere, already born.**

Kamsa stared vacantly at Vasudeva and Devaki. Then he spoke in an unsteady voice, ‘Go wherever you like if you so desire. The prophecy was merely Narada’s jesting at me.’ He then returned to his palace.

---

Adapted from ‘Krishnavatara’ by K.M.Munshi,  
and ‘Sri Krishna Lila’ by Vanamali.

## He is named KRISHNA.

### Ghana Shyam:

Immediately after birth, the boy born to Devaki and Vasudeva was sent to Gokul. Devaki had not the time to see her son properly, and feed her breast milk. She was always lost in thoughts as to how her loved-one would be doing; whether he had taken his feed; what he must be doing at that hour of the time, and so on.

One day, Devaki was standing on the balcony of her prison house, when she chanced to see a dark cloud moving across the sky. It was dark blue - yes; it was the color of her loved child! She went on gazing at the cloud till its shape was transformed into that of a child. She saw the hands, the feet and the face she would never forget and the dyes that would haunt her day and night. She almost swooned with excessive delight. Her beloved one was dark as the cloud - he was *ghana shyam*.

It so happened that at that moment, sage Gargacharya - the family priest - came to Devaki and Vasudeva, and told them that he had cast the horoscope of the child, and that according to the rules prescribed by the sages, the child's name had to begin with *ka* or *chha* or *gha*. It was a miracle for Devaki - so she felt - that the child could be named Ghanashyam. In hurried consultations, all the three agreed that none should know it, except the three ones, for they dared not let Kamsa discover the identity of the child she worshipped who was growing up rapidly at Gokul.

### Krishna: Sanskrit for 'black or dark blue'.

Next day, sage Gargacharya left for Gokul where he was welcomed by Nanda and his wife Yashoda, and they requested the

sage to perform *namkaran* (naming) ceremony of their child and that of Rohini's. At that time, the acharya said that if he performed the ceremony openly for the children, Kamsa will come to know of it, take it as an indication that his foe is born and take steps to kill him. So, on the advice of sage, Nanda agreed with him to perform the ceremony in some solitary place without the knowledge of even the other *gopals*. Since the sage knew everything and had come with the express purpose of naming the children, he proceeded with the *namkaran* ceremony.

Thus, without the knowledge of anyone else, the ceremony was conducted in an empty cow-barn with only Nanda, Yashoda and Rohini as witnesses. First, Gargacharya took Rohini's son in his lap, and said that he shall be called Rama or the charming one, as he will charm his friends and relatives by his qualities; he will be Bala on account of his great strength. He named him Balarama. Next, he lifted Yashoda's child and placed him tenderly on his lap. The mischievous little thing gave him a sharp look as if to say, "You'd better give me a good name, one that has never been heard before and yet one which befits me and will be remembered by all to come - or else."

'Krishna!' was the name, uttered by Gargacharya. That was the name for Him. 'Krishna' - the one who steals the hearts of men; who comes into contact with Him belongs to Him forever. Krishna also means 'black or dark blue', for the baby was the color of the rain-clouds during the monsoon. Gargacharya then outlined the child's horoscope saying: Numerous are the names with which this child will be known because of His qualities and achievements. Even I know not them all. O Nanda! This child will be equal to Lord Narayana (Vishnu) Himself, in respect of fame, prowess and excellence. Look after Him with all attention. All those who harm Him will be harming themselves, and those who love Him will be ever protected.'

---

Adapted from 'Krishnavatara' by K.M.Munshi,  
and 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Vanamali.



## **Krishna shows His cosmic form to Yashoda;**

The baby is capable of looking after himself.

He, whom the Vedantins (followers of the Vedas) speak of as Brahman, whom the yogis consider the *atman* (individual soul), and whom devotees call *Bhagavan*, that Supreme One was considered by Yashoda, to be her own son.

.....from Sri Krishna Lila by Vanamali.

One day, Yashoda was sitting in her favorite spot in the veranda and worrying about all the dangers that might possibly befall her child - Krishna. With infinite tenderness, she contemplated the cherubic (angelic) face in her arms. At that moment, the child opened his mouth as if to yawn and lo! the mother saw the entire universe in his little mouth. She stared fascinated. There were - the sky, the earth, the heavens, the stars, the planets, the sun, the moon, fire, air, oceans, rivers and continents - all inside the baby's mouth. The universal manifestation was within the baby's mouth. For a split second, she forgot herself and the baby; she felt as if she was poised on the brink of endless worlds, the spectator of a mighty cosmic drama. At last, she could bear it no longer and closed her eyes. When she opened the eyes again, the illusion - if it could be called that - had vanished, and she was just a mother holding her baby in her arms.

‘Rohini! Rohini!’ She called. ‘Come here and tell what you see in this child's mouth. I thought that I saw something strange and

wondrous.’

Rohini came running and with great difficulty, she managed to open the baby’s little mouth and shove her finger inside, only to get a sharp nip for her pains. She said, ‘Yashoda! I know what’s in his mouth. He’s teething. That’s what you saw.’

Yashoda shook her head doubtfully. The miracle she had just witnessed was already fading from her mind, but a lingering feeling of awe remained and with a certain degree of comfort. This child was not as helpless as he looked, she thought to herself. There was no need for her to worry so much over his welfare. He was capable of looking after himself. This thought comforted her and this was just what the Lord wanted.

---

Adapted from ‘Sri Krishna Lila’ by Vanamali,  
Vanamali Gita Yogashram, Rishikesh, India.

## First Birthday;

With the touch of Krishna's leg, the cart tumbled.  
Shakata demon is killed.

(Krishna is 1 year old).

Twelve months passed. Yashoda and Nanda celebrated the first birthday of their son by hoisting a feast on the banks of Yamuna where an ancient temple of Gopanath Mahadeva stood. Nanda gave a feast to the Brahmins and all the *gopas* and *gopis*. Yashoda, with the little child in her arms, was greeting everyone with a smile.

Yashoda bathed the baby amidst the chanting of *mantras*. Having received the blessings of the Brahmins, she placed the drowsy infant under a cart to sleep. She kept a ring of little boys to watch over him and went inside to attend the guests. At this moment, the demon Shakata entered the cart, thinking that it would be easy to bring it down upon the infant and kill him as if in an accident.

While placing the infant child under the cart, Yashoda forgot to feed the milk to the child who had started crying, being hungry, but mother Yashoda could not hear him because of the noises of the guests. Being hungry, the child lifted his legs and began to kick his lotus feet just like an ordinary child. While he was kicking, he accidentally touched the wheel of the cart, and it moved and tumbled with a great noise. Suddenly, there was a cry. The cart had tumbled and all its contents were thrown to the other side of the yard, and Shakata was killed. With a piercing scream, Yashoda ran back terrified to the place where the child lay. There was the

child, kicking the air and crying lustily - and unhurt. Nanda also rushed to the spot and wondered at the little baby that had kicked the cart over. Hearing the terrible cracking sound, everyone rushed forward.

‘What happened? What happened?’ They asked the children who had been looking after the baby.

‘The cart fell down as this little boy kicked it with his feet,’ They said proudly. The people gazed in astonishment at the baby who was kicking his feet and gurgling happily, as if to confirm the truth of what the children said.

Yashoda snatched up her baby and caressed his rose-petal feet. ‘Did you get hurt, my darling?’ She crooned. ‘Did the cart hurt you?’

‘God certainly looks after your child, Yashoda!’ Other *gopis* exclaimed. Not having an inkling of the superhuman might of their child, the frightened parents arranged for many rites to be done for him to protect him from evil forces.

---

Adapted from ‘Krishnavatara’ by K.M.Munshi,  
‘Sri Krishna Lila’ by Vanamali, and ‘KRSNA’ by  
A.C. Prabhupada.

## **Puttna Masi goes to Gokul.**

(Krishna is 2 years old).

Learning that Devaki had given birth to the eighth child, Kamsa ran to the place where Devaki was lying and came to know that it was a girl. “Boy or girl, it shall not live”, He declared and caught hold of the child. As he held the child and raised his hand to dash it to the ground, that the child slipped out of his hand. A shriek followed, poignant and terrifying. The child flew out of the window and he heard a super-natural voice saying: “Your destroyer is elsewhere, already born.”

Next day, Kamsa called Puttna, the wife of his General - Pradyota - and ordered, ‘Puttna! Find out, how many children were born during the last few days and see that none of them survives.’

Two years had gone by since Puttna had undertaken the task and all she had reported was that nine babies had been born in that month in Mathura and all of them had been either poisoned or stolen and killed. At the same time, Kamsa could not get over the weird experience of the new born girl slipping out of his hands and flying away through the window with that terrible shriek which rang in his ears night after night.

Meanwhile, Kamsa heard that the wife of Nanda, the chief of Gokul, though past middle age, had given birth to a boy about two years ago, and came to the conclusion that the only way was to take the help of Puttna to get rid of that boy. So she was called to his presence. Though she hesitated to undertake this task yet Kamsa insisted and threatened her saying: ‘Puttna! You know that I do not like to be disobeyed. A word from me and my men of Magadha

will be only too glad to throttle you with their bare hands. You and your husband (Pradyota) are mine in life and death. I give you a fortnight's time. Go to Gukul and finish your work.' Frightened and trembling, Puttna left the palace.

## **Puttna in Gokul:**

Krishna had completed his second year. Every year, the residents of Gokul, as usual, held a festival in honor of their guardian deity - Gopanath Mahadeva. On this auspicious day, everyone would go for a bath in the Yamuna, have a darshan of Mahadeva, make an offering and partake of a sumptuous feast. Yashoda, Rohini and other members of the family were preparing to set out for the sands to watch the rising moon, when a runner brought the message that a great lady, the wife of one of leading Brahmin courtiers of Mathura, was arriving to visit Gopanath Mahadeva to fulfil a vow that she had made.

Though unhappy with her mission, the great lady (Puttna) took bath and painted her breasts with an ointment prepared in arsenic, of which she alone knew the secret. Then at the temple of Mahadeva, she prostrated herself before the deity and offered prayers. Thereafter, the guide took her to the place where Yashoda and her family had set in a circle, with the milk pots in the centre. On seeing the great lady, Yashoda gave a smile and said, 'You are welcome, sister.' Then, she moved a little and made room for the great lady by her side.

While sitting there, the great lady saw a small, bluish boy who had lovely curls, dark eyes spilling laughter, a face full of mischievous delight. This was going to her victim. She was inclined to give up her mission, but if she gave up, all her eight children would be put to death; and she too along with her husband. The wrath of Kamsa would be upon her family. She could not afford to give up. She looked steadily at the boy and when she caught his eye, she opened her arms, and Krishna unafraid walked into her

arms. She found her heart bounding in joy. In ecstasy, she hugged Krishna. Her repressed maternal instinct burst out and she felt that her skin had become wet with milk. Her bodice was drenched.

Puttna had no command over herself. By ecstatic longing for the boy, she took Krishna on her lap, untied the ends of her bodice and bared her breasts. Milk was oozing out plentifully. She took Krishna to her breast impulsively. He responded, took the teat in his mouth and began to suck greedily, while the great lady was saying: 'Boy, boy. Enjoy it as much as you like. You have given me what no one else could.' Then she felt as if her mind was stopping. Her heart was bounding like a wild horse. A spasm shot through her frame, a nameless pain.....and the boy was sucking away from her breasts.

At that moment, Yashoda, Rohini and the family members heard the people running forward with cries: Puttna, Puttna, Puttna. And they looked at the great lady sitting by their side - sunk to the ground, her eyes wide open. She made a last gesture to keep the boy to her breast but it was in vain. It was Puttna; she lay dead and Krishna had toddled back to Yashoda.

Nanda reached the spot where his family, in high excitement, was trying to realize what had happened. He saw and recognized Puttna as she lay prostrate on the ground. 'Where is Krishna? I heard in Mathura that Puttna had left for Gokul and I rushed back,' He told Yashoda in breathless tones.

'Kill Puttna! Kill Puttna.' Shouted the men who had gathered there with bamboo poles upraised.

'She is dead already,' said Yashoda as she shrank away from the dead body. 'It was my boy who did it.' And she hugged Krishna to her heart.

---

Adapted from 'Krishnavatara' by K.M.Munshi,  
Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.

## **Trinavrit;**

Forest dweller who was sent to Gokul to kill Krishna gets killed.

When Kamsa heard of the death of Puttna, he flew into an extreme rage and declared that he would avenge the death and be get rid of his enemy. He rose from his throne and stood gazing absent-minded at the Yamuna river. A forest dweller who was catching birds on the bank of the river, caught his attention and an evil idea flashed on his mind.

In Gokul, mother Yashoda felt very alarmed at Puttna's death and Krishna's narrow escape. Nanda was in even greater fear than she was. He knew that wicked Kamsa appeared to have discovered that Krishna was Devaki's eighth son, and Puttna's death would not weaken Kamsa's resolve to put an end to Krishna's life. He therefore called his servants and kinsmen, and put them on double guard for the safety of Krishna.

A few days had passed uneventfully. One morning, Yashoda had gone to pay a visit to a relative nearby. She carried Krishna with her. On her way back, suddenly, the sun clouded. A sand-storm came over the village, travelling swiftly. The velocity of the storm made it very difficult for Yashoda to stand. Even her eyes were filled with dust. She therefore decided, being out of breath, to wait. She put Krishna down on a veranda nearby and, clinging on a pillar, sat near him waiting for the storm to blow over. It was sometime before the dust-storm blew over. Yashoda opened her eyes and looked for Krishna. He was not there. She started searching and continued to crying : 'Krishna. Krishna.' She wailed aloud saying, 'My Krishna is gone. He is not to be found.'



Some *gopis*, who were going that way, joined Yashoda in searching for her boy. Someone ran and informed Nanda about the loss of Krishna. Everybody was searching but the boy could not be found. After a long and impatient search, the party came across a dead body on the outskirts of the village. Some man, in running quickly through the dust-storm, had stumbled and broken his head against a large stone lying by the wayside. One of the villagers recognized him. He was the bird-catcher who had come to Gokul only two days before. His name was Trinavrit and he had come from Mathura.

After a little while, they heard a response. A small beloved voice replied: 'I am here, father.' And little Krishna emerged from an adjacent mango grove smiling cheerfully and rushing up to Nanda who ran forward to envelop the child in his arms. 'How did you come to be here, Krishna?' asked Nanda, his voice choking with emotion.

'He ran with me,' said Krishna pointing to Trinavrit lying dead on the ground. 'He held me tight and I held him tight too. But he fell and I ran away.' And Krishna laughed with joy.

---

Adapted from 'Krishnavatara' by K.M.Munshi.

# Is He God?

Devaki's faith in the divinity of her son.

## **Devaki's faith:**

Devaki was separated from her son immediately after his birth and who was now being brought up by Yashoda at Gokul. But she was never tired of listening to Vasudeva's narration of what had happened on the night of miracles - how the child, the moment he took him in his arms, assumed the resplendent form of the four-armed Lord; how a deeply-felt prayer had sprung from the depths of his heart; how the doors were opened by unseen hands; how the guards were asleep; how the rain had stopped when he stepped into the swirling waters of the Yamuna; how a dark cloud, like the giant hood of Sesha, the monarch of the serpent race, shielded the child from rain; how he brought back Yashoda's daughter without anyone noticing it; and how she slipped from Kamsa's hands and flew out of the window, with a shriek which struck terror into the heart of that wicked prince, Kamsa.

All this instilled a faith in Devaki that her son is God. Time and again, this faith continued growing.

## **Devaki agrees to go on pilgrimage:**

At Mathura, when Devaki and Vasudeva heard of the attempts made by Puttna to poison and kill Krishna, they got worried. And later when sage Gargacharya narrated how a forester kidnapped Krishna and died in the storm, whereas Krishan was safe and smiling, they became all the more nervous. Kamsa seemed to have suspected that his killer was at Gokul.

At the same time, Devaki's faith in the divinity of her child was strengthened. Vasudeva had, however, not the deep faith in his child which his wife had. He felt that Kamsa was sure to pursue his aim of destroying Krishna. A few days later, he consulted Akrura and Gargacharya, and came to the conclusion that something had to be done to save Krishna.

'Don't forget that the Lord has come to deliver us,' Akrura replied. 'None can harm Him. At the same time, we being humans, have to take precautions.'

'But, there is one danger,' said old Gargacharya. 'I go every fortnight to Gokul and bring you news. Nanda also sends you messages. You cannot help making enquiries about Krishna. Sometime or the other, Kamsa will surely come to know that we are all anxious about Krishna's safety. This will confirm his suspicion that he is Devaki's child. Then, he will do all that he can to harm Krishna.' To a query from Vasudeva, the Acharya replied, 'We must not allow Kamsa to suspect that you have anything to do with Krishna. But that means that you and Devaki must leave Mathura and go on a long pilgrimage.'

'Oh! What will happen to our beloved child in our absence?' Asked Vasudeva piteously.

I will be here. Nobody will suspect an old Brahmin going to Gokul to perform religious ceremonies. We can persuade Nanda to hold some sacrifice and I can go and live there for sometime,' said Gargacharya.

'Vasudeva. I think Gargacharya is right,' said Akrura, the chief of Vrishni tribe. 'If you both leave Mathura, Krishna will be safer than while you are here. Even as it is, while staying in Mathura, you cannot do anything to protect Krishna. I am here all the time. I give you a promise: even if it costs the life of every Vrishni, we will not let Krishna be harmed. Perhaps, if you are away from Mathura, I can look after him much better. It is most important

that Kamsa's suspicion - that Krishna is your child - should be allayed.'

'I dare not make the suggestion to Devaki,' said Vasudeva. 'She is unhappy enough. As it is, she is half dead, longing for news of her boy whom she cannot even see for a moment. You don't know. Every moment of her life she lives in Krishna.'

'Lord!' Came Devaki's voice trembling with deep emotion. 'Acharya is right. We must leave Mathura. I am willing to die if my GOD lives.' And she fainted.

---

Adapted from 'Krishnavtara' by K.M.Munshi,  
Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.

## **Krishna buys fruit**

and pays with .....

Krishna was toddling through the streets of Gokul when he saw an old lady carrying a basket of fruit that she had managed to collect from the forests. ‘Give me some, give me some.’ He said, running to her and tugging at her sari.

She looked at that cherubic face and said, ‘I generally sell my fruits in exchange for grain, but for you I’ll give my whole hoard free.’

Krishna refused to take anything free and said, ‘My father is very rich. He has plenty of grain. Come with me and I’ll give you as much as you wish.’ So saying, he darted off like a blue arrow and the woman labored after him. Soon came Krishna’s house and he entered calling his mother to get the grain. But Yashoda had gone out for a visit and the house was deserted. What was he to do? Going inside, he grabbed as much grain as he his little hands could hold and with the greatest concentration, he walked with bated breath, gazing fixedly at his hands so that not even a single grain would fall. But despite his best efforts, all along his passage, the grain slipped through his baby fingers. When he emptied the two fistfuls with a sigh of relief into the lady-seller basket, it was doubtful whether there were more than five or six grains altogether. The child beamed with joy at his own efforts and looked happily at the old lady. She smiled tenderly at him and wiped the beads of perspiration from his forehead with her own garment.

Then, she took a fistful of berries from the basket and filled his cupped palms. Two more were needed to fill them to the brim.

She turned to search for two big berries to place on top and when she looked around, Krishna's hands were empty. Once more, she filled them and once more the same thing happened. This kept on going until the last berry was in his mouth and the basket empty. 'Are you satisfied now, my precious?' She enquired anxiously.

Krishna nodded; he could not speak for his mouth was too full. Though she had received only a few grains in return for her entire stock of fruit, the old lady's heart was filled with unspeakable joy. Lifting the empty basket unto her head, she felt a great weight and put the basket down. Look! She found to her amazement that it was filled with precious gems as big as the fruit (berries), glistening and gleaming. Her poor old eyes were dazzled by the glimpse of Him.

Who can explain the *Lila* of this divine Being who played these pranks to the delight of the simple cowherds of Gokul?

---

Adapted from 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Vanamali,  
Vanamali Gita Yogashram, Rishikesh, India.

## **Krishna eats the mud;**

Yashoda sees the Universe inside Krishna's mouth.

One day, the bigger children including Balarama rushed out to eat the fruits of a tree growing in the compound. Krishna loved those fruits, so he toddled after them even though nobody had thought of inviting him. They shooed him off, as being too small to climb the tree. Still, he insisted on accompanying them, and they agreed to give him the task of picking up the fruits as they fell.

‘Now. Mind you, Krishna! Don’t eat a single one.’ They warned, knowing his capacity for food. ‘Your job is only to collect the fruits and we’ll come and divide them equally.’

‘All right.’ He said meekly.

The big boys scrambled up and started throwing down bunches of lovely, ripe, purple fruit to the ground. Krishna picked up and gobbled them up as fast as he could, and as much as he could. He crammed them into his mouth. After some time, one of the boys chanced to look down and noticed what was going on. ‘Hey! Stop that nonsense at once.’ He shouted and addressed other boys saying, ‘Look at Krishna. He is eating the fruit, instead of collecting it.’

‘Stop! Stop!’ All of them shouted from the top of the tree at Krishna who seemed supremely unconscious of the whole affair; he continued to cram the mouth. While eating, he had not even cleaned the fruit with the result that a bit of mud also found its way unto his mouth. The boys came sliding down and shook him hard. Krishna did not speak a word for the simple reason that his mouth was full and packed with the fruit. The big boys caught hold of him and took him inside the house searching for his mother.

‘O Mother!’ They cried. ‘Your son is eating mud.’ Hearing this, Yashoda came running to find out what the commotion was all about. ‘Your son is eating mud.’ They cried again, pointing accusingly at Krishna.

‘Have you been eating mud?’ Mother repeated sternly. In reply, Krishna shook his head and started sniffing loudly. He dared not open his mouth yet, for he had not quite finished swallowing the fruit.

‘Ask him to open his mouth, Mother.’ The boys said and agreeing with them, Yashoda also said sternly, ‘Open your mouth, Krishna.’

Krishna turned his limpid gaze on her as if he was saying in unspoken words: Have you forgotten what happened when you looked into my mouth, the last time? She had indeed forgotten or probably misunderstood. If so, the time was propitious for another lesson. And the Lord opened his rose-bud mouth. Mother bent forward to peer more closely and lo! She felt herself whirling in space, lost in time, for inside the child’s mouth was seen the whole universe of moving and unmoving creation, the earth and its mountains and oceans, the moon, the stars, all the planets and regions. She was wonder-struck to see the land of Vraja and the village of Gokul, herself standing there with the child Krishna beside her with a wide-open mouth, and within that mouth another universe, and so on.

‘O God!’ She thought. ‘Am I going mad or is this a dream or the magic wrought by this strange child of mine. She felt her head whirling and cried, ‘Krishnaaa....’ It was a despairing cry. She shut his mouth and she got back her equilibrium. In a trice, she had almost forgotten what she had seen. ‘Why have you been eating .....

She stopped in mid-sentence.

What a fool she was! This child carried the whole universe within himself and she was worrying about a few grains of sand! ‘Krishna! O Krishna!’ She whispered, snatching the boy in her arms. ‘Who



are you? Who are you? Who are you?’ She murmured, nuzzling his baby’s curls with her lips. Before the astonished gaze of a dozen small boys, she carried her darling inside, caressing and cooing him. The boys gazed after her in disappointment.

Krishna. He, whom the Vedantins (followers of the Vedas) speak of as Brahman, whom the yogis consider the *atman* (individual soul), and whom devotees call Bhagavan, that Supreme One was considered by Yashoda, to be her own.

---

Adapted from ‘Sri Krishna Lila’ by Vanamali,  
Vanamali Gita Yogashram, Rishikesh, India.

## Aghasura: Puttna's brother;

Asura dies by suffocation.

Krishna was about 5 years old. One day, he got up very early, for he and his friends had decided to have a picnic in the woods. After getting ready, they set out with their calves. The boys danced and frolicked as they went, carrying their slings, sticks, horns, flutes and mud pots with their lunches.

As they reached the woods, dancing and frolicking, that a demon named Aghasura, younger brother of Puttna made his appearance in the form of a huge python; he had expanded himself by the yogic *siddhi* called *mahima* and lay in wait for the boys with his mouth open like a cave. The boys, on seeing the so-called cave, thought it to be another extraordinary feature of the scenery of nature. The demon kept his huge tongue hanging out and the boys mistook it for a newly-made road and ran into his gaping mouth before Krishna could stop them. Instead of swallowing them immediately, the demon kept his jaw open in the hope that Krishna would enter. Though, Krishna knew what it was, he entered into the demon's mouth and immediately began to expand himself within the throat of the demon; there he grew in size so big that very soon, the demon could not breathe and eventually was suffocated to death. The boys, led by Krishna, came out of the body of the monster with Krishna shining with a divine radiance to the amazement of the boys.

(It is said that when Lord Brahma came to know of this, he immediately came down to see what had happened. When he saw that the demon was killed, he was wonder-struck at the uncommon, glorious pastime of Sri Krishna).

---

Adapted from 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Vanamali,  
and 'KRSNA' by Swami Prabhupada.

## **Prank with Brahma;**

Brahma steals the calves and the gopals.

(Krishna is 6 years old).

One year had passed since the death of demon Aghasura. Now, Krishna and his friends could go to picnic without any fear. One day, he led his friends to the sandy bank of river Yamuna which was an ideal place for a picnic. They let the calves drink water and let them loose near some grass. Then they placed Krishna in the middle and sat around him in circles. They ate their food, sharing, joking and teasing each other. Seeing this unique sight, the creator Brahma was steeped in wonder. Desirous of seeing more of the Divine Child's play, he spirited away the calves into his own world, known as Brahmlok.

Soon, the boys noticed that the calves were missing. Seeing the worried faces of the *gopas*, Krishna told them not to worry and he would go himself to bring back the straying calves. Then, he wandered off in search of the calves. In the meantime, Brahma came and spirited away the boys as well.

Unsuccessful in his attempt to find the calves, Krishna returned to the river to find that the boys had also vanished. It dawned on him that this was a joke played by the creator - Brahma. He decided to play along with him. In the evening, when it was time to return home, they (calves & boys) were still missing. So Krishna took on the forms of all the missing boys and calves, the sticks and slings, and the pots and flutes. This is the experience of the *yogis* in God consciousness, when they see all things, including inanimate objects as divine.

As the calves, the *gopals* and Krishna himself, entered Vraja, the *gopis* and mother cows, instead of welcoming Krishna first, as was their habit, ran to their own children and calves, for everyone and everything was *Krishna-maya* (filled with Krishna). Therefore, on that day, no one saw any difference between their own children and Yashoda's child.

For one full year, this impersonation went on and every evening when the little cavalcade consisting of so many Krishnas, returned to the settlement, the *gopis* welcomed them. With the cows, it was the same. Balaram noticed these startling signs of overwhelming affection by the *gopas* and *gopis* for their own children, instead of for Krishna, and realized that it was all the play of the Lord. He did not divulge this to anyone.

A human year is only a minute for Brahma. So, when he (Brahma) came back a while later, he was surprised to find the scene exactly as he had left it. Krishna was sitting in the middle, the *gopals* were seated around - teasing and laughing with each other, while the calves frisked around merrily. Brahma was confused; he knew for sure that he had just whisked the calves and the boys, and here they were, all exactly as he had seen them before.

Actually, the original ones were sleeping under the spell of Brahma's mystic power, but the present ones seen by Brahma were all immediate expansion of Krsna or Visnu. Visnu is the expansion of Krsna, so the Visnu forms appeared before Brahma. Then Brahma realized that the cows and the boys transformed into *visnu-murtis*, or Visnu-forms were not display of Visnu-maya, but were Visnu Himself.

Lord Brahma was thus perplexed, being unable to understand the extraordinary power manifested by the Supreme Personality of Godhead (Lord Krishna). At that time, Krsna took compassion upon Brahma and suddenly pulled his curtain of *yogamaya* over

the scene. With the curtain of *yogamaya* removed, Lord Brahma appeared to awaken from an almost dead state; he began to open his eyes and could see the external cosmic manifestation with common eyes. He saw all around him the super-excellent view - full with trees and all other living entities. He could understand that because of the presence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, all other places are transcendental and are free from lust and greed. He saw the little Child playing the flute and holding a lump of food in his hand - searching out his friends and calves, just as he had actually been doing after their disappearance, one year before.

Brahma's pride was humbled and he did not know what to do. Finding no way out, he got down from his divine vehicle -the swan-, and prostrated before the Divine Child and began to extol Him. After extolling and prostrating before the lotus feet of the blue boy, Brahma circled Him three times and departed to his own realm after receiving Krishna's blessings.

The *gopals* and the calves who had been spirited away a year ago now appeared. But since they had been in Brahma's world, they felt that they had been away only for a few moments. There is memory which cannot be effaced by the Lord's *maya*. The boys said to Krishna, "You've returned so soon. You haven't even finished eating your ball of rice. Come and sit comfortably and eat." They announced at Vraja that Krishna had killed the demon Aghasura even though the event had occurred a year ago.

---

Adapted from 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Vanamali,  
Vanamali Gita Yogashram, Rishikesh, India;  
and 'KRSNA' by Swami Prabhupada.

## **Killing of Dhenukasura;**

Donkey asura.

Krishna was now six years old. He could look after the cows instead of the calves. He went with them to distant parts of the forest which have been hitherto forbidden to him. One day a *gopala* named Shridama, a dear friend of his, said to Krishna, ‘Not far from here, there is a palm grove which has been forbidden to us, since a wicked demon Dhenukasura lives there. He has the form of a donkey, is cruel and very ferocious. The fruits of those trees have a unique flavor. Let us go and try to get a few fruits.’ Krishna agreed readily.

Next day, Krishna along with Balarama and other friends entered the forbidden forest. They saw the trees overloaded with fruits and fresh twigs, bending down to touch the ground as if welcoming them. They looked at each other and then Balaram took hold of the trees one by one and shook them so hard that the ripe, juicy fruits fell down in clusters. Hearing the sound, the donkey-demon came rushing out furiously and kicked Balarama in the chest. He was about to kick him again when Balarama caught hold of him by his hind legs and whirled him round and round with one hand and threw him on the top of a palm tree. The tree crashed down, felling a number of other trees. The *asura* was dead.

After Dhenukasura had been killed, all his (Asura’s) friends and associates assembled and attacked Balarama and Krishna with great force. Both the brothers caught hold of them, one by one, by the hind legs, and, exactly in the same way, wheeled them around and killed each of them. The demon and his associates were

killed. The boys were overjoyed and applauded both the brothers merrily.

People now began to come into the forest to collect the fruits and cows began to graze without fear on the nice grasses growing there. They picked up the ripe fruits and, after eating their fill, would carry loads of them back home, singing merrily on the way.

---

Adapted from 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Vanamali,  
and 'KRSNA' by Swami Prabhupada

## How *Gopis* feel about missing clothes?

At the age of six, Krishna thought that life was all joy!

The little girls and boys of Gokul were very lovely and friendly. They would like to play with Krishna and not with their friends. He liked their company and they liked him. In Gokul, the boys and girls in their different groups would go to bathe in the river at different places. The girls knew when Krishna would be going to bathe and they would come to the river at the same time. They would enter the river very near the place where he and his friends were bathing, though their mothers did not like their doing so. They would laugh and whistle; life was all joy and fun.

Krishna was longing for long to teach *gopis* a lesson. They would not stop complaining otherwise. But what should it be? As he was thinking of new jokes to play, he came to the bank of the river. Pretty young *gopis*, and some fairly old ones too, were bathing in the river and enjoying themselves. It was past midday and no men folk could be seen on the bank.

His eyes fell on the *gopis*' clothes lying near the *Pipal* tree. What a fun? He thought to himself. Hiding behind a bush, he went quietly up to the tree, collected all the clothes, tied them in a bundle and climbed the tree to hide in its thick foliage. He sat there quietly. When the *gopis* came out of the water and went to the tree to take their clothes, they found no clothes; they shrieked in horror. To Krishna, it was a great fun, the way they looked at each other, and around; and the way they tried to hide their bodies, with their hands, and they simply could not find their clothes.



Krishna was sitting on a tree. He played his flute. Astonished, *gopis* looked at him - begged and begged for their clothes. He said to them: Ask my forgiveness for making complaints against me. *Gopis* did and pleaded to be forgiven – in such piteous tones that he could not help relenting. But he threw the clothes down one by one. There was a scramble for each till the owner was able to identify it. So, the fun continued. When everyone was dressed, he climbed down the tree and walked away playing his flute.

‘Yashoda’s son is terrible.’ He heard one of them saying and he smiled. ‘Thank God; he is only seven.’ Muttered another. And Krishna couldn’t understand what difference it would have made if he had been seventeen.

On reaching home, Krishna was shocked when he saw that the girls had come to his mother and told her about his kindness in giving their clothes back to them. Krishna was expecting a rebuke from the mother for his action at the river, but they made mother to give him a spanking. It was a strange world.

---

Adapted from ‘Krishnavatara’ by K.M.Munshi,  
Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.

## **Gopis' complaints to Yashoda;**

Krishna gave a pinch to my little daughter, complains one *gopi*.

### **Gopis' complaints:**

1. One day, *gopis* gathered together and began to speak of Krishna's pranks to his mother, Yashoda. They complained:-

i) He comes and releases the calves before milking time. He steals the butter, milk and curd, and after consuming to his fill, he distributes the rest to his playmates, if they are there, or else to the kittens and baby monkeys who follow him in the hope of getting something.

ii) After he has had his fill, he breaks the pots. If we scold him, he laughs at us. What should we do to him?

iii) One *gopi* narrated her sad tale thus: Once I hung the milk pot so high that he could not reach it even with a stick, and do you know what he did? He dragged a pounding stone from outside - I don't know -, and then he clambered up on it, broke the pot with a stick, opened his little mouth, and stood there drinking the milk that was pouring down. Half went into his mouth, some over his body, and the rest on the floor, to the delight of the waiting kittens. Now look at him, standing there, the picture of innocence, after having done so much mischief.

iv) Just then another *gopi* came with a different tale complaining: Just listen to this, mother! You know that I've started being very careful with my things and always keep them locked so that Krishna can't get them. Yesterday, he was really angry. When

he found nothing to steal, he gave a pinch to my little daughter and made her wake and scream just as he was leaving.

2. Krishna was hiding behind his mother and peeping out. He was sucking a worried thumb and peeping worriedly at his mother's face to see how she will be reacting to the complaints of *gopis*. To the first set of complaints, the mother reacted, 'Never mind. I'll replace yours mud pots with golden ones.' To the others, she said that he could never have done any of the crimes that were being said for the simple reason that he was never out of her sight for more than a few minutes at a time.

Yashoda could not believe what the *gopi* was saying, so she said, 'Well. Next time, he does something of that kind, just catch him and bring him to me and I'll punish him.'

('Is it possible that these *gopis* are making up these stories to get golden pots?' Krishna wondered. When he heard of a *gopi's* complaint about pinching her little daughter, he grinned, 'Why are you wasting time sleeping when you should be concentrating on growing up? What knowledge can you have of happiness that makes you smile now? I'll show you such delight that nothing else can be comparable.)

3. The *gopi* agreed and relaxed. Next day, with good luck, she managed to catch Krishna when he was standing with his hands in a pot of butter. She caught him and was dragging him to Yashoda that his buttery hand slipped out of her grasp and off he went like a streak of blue light. Gopi followed and found him sitting in his mother's lap on a swing, looking a picture of innocence. 'Look, Yashoda! I had caught this child stealing butter hardly ten minutes ago and I was dragging him here to show you. Just then, he was off like a shot and now sitting here as if butter would not melt in his mouth.'

4. Yashoda looked at her in astonishment and said, ‘What are you talking about? This child has been sitting on my lap listening to a story, for the past one hour. How can he possibly have been with you ten minutes ago?’ Gopi was crestfallen, knowing that a mother would side with her child, and Yashoda was advising her, ‘Next time when you catch him, be sure to tie him up securely and bring him to me, and I promise to punish him.’

---

Adapted from ‘Sri Krishna Lila’ by Vanamali,  
Vanamali Gita Yogashram, Rishikesh, India.

## **New complaint;**

Krishna is caught.

Happily for the *gopi*, she was able to test the truth of Yashoda's promise, the very next day. She caught hold of Krishna when he was taking butter in her house. In fact, Krishna allowed himself to be caught. Determined to take no more chance, she put him inside a big, heavy chest in a corner, locked it up and pocketed the key. 'Just wait there. You little rogue! Think of some new mischief while I finish my work and take you to your loving mother. Then we'll see what to do with you.' After finishing her work, she dragged the heavy chest up the small incline leading to Yashoda's house.

'Here he is,' She panted in triumph reaching Yashoda's house. 'Your innocent son. I have caught him and locked him up, as you suggested.'

'When did you catch him?' Yashoda asked curiously.

'Soon after lunch,' *Gopi* replied. 'He joined us for lunch and then left very properly by the front door, only to creep in through the back gate and steal butter from the larder. Mind you, this was not even for himself, for he was soon full after the heavy lunch I gave him. I caught him distributing the day's butter, the result of a hard morning's labor, to the cats and monkeys.'

Yashoda gasped and said, 'Either you are mad or I am. Krishna had his lunch with us today. In fact, he sat between his father and his brother, and he's been playing here ever since. Now, please open the chest and let's see who is right, you or I?'

Without hesitation, the *gopi* took out the key and opened the chest, for she had no doubt who was right. Both of them peered into the chest and lo! Staring at them with tear-filled eyes was the *gopi's* own daughter. Yashoda had a hearty laugh and said, 'Well, well. I never realized that your eyesight was so poor.'

The poor *gopi* was completely bewildered. How could she grasp the fact that God can appear in all places at the same time, for He is everywhere. After that she never dared to go to Yashoda with her complaint and her devotion and love for Krishna grew day by day. Her little daughter grew up. Seeing her great devotion, and from that time onward, she gave her heart to him.

---

Adapted from 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Vanamali,  
Vanamali Gita Yogashram, Rishikesh, India.

## Butter Thief;

Mother ties Krishna to a mortar with the rope.

The ungrateful *gopis* left Mother's house. The servants, being away, Mother began to churn butter-milk herself. Krishna thought that before she did it, she would come and take him in her arms. But No. She wouldn't. He tried sobbing, but she was adamant. This made him angry in his quiet way. Today, Mother had become really angry. He could not understand it. When his father had heard of his playing the trick with the clothes of the *gopis*, he had laughed. But not Mother. She was red in the face. But women were women after all.

Maybe, women were different from men where clothes were concerned. He must give Mother a chance to be good again. So he stopped crying, slowly stepped up to Mother and tried pulling the border of her *sari*. Mother turned round, looked at him as if she could eat him alive and pushed him away.

'Mother,' he cried piteously. But the smell of boiling milk was in the air. She sniffed it and ran into the kitchen to stop the milk boiling over. He felt angry. Mother was still in a bad mood. Something had to be done to bring things to a head.

Then his eyes happened to fall on the pot of butter on the rope hanger. He just picked up a stone and threw it at the pot with the sure aim of an expert. 'PHUT! There was a big crack in the pot and the butter dripped out. He ate as much of it as he could, collected the rest in a brass plate, and carried it to the back door. There he sat down on a big wooden mortar and invited his friends - the monkeys to the feast. One, two, three, four of them arrived and

took the butter from his hand, sat in front of him and gobbled the butter down, of course dropping a lot on the ground. Krishna was enjoying and he forgot his anger.

Mother came out of the kitchen and saw her pot broken and the butter all-over the ground. She immediately sensed that he had done it. She came up to him angrily, caught hold of his ear and gave him a slap saying, 'Kahna! You wicked boy. When will you improve? I will give you a lesson you will never forget,' She shouted. In anger, she brought a stick to beat him with. The only thing he could do in that situation was to run. She followed him, but his feet were slippery with butter and he fell to the ground. She took hold of him and he sat down on the mortar, rubbed his eyes furiously and cried loudly.

Mother stopped for a moment with her stick upraised and he cried for all he was worth. Perhaps in that way, she might become kind, he felt.

However, all that Mother did was to throw away the stick and take down a rope hanging on a peg nearby. She was very angry still and he waited to see what she would do next.

Mother actually bent down and tried to bind him to the mortar with the rope. He wriggled away as far as he could, but Mother was very strong. She was able to overpower him and he felt helpless, though it made her red in the face. She had tied him to the mortar and went angrily out to do her daily work about the house.

---

Adapted from 'Krishnavatara' by K.M.Munshi.



# **Miracle of the Twin Trees;**

Radha meets Krishna, for the first time.

(Krishna is 7 years old).

Mother had tied her son, Krishna, with a rope to the mortar and went angrily to her daily work about the house. When he tried to get up, the heavy mortar came up with him. With great effort, he moved towards the door, slowly and slowly. Step by step, he reached the outer gate, dragged himself and the mortar out. Now, he was in the open. He knew that women in the village would be going to the river to fetch water. Being tired and thirsty, he sat down on the mortar and was waiting.

He felt it tiresome to go on waiting. He wanted to return home. Then his eyes fell on a pair of gigantic trees growing side by side by the road. They were growing very close to each other. In fact, between them there was such a small gap that only a small boy like him could manage to squeeze through. He thought for a moment. Yes. If he jumped to one side and tried to pull the mortar through the little gap between the trees, it would not go through. The rope would then snap. The mortar would be left behind; he would be free on the other side.

Somehow he was able to scrape through between the trees. The mortar was on the other side. Then he set his face in grim determination and pulled. Lo! Instead of the rope snapping, the twin-trees crashed on the ground with a terrible noise. He felt exasperated. The trees had fallen, but the mortar remained tied to him and now he just couldn't move. He lay on the ground, tired, sweating and disgusted; for, now, how could he drag that heavy

mortar and the trees too? He had to wait.

## **Radha meets Krishna:**

At that moment, Krishna heard voices nearing him and saw two girls going to the river, talking and laughing. Just, one girl said to the other, ‘Look. Someone is sitting on the ground, near the trees. It looks like a boy; let’s help him.’ They drew nearer and the younger one, Lalila, cried, ‘Radha!. He is Yashoda’s Kahna’.

‘You mean chief Nanda’s son, Kahna! How strange?’ Said the elder one - Radha. They rushed to him breathlessly, putting their pots on the ground. ‘What are you doing here, Kahna?’ They asked.

‘Don’t you see? I have been pulling out trees.’ He said laughing as best as he could.

‘But you are tied to the mortar. Who tied you? Let me help untie it.’ The elder girl Radha said.

‘Oh! Mother tied me to the mortar,’ He said as if that was the usual thing. And he continued, ‘She will come and untie me. I am waiting for her. You know, Mother is very kind. She loves me, but she gets angry now and then. Unless, she unties me herself, her anger will not calm down. I know Lalita too and a lot of others.’

‘Then, what can we do for you?’ Lalita asked.

‘Go and get me some water, if you please. You are such a nice girl, Lalita,’ He said flashing out a smile which could win all hearts for him.

Lalita ran to the river with one of the small pots and Radha sat beside him. ‘Are you Nanda’s son about whom everyone is talking.’

‘Yes. I am Nanda’s son. All right. They talk about me because they have nothing else to do. You too will soon begin talking about me,’ He said naughtily. ‘You look so kind and loving: nice and cool. What is your name and how you come here. I didn’t see you earlier in Gokul,’ said Krishna.

‘My name is Radha. I belong to Barsana. I and my brother are on our way to Vrindavan where my father lives at present. My brother brought me here to fulfill a vow that he had taken at the shrine of Gopanath Mahadeva. But, Kahna! Why did Mother tie you to the mortar?’ Spoke Radha.

‘Oh! I broke the pot of butter and gave it to the monkeys,’ He said.

‘Ah. That is why they call you a butter thief. Is it? I have heard that you harass every woman in Gokul,’ She said laughing.

‘If you come and stay in Gokul, I won’t harass you. I promise,’ said he.

‘If I were here, I would see that you behaved properly; and if you break my pot, I will tie you like this,’ Radha answered threatening him in jest. And both laughed.

Suddenly, some women would be seen coming. Lalita had brought water from the river. Mother also came searching for his loved-one; she rushed to him breathless, untied the rope, freed him and lifted him up endearingly, hugging all the while and saying sweet things. Then, all came back to the home - happily.

That night, Krishna couldn’t get any sleep, though dead tired. He knew that Radha was leaving the village in the morning and he just couldn’t stop thinking of her. He got up early in the morning. He knew the *gopa’s* house where Radha and her brother were staying and reached there, just when they were coming out of the

house to get into the bullock cart. Seeing, Radha rushed up to him and lifted him. She was quite strong, though looked so small and delicate, and took him to her brother.

‘Brother. This is Nanda’s son, Kahn, who was tied to the mortar; he brought down two large trees,’ She said laughing all the while. Her brother, a big, good natured fellow lifted him and patted him on the back. Krishna didn’t like this patting but he had to put up with it. After all, he was Radha’s brother.

### **Krishna’s promise to Radha:**

When they climbed up into the cart, Krishna also jumped in. ‘I will come to the outskirts of Gokul. Radha was so kind to me, yesterday,’ He said to Radha’s brother and just sat by her side.

As bullocks went fast and the cart jostled along, he was thrown against Radha - or rather, he let himself be thrown harder than ever against her. She put out her hand, reached his and pressed it. Reaching the outskirts of Gokul, he took leave of Radha and her brother; then he jumped from the cart.

‘How old are you?’ Radha asked in her melting voice which gave him such a curious feeling.

‘Seven. And you?’ He couldn’t help asking.

‘Twelve,’ She said and laughed. ‘Come to Vrindavan, sometime.’

‘Oh. I am coming, of course. It is my promise,’ He said goodbye to her and as the cart moved on, he stood still until the dust raised by the cart settled down. Thereafter, he went home, thinking what a nice playmate he had won and lost.

---

Adapted from ‘Krishnavatara’ by K.M.Munshi.

# **Arrival at Vrindavan;**

Krishna & Balaram along with their parents  
leave Gokul and arrive at Vrindavan.

(Krishna is 8 years old)

## **Migration to Vrindavan:**

A year passed. Strange things were happening in Gokul. Increasing number of dangerous incidents were taking place. Wolves of Mahavana in their hundreds invaded Gokul. The Yadavas were in a panic. Night after night, they watched for the invading beasts. No one could sleep, for their howls struck terror into every heart. Wolves were all over Gokul. Children, cattle and dogs were being taken away by the beasts every night. There was an atmosphere of unsafety all over the settlement. An old man, Upananda declared that there was some evil spirit in that place and that God alone had protected their child (Krishna) and kept him safe from harm. He suggested that it would be safer to shift to a new place before any further calamity took place. And, at a meeting of the Panchayat, it was decided to migrate to Vrindavan which was noted for its beauty and plenty of virgin pastures for the cows. All of them readily agreed to make the move immediately.

Old men, the women, the children and their possessions were loaded on the carts. The cavalcade set forth with the cows marching in front, the carts following and the men carrying bows in their hands. The calves lowed softly as they ran to keep up with their mothers. The bells on the horns of the bulls tinkled merrily, keeping time with the bells on the wheels of the carts. The *gopals* blew their horns and trumpets and the *gopis* sitting in the carts

sang lyrics about the pranks of their beloved Krishna. In a new cart were sitting, Balarama and Krishna - the latter with his flute in his waist-band and peacock feathers in his neatly folded and gold-embroidered turbans. Sometime, they would just get down and walk in front of the cart, with a staff in hand. Neither Yashoda nor Rohini felt the tediousness of the journey. They jolted along in the carts until the sunset in the west and they reached the outskirts of Vrindavan with Nanda, at the head.

### **Promise fulfilled:**

When Radha came to know of this, her heart leapt with joy. The promise was redeemed. Now, he would come, the smiling boy with his flute in his hand and his eyes dancing mischievously.

The immigrants came. Nanda and his Yadavas were received by Vrishbhanu, along with all the settlers and their families, with all respect and courtesy. And, Radha was there too, leaping with joy like a child.

The old people embraced each other. The women from the settlement joined those from Vrindavan and began to laugh and talk. But Radha had her eyes only for one person - the dark blue boy who moved in front of them all. She ran forward shouting, 'Kahn, Kahn', and exerting the sinuous strength of her small, supple body, lifted him up. Kahn was full of joy too. He started hitting her affectionately on the back till she was red in the face. And the children, very pleased, joined hands and went round and round them merrily.

---

Adapted from 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Vanamali,  
and 'Krishnavatara' by K.M.Munshi.

# **Raas Leela;**

*Gopis and Krishna.*

With Radha in Vrindavan and Krishna arriving there, *Raas Leela* took a new direction.

Plenty and beauty made Vrindavan, a real paradise for the Yadavas. Holi came. During this colorful festival, the boys and girls romped about free of cares, swinging, playing and even shouting at each other. Parties of boys, led by Krishna and Balarama, met the opposing hosts of girls led by Radha and Lalita. There were attacks and counter-attacks with mud and flowers, colored water and powders. However, victory or no victory, little Krishna was the real winner, for, at the end of the game, the girls carried him on their shoulders, as he played his flute, entirely at peace with himself. Radha had found her soul; she sang songs in which she poured her love for little Krishna, and young and old found joy in singing them, because they loved Krishna.

Radha had brought the care-free habits of Barsana to Vrindavan. Even after the Holi festival was over, the milk-maids led by Radha continued to make the life of the boys difficult. The moonlit nights brought unending joy. The girls, led by Radha would collect on the sandy banks of river Yamuna and spend half the nights in songs and dances. Round and round they would go dancing to their songs and rhythmic clapping. The boys, led by Krishna would be there too; first as spectators, then as partners. But the climax of their *raas* was reached when the clumsy ones dropped out and Krishna stood alone playing his flute in the centre and the girls, falling under the spell of his flute, swayed to the rhythm of their own jingling feet going round and round, till they broke off for laughter and carried him away as a living trophy.

Krishna and Balarama were generally inseparable. Under their leadership, the boys of Vrindavan enjoyed themselves. As they went through the forest, they plucked flowers to make garlands, ear-rings and bracelets of them. They raced against each other, played all kinds of jokes and games, told funny stories till they split with laughter, rode on each other's back or wrestled. Krishna could wrestle with the biggest of the boys and could sling a stone farther than any of the strongest. He could laugh, sing and dance. He was the cleverest at any game of skill. And his flute spread a magic charm as its sweet notes echoed everywhere. The boys loved Krishna above every one, for each felt that he was loved by Krishna for his own sake.

That was true not only of the boys and the young *gopas*, but of every one in Vrindavan. Krishna was now no longer inclined to steal butter, but he never missed an occasion to call on his neighbors. Whenever he visited, the elderly *gopis* never failed to offer him the precious butter they had. Every one of the women in Vrindavan loved him.

While people were trying to settle down in the new surroundings of Vrindavan, the old restraints were all gone. The little *gopis* flitted to and fro through the new settlement. They raced with the boys, defied all conventions and went to the river for bath at the same time as the boys and joined them in water. The boys and girls would splash water at each other till the vanquished party left the river first.

Altogether, the love and devotion which little Krishna inspired had no limits. He was friendly with most of the cows and calves whom he led to pasture every morning. He knew many of them by name, and whenever he appeared, they would go to him to get a pat from his small hands. Even peacocks forgot their timidity when he called them. When he played the flute, the cows stood still as if listening with rapt attention and the peacocks would dance in ecstasy. Though he was the most adventurous of all the young boys



in the village, he was never conscious that he was doing anything out of the way. The report of his adventures, magnified in the imagination of the people of Vrindavan, invested him with a halo of miraculous power. Krishna, however, remained unconcerned; he just walked in and out of adventures in the most natural way, always smiling and self-possessed, never afraid and never elated.

## ***Gopis* and Krishna:**

Krishna sat on the banks of Yamuna; he took his flute and started playing on it. The *gopis* could not resist the charm of the music and ran in large numbers to the source of music i.e., Krishna on the lightly wooded banks of Yamuna. Seeing them, Krishna was amazed and asked why they had come there at that hour of night, relinquishing their duties towards their husbands and children, and asked them to go back and serve their husbands and children.

**The *gopis* replied:** Whom one does all the actions enjoined on oneself? to reach Whom does one discharge one's duties? to attain Whom does one relinquish everything in the world? Him we have now reached. How can we go back? Even if you compel us to go back whom are we going to serve there except Thyself?

Krishna was extremely satisfied by their answer and allowed them to stay there and listen to his music. When Krishna, eternally present in everybody's heart at all places, saw this feeling of extreme devotion growing in the *gopis*, He disappeared from their midst with yogic power. The *gopis* were left alone in the darkness of the night; some wept piteously, some cursed Krishna as the cruel person and some simply collapsed with silent tears. They searched for Krishna in and through the jungles, not knowing that He was right behind them and that all they had to do was to turn right about from their extraneous search. When they were tired of searching, they came to the same spot from where Krishna had disappeared, and sang a heart-rending song, pleading Him to appear and bless. This song of the *gopis* is the most famous

**Gopika Geetam** of the Bhagawata comprising a mere 19 *slokas* and composed in a sweetly musical metre of Sanskrit language. This beautiful song of the *gopis* is rich in philosophical import. The compassionate Lord could not torment His devotees anymore and appeared before them in all His glory and beauty.

### **Krishna's manifestation: one-Krishna with one-gopi:**

The Lord comforted them saying that he had vanished from their midst only to reinforce their love towards Him. He then allowed them to shower all their love and affection on Him, and they danced around him in divine ecstasy. Seeing that they were completely absorbed in Him, Krishna manifested Himself by his Yogic power into as many forms as there were *Gopis* and started to dance with each one of them in their dance of *Raas* - remaining himself in the centre of it - all playing his flute. They danced on to the rhythmic beat of their feet, not knowing how long the Raas Leela lasted - until they woke up from that immaculate state of self-fulfillment. Time started moving again and they became aware of the world around them.

Thus, the Lord, incarnated in human form as Krishna, delighted everyone by His very presence while He himself remained unconditioned by any of the happenings around - whether it was love showered on Him or hatred perpetuated, whether He was compelled by the force of Love to dance with the *gopis* or to engage in bloody duels with the Asuras. Vrindavan acquired a rare charm of divinity, ever peaceful and prosperous, free from all fears, and filled with a sense of supreme self-contentment. It became verily the heaven on earth.

---

Adapted from 'Krishnavatara' by K.M.Munshi,  
and 'Glory of Krishna' by Swami Chinmayananda.

## Mad Calf;

Arishta demon meets its end.

Krishna and Balarama were growing rapidly in age and strength, and their adventurous spirit also grew. Once a hefty calf came to be possessed by a demon. Its name was Arishta. It simply went mad, running about as it liked. Bellowing wildly, with upraised tail and reddened eyes, he charged down the small lanes, causing havoc among people and cattle. It kept inflicting injury on the cattle and even attacked some *gopas*. Everyone was in despair what to do with it. Attempts were made even by expert cowherds to tie it up, but with no success.

One day, while the boys were playing, the mad calf in one of its worst moods came rushing along and gored a cow to death. To the horrified amazement of every one, Krishna left his playmates, stood in front of the calf and provoked him by clapping his hands on his shoulders in the manner of bullfighters. The calf snorted angrily and rushed at him with lowered head. Krishna sprang aside. The other *gopa* boys, aware of the danger, begged him to come away. But he would not. He shouted, teasing the calf by standing in front of it. Then, with wild eyes and bursting nostrils, the calf would measure the distance between it and him, and lowering its head, make a rush at him. And every time, Krishna would jump away from the path of the calf with sure-footed swiftness.

Once the calf paused for breath, getting ready for another of its vicious charges. Krishna slipped away, tied the end of a rope to a stout tree, and crept from behind. Before the calf found out what was being done, the loose end of the rope had been flung round its hind feet.

Sensing Krishna to be somewhere behind, the calf suddenly turned around. Its feet however got caught in the noose, and the more it tugged at the rope, the firmer the knot grew. In spite of the protests of his friends, Krishna again sprang in front of the calf and worked it up into a mood of fury by shouting defiance at it. In spite of its hind legs being tied, it tried to charge at him, to find that he had slipped away.

With gestures, Krishna lured it towards the tree. The calf, blind with rage, made a dash as Krishna sprang behind the tree. The charging calf ran straight into the tree, crashing its skull and fell down. And Krishna, as if it was merely a sport, joined his companions who had been dazed with fear and admiration.

---

Adapted from 'Krishnavatara' by K.M.Munshi,  
and 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Vanamali.

## **Killing of Bakasura**

One day, Krishna, Balarama and all other cowherd boys went to the bank of river Yamuna with their calves. After calves and the boys had taken the water that the boys saw a huge animal which looked something like a heron (big crane); it was as big as a hill. When they saw that unusual animal, it was flapping its wings and advancing threateningly towards them with parted beak. The boys got frightened. The animal, however, suddenly and immediately attacked Krishna with his pointed sharp beak and quickly swallowed him up.

The animal was Bakasura, a friend of Kamsa and was sent by the latter to kill Krishna. But the crane spat Him as fast as it had swallowed him, for it felt as if it had swallowed live the coal – so hot had the Lord's body become. However undaunted, it tried to pierce him with its sharp beak, but Krishna pried it open with his bare hands and tore it apart as easily as one would split a blade of grass. The asura died instantly. When the boys saw Krishna freed from the mouth of this great demon, Bakasura, they all including Balarama were so pleased that it seemed as if they had regained their very source of life. As they saw Krishna coming towards them, they one after another embraced him and held him to their chests. After this, they assembled all the calves and returned to their homes. The boys were filled with wonder and reported the event to their parents. The elders listened to these strange tales with growing amazement and marveled at the prowess of this unique child in their midst.

---

Adapted from KRSNA by Swami Prabhupada and  
Sri Krishna Lila by Vanamali.

## **Pralambasura;**

Demon who disguised himself as a *gopala*.

One day, Krishna went to the forest as usual with his friends. They regaled themselves with various sports like wrestling, whirling, leaping, pulling and boxing. Sometimes they danced while Krishna played the flute, and sometimes he would dance with them providing the music of his flute and clapping. While they were thus playing under a huge banyan tree, a demon called Pralamba arrived in the form of a *gopala* and joined the group. The demon had the brilliant idea of taking on the form of a *gopala*; thus lulling the playmates and trying to kill Krishna. Krishna penetrated the demon's disguise immediately but gave him the benefit of doubt and allowed him to join their game. After all, demon though he was, he had taken on a form which was dear to the Lord.

The group split into two teams with Krishna and Balarama, as the team leaders. Various games were arranged, at the end of which the defeated person would have to carry his victorious counterpart on his shoulders and walk to the banyan tree at a distant place. Pralamba chose to be on Krishna's side, for he thought that he could easily defeat Balarama and then deal with Krishna who would be alone. The game started and the result was that the party of Balarama came out victorious, whereas Krishna's party was defeated. So Krishna took Shridama on his shoulders while Pralamba took Balarama on his shoulders and they started walking.

In order to avoid the company of Krishna, the demon Pralamba took Balarama far away. While trotting, he started taking on his

own demonic form - with body expanding, eyes blazing fire and mouth flashing with sharpened teeth. Balarama was surprised to see this and began to wonder: How is it that all of a sudden, this carrier has changed in every way? But with a clear mind, he could understand quickly that he was being carried away by a demon. Immediately, he thought of a plan and struck the head of the demon with a strong fist like a thunderbolt. The demon fell down with a tremendous sound and died instantly. Hearing the sound, all the boys rushed to the spot. Astonished by the ghastly scene, they began to praise Balarama with the words: Well-done! Well-done. All of them then embraced Balarama with great affection and congratulated him.

---

Adapted from 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Vanamali,  
and KRSNA by Swami Prabhupada.

## **Blessing the Brahmins' wives.**

One day, the boys had finished eating all the food they had brought from their homes and were still hungry; they begged Krishna to procure some food for them. Krishna asked the boys to go and beg for some food from the Brahmins, for it was incumbent on them to feed the hungry. The boys ran off and begged for food from the learned Brahmins who were well-versed in the Vedas. Pretending that they had not heard, the learned ones continued to chant *mantras*, deaf to the needs of the hungry boys outside, for they were confirmed ritualists, blind to the inner meaning behind the Vedic *mantras*. The disappointed boys returned with tears in their eyes and Krishna comforted them.

‘Never mind,’ said Krishna. ‘Such behavior is to be expected from those who have only heads and no hearts. They may be full of learning but their hearts are barren and they know not the meaning of love, out of which alone, kindness can flow. But do not lose heart. Go and inform their wives that I and My brother are waiting here; they will give, whatever you need, for they have great love for Me.’

So, once again the boys went and this time they were welcomed with great love by those pious ladies who had been hoping to have a glimpse of the child Krishna, from the time they heard of Him. Though they were reprimanded by their men, they rushed to meet Him, carrying with them all types of delicacies. There was one woman, however, who had been sternly debarred from going and whose husband locked her up. But so great was her longing to see Him that her spirit left its mortal cage and merged in Him even before the others reached Him.



The others ran to Him and when they saw Him, blue complexioned, wearing a golden colored garment, and decorated with a garland of wild flowers, with peacock feathers in his hair, twirling a lotus in one hand and resting the other on the shoulder of a friend; they felt their hearts fill with joy. They prostrated before Him and then laid the feast in front of Him. The Lord knowing their devotion, accepted the offering and said to them, ‘You can now return to your homes. Engage yourselves in sacrificial activities and in the service of your husbands and household affairs so that your husbands will be pleased with you and the sacrifice which they have begun will be properly executed. After all, your husbands are householders and without your help how can they execute their prescribed duties?’

The ladies were terrified of going back and said, ‘There is no chance of our husbands accepting us, since we have mortally offended them by coming here. We have now no shelter to return. Please, therefore do not ask us to return home, but arrange for our stay under Your lotus feet so that we can eternally live under Your protection.’

The Lord said, ‘You will not be blamed by your husbands, parents, brothers or sons for coming to Me. Physical contact is not needed for the growth and fulfillment of spiritual love. Keep your mind fixed on Me always and you will surely attain Me before long.’

So the ladies returned and were surprised to find that their husbands had repented and welcomed them back, and executed the performances of sacrifice, as enjoined in the *sastras*. They realized that it was only to bless them that the Lord of the universe had come to them, to beg for some food. He, whom they were worshipping through the *yajna* (fire sacrifice ceremony) had Himself come to them in the guise of a *gopala* and they had sent Him away. But even now, though the realization came to them, yet they desisted from going to Him for fear of the king, Kamsa.

---

Adapted from ‘Sri Krishna Lila’ by Vanamali,  
and ‘KRSNA’ by Swami Prabhupada.

## Devouring the forest Fire.

Once while the boys were discussing the wonders of the day, the cows wandered afar in search of grass. Concerned about their disappearance, the boys searched far and wide and eventually traced them to a field. Having left the shade of the trees, the cows were dazed by the blinding heat of the sun and did not know which way to turn, when the dry grass-field was swept by a wave of fire that soon turned into a mighty conflagration. All the boys feared that their very means of livelihood, the cows, were now lost. Terrified at the sight of the advancing flames, the *gopals* and the cows terrified in fear.

On the other side, Balaram and Krishna along with their friends, could not find their cows and they became very concerned. They began to trace the cows by following their footprints, as well as the path of eaten grass. Soon, however, they heard the crying of their cows. Krishna began to call aloud the cows by their respective names. Terrified at the sight of the advancing flames, the *gopals* and the cows thronged around Krishna.

“Do not panic”, Said the quiet voice beside them. “Just close your eyes and hold Me, and no harm will befall you.” With absolute trust, they did as they were told, as they knew that He would never fail them. They did not have the slightest fever. No longer did the fire have the power to harm them, for that beloved voice had spoken. Meanwhile, Krishna, the supreme mystic, immediately swallowed up all the flames of the fire.

“Why are you standing like statues, closing your eyes?” Now it was the little boy speaking to them teasingly; open your eyes. The boys obeyed and opened their eyes; they found themselves back under the banyan tree, where they had been playing. They rubbed their eyes in surprise. Had they dreamed the terrible happenings of a minute ago? Where was their guardian angel? Was he only a little boy laughing and rolling in the grass, making faces, pulling their hair, jumping and climbing trees like all little boys, or was He a superhuman? They followed him in glee. Why bother to puzzle their heads as to who or what He was? Let them enjoy the present while they could.

---

Adapted from ‘Sri Krishna Lila’ by Vanamali,  
and KRSNA by Swami Prabhupada.

## **Narada's revelation to Kamsa;**

Demons Kesi and Vyomasura are killed.

Time was approaching fast that Kamsa, the wicked ruler of Mathura, be eliminated. The demons sent by him, from time to time, to kill Krishna, had met their end at his hands. Now, one day, sage Narad went again to the court of Kamsa, for he considered it right time that the Lord moved out of Vraja to enact further scenes of his enthralling life, in different arenas. He proceeded to Mathura to enlighten Kamsa about the identity of Krishna and Balarama. Reaching the court, Narad said:-

“Know, O Kamsa! That the eighth child of Devaki who was shown to you was actually the daughter of Yashoda, the wife of the chieftain Nanda who resided in Gokula. She was exchanged with Devaki's son, Krishna, who now lives in Vraja, as the son of Nanda. Balarama, his brother, is also Vasudeva's son, from his wife Rohini and lives in Nanda's house. They are the ones who have killed all the demons you have sent to destroy Krishna.”

Hearing this, Kamsa became furious with rage and took up his sword to kill Vasudeva. He was restrained by sage Narada. But in order to satisfy his wrath, Kamsa arrested Vasudeva and Devaki once again and shackled them in iron chains in the prison. Then he called the demon Kesi and commissioned him to go to Vrindavan and kill the boys.

Kesi took on the form of a huge horse and arrived Vrindavan, snoring and furrowing the earth with his sharp hooves. Seeing Krishna approaching him fearlessly, the demon charged at him with his mouth wide open as if to swallow him. Evading his upraised hooves, Krishna caught hold of his legs, whirled him

round and flung him a hundred yards away. But Kesi was not beaten yet. He struggled to his feet and charged once again with his teeth bared menacingly and foam flecking his mouth. As he was going to charge, Krishna thrust his left arm into his (horse's) open mouth and when the demon tried to bite off his arm, his teeth fell out. Krishna's arm within the mouth of the horse at once began to expand and Kesi's throat choked up. The great horse suffocated and it threw its legs hither and thither. As its last breath came, his eyeballs bulged in their sockets; its vital force of life expired and it fell down dead. The horse's mouth became loose and Krishna extracted his hand without difficulty. He did not feel any surprise that the Kesi demon was killed so easily.

### **Vyomasura:**

After he had killed the Kesi demon, Krishna returned for tending the cows in the forest as though nothing had happened. His friends were with him. Later they went to play on the top of Goverdhana Hill. They were imitating the play of thieves and police. While they were enjoying their favorite pastime, a demon known by the name of Vyomasura appeared on the scene. He was the son of another great demon, named Maya, and could perform wonderful magic. Vyomasura took the part of a cowherd boy playing as a thief and stole many boys who were playing the parts of lambs. One after another, he took away almost all the boys and put them in the cave of the mountain and sealed the mouth of the cave with stones.

Seeing the nefarious activity, the demon was indulging in, Krishna caught hold of him. The demon tried to get out of the Krishna's clutches, but the latter did not allow him to escape and immediately threw him on the ground and killed. Thereafter, Krishna released all his friends from the cave and returned to Vrindavana with them along with the cows.

---

Adapted from 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Vanamali,  
and KRSNA by Swami Prabhupada.

## **Liberation of Vidyadhara- a demi-god.**

Once upon a time, the cowherd men of Vrindavana, headed by Nanda Maharaj, had gone to Ambikavana (in Gujarat) to observe Shivratri ceremony. Ambikavana is situated on river Sarasvati. They devotedly worshipped the deity of Lord Shiva and Ambika, and spent that night on the bank of Sarasvati. They had fasted all day. While they were taking rest, a great serpent from the nearby forest appeared and hungrily began to swallow up Nanda Maharaj. Nanda cried out helplessly to Krishna to save him. Hearing the cries, all the cowherd men got up and saw what was happening. They immediately took up burning logs and began to beat the snake to kill it. But despite being beaten with burning logs, the serpent was not to give up swallowing Nanda.

At that time, Krishna appeared on the scene and kicked the serpent with his foot. Immediately, upon being touched by the foot of Krishna, the serpent shed its reptilian body and appeared as a very beautiful demi-god named Vidyadhara. On being questioned by Krishna, the liberated Vidyadhara narrated his story like this:

In my previous life, I was named Vidyadhara and was known all over the world for my beauty. Because I was a celebrated personality, I used to travel all over the world. While travelling, I saw a great sage named Angira. He was very ugly and I was very proud of my beauty; I laughed at him. Due to this sinful act, I was condemned by that great sage to assume the form of a serpent.

Because, I was very proud of the exquisite beauty of my body,

I derided the ugly features of the great sage Angira. He cursed me for my sin, and I became a snake. Now, I consider that this curse by the sage was not at all a curse; it was a great benediction for me. Had he not cursed me, I would not have assumed the body of a serpent and would not have been kicked by your lotus feet and thus freed from all material contamination.

Now, since I have become freed and relieved of the sage's curse for my sinful activities, with the touch of your feet, I am begging for your permission to return to my abode, the heavenly planets.

Hearing this, Krishna smiled and Vidyadhara got permission to return to his home in the higher planetary system. Then, he circumambulated Krishna, offered his respectful obeisance unto him, and thereafter he returned to his heavenly planet. The cowherd men too returned to Vrindavana, after performing Puja and completing all other ceremonies.

---

Adapted from KRSNA by Swami Prabhupada.

## **A dangerous adventure;**

Krishna tames Hastin: a mad bull and rides it along with Radha.

Years passed by. Krishna was now 14 years old and had grown tall and handsome with his muscles so supple that they could never mar the grace of any limb. Balaram was of heavy build and of giant strength. In the course of play, Balaram said, 'Krishna. Tomorrow is your last day. If you don't ride Hastin by tomorrow morning, you will lose your bet.'

Hastin was Vrindavan's king of stud bulls. It was a royal beast, massive and sturdy, and sinuous in every limb. Its horns were sharp and strong. All day long, it pawed the ground impatiently, eyed everyone who approached him and was ferocious at all times.

Once, the boys had been to see Hastin and Balaram had expressed the hope that one day he would grow so strong that he would even kill Hastin, if necessary, with a blow. At that time, Krishna cracked a joke at Balaram saying, 'I don't know whether you can kill him with a blow or not, but you can't ride him.' Balaram retorted, 'Krishna. You can't ride him either.' 'I can,' asserted Krishna. And, then there was a bet that if Krishna did not ride Hastin, he will carry Balaram on his back in open daylight through the village. A day, after a month, was fixed for Krishna to ride.

One day, Krishna stole time and went to the shed where Hastin was stabled. With some difficulty, he induced the keepers to take him to the great bull. One of the keepers agreed and accompanied Krishna while carrying a basket of cotton-seed meal for Hastin.



Seeing the new visitor, Hastin snorted viciously and began to tug at the rope which bound him to the old banyan tree. Krishna looked at him, then took his flute and began to play it. Soon, bull's anger grew soft and he looked at Krishna with curiosity. At that time, the keeper came and placed the basket containing the feed near the bull. In a few moments, Krishna stopped playing the flute and walked a little to the bull to push the basket nearer unto his mouth.

Then, day after day, Krishna came, played the flute and the majestic bull almost looked as if he was enjoying the treat. And every time Krishna came, he brought a bundle of fresh tasty grass and sweets and offered them to Hastin who ate them and seemed to like them very much indeed. A few days later, Krishna, as he played the flute, came almost within touching distance and Hastin let him pat him. He seemed to like the pat. The keepers were amazed; the fiery bull had become a friend of Krishna.

On the morning of appointed day when Krishna and Balaram came to Hastin's shed, the bull who was seated on the ground, looked up fiercely and snorted. Alarmed, Balaram asked Krishna if he was going to ride Hastin. 'Of course,' replied Krishna. At that moment, some new arrivals came, and they were Radha, Shridama and Uddhav.

'What is this, Kahn?' Asked the angry milk-maid (Radha was about 19 years old, at that time). Then, she turned to Balaram and said, 'Big Brother. Why do you want Kahn to ride Hastin? Have you gone mad?' In the same tone, she said to Krishna, 'Kahn. You need not be foolhardy. You are not going to ride Hastin.'

Smilingly, Krishna replied, 'Who says I am not going to ride?' Meanwhile, Hastin, disturbed in his rest, was furious. He rose to his feet, eyed the group collected in his shed suspiciously and bellowed angrily.

'Kahn. I won't let you ride. Give up your obstinacy,' Radha

pleaded in fright, looking at Hastin. Balaram also spoke, ‘No. No. My brother.’ But Krishna was firm. He said unequivocally that he was going to ride Hastin not because of bet, but because he wants to ride. But Radha was still angry and she declared to Krishna, ‘If you are riding the bull, I am also riding with you. If you are determined to get killed, I will die with you.’

Krishna was silent for a moment and then he said, ‘All right. I will let you ride with me.’ Then, he requested Balaram and others to walk away a little to the other side. To Radha, he said to wait for a moment and he will take her for a ride.

Thereafter, Krishna went to a corner, collected some feed and proceeded towards Hastin. He placed the basket of feed on the ground and played the flute. The charm of flute was on Hastin and he was quiet. Krishna took the basket near the mouth of Hastin who ate the feed and felt cheerful. Krishna went nearer and patted his back. While the bull was eating, Krishna leaned on him with easy familiarity, playing the flute all the time. Meanwhile, the keeper brought water to Hastin and while the latter was drinking, that Radha on a signal from Krishna, climbed a wall nearby. No sooner had he finished drinking water than Krishna jumped on his back with the bull’s nose-rope in his hand and helped Radha to climb up behind him. Hastin looked up at Krishna and was in a happy mood now.

‘Hastin, my son! We are now going into the forest for a run,’ said Krishna in an affectionate tone. The bull looked up as if he understood and began trotting towards the forest path. While Krishna prodded Hastin forward, Radha tightened her arms round his waist. She was thrilled with excitement. In the shed, Balarama, Shridama, Uddhava and the keepers were glowing with pride. After a while when Krishna and Radha returned safely and smiling, they all felt that father would never forgive them for letting Krishna ride Hastin if ever he came to know of this dangerous adventure.

---

Adapted from Krishnavatara by K.M.Munshi.

## Demon Sankhacuda is killed;

Krishna gets the valuable jewel.

Once, Krishna and Balaram were playing with the *gopis* in the forest of Vrajabhumi. The moon was shining in the sky, surrounded by glittering stars. The breeze was blowing, bearing the aroma of *mallika* flowers, and the bumblebees were mad after the aroma. Taking advantage of the pleasing atmosphere, Krishna and Balarama began to sing very melodiously. The damsels became so absorbed in their rhythmical song that they almost forgot themselves.

While Krishna, Balarama and the damsels were so much absorbed almost in madness, a demoniac associate of Kuvera (the treasurer of the heavenly planets) appeared on the scene. His name was Sankhacuda because on his head there was a valuable jewel resembling a conch shell. He said to himself that Krishna and Balarama were enjoying the company of many beautiful girls, he too should enjoy the girls' company. While on the scene, the demon started taking and abducting the girls forcibly. The girls resisted and called out the names of Krishna and Balarama for protection. The two brothers rose to the occasion and immediately followed them, taking up the logs of wood. Very quickly, they reached Sankhacuda who ran away, fearing for his life. But Krishna would not leave him go. He entrusted the *gopis* to the care of Balarama and followed Sankhacuda wherever he fled. After following the demon for a short distance, Krishna caught him, struck his head with his fist and killed him. He then took the valuable jewel and returned. In the presence of all the damsels of Vraja, he presented the valuable jewel to his elder brother, Balarama.

---

Adapted from KRSNA by Swami Prabhupada.

# **Kaliya of the Poisonous Pool;**

Krishna subdues Kaliya Naag.

Exploits of Krishna and Balarama spread awe and amazement among the people of Vrindavan. They had no doubt that the boys were gods and that those who attacked them were demons. But, while they loved and admired them for their adventures, they were in fear all the time that, in their next adventure, they would fall victims of their own recklessness.

This fear reached its height when Shridama came running to Vrindavan with the news that Krishna had jumped into the Poisonous Pool to subdue Kaliya, the venomous snake which lived there.

The Poisonous Pool, a short distance from Vrindavan, was situated in an unfrequented part of the forest. It was only during the monsoon that the waters of the river flowed into it; during the rest of the year, it was stagnant and weedy. It gave off a foul smell and a sickening vapor hung over the waters.

A huge, fierce snake, Kaliya with its brood lived in the Pool which was on that account shunned by men and beasts. Its slimy greenish water was supposed to be charged with poison. Cattle, constrained to drink at the Pool, were known to have died.

On this occasion, some heifers had drunk its poisonous water and immediately fallen dead. The boys frightened ran away in swift retreat. Not so Krishna. He quietly looked at the waters, his eyes fixed on the snake as it glided in and out of the water in the middle of the Pool. Then, before the others could realize what he was up to, he had tucked up his dhoti, taken a rope in his hand, climbed on to the branch of a tree and jumped into the Pool.

Everyone down by the Pool screamed with terror; some fainted. Shridama and Uddhava, the most devoted of his friends, ran breathlessly to Vrindavan to inform Nanda and Yashoda that Krishna had jumped into the Poisonous Pool to fight Kaliya.

The waters of the Pool were slimy with tangled seeds and Krishna found it difficult to swim across and reach the place where Kaliya could be seen moving among the weeds. However, he was as cool as ever, confident in his own strength and skill.

The snake, awakened to fury at this unusual trespass into its domain, raised its hood in rage and began to approach Krishna. But, as he swam, Krishna straightened himself, made a lasso in the rope and trapped the snake's neck in the noose.

The snake was taken by surprise by the flying rope. Before it knew what this was, its hood was in the noose. It made a frantic struggle to get away but there was no escape. It lashed out furiously, twisted its snaky coils and splashed water all around. The frightened crowd on the side of the Pool watched its furious struggle in breathless agony and suspense.

The mighty snake struggled, but struggled in vain. The noose grew tighter with every attempt it made to get away from it. And Krishna, swimming swiftly, remained at a distance - the other end of the rope tied round his waist.

For some time, the snake tugged at the rope; every time it did so, Krishna pulled at it with all the strength he possessed. The snake turned and twisted round and round and tried to lash at its captor with its tail but in vain.

This struggle went on for a long time. Ultimately, the snake's strength was spent. Krishna swam back to the side, pulling the frightened snake behind him. It was strange how Kaliya's mates followed him, their lord and master, with meek submissiveness. Nanda, Yashoda and other people of Vrindavan who had arrived, in the meantime, were relieved to see Krishna dripping with water and ran to him.

## **Krishna pleads for marriage with Radha;**

Is it right for me to forsake *dharma*? Asked Krishna.

(Krishna is 15 years and Radha is 20 years old).

Radha was the first to learn of Krishna's plunge into the Poisonous Pool. When she heard of it, her heart seemed to faint inside. Ahead of others, she ran like a frightened deer and saw the snake lashing its tail and her Kahn hobbling up and down in the waters. She swooned with a piercing shriek. Radha's brother had arrived in the meantime. When he saw Radha, he brought her home. Kapila (Radha's step-mother) could not suppress her anger and slapped her. Vrishbhanu (Radha's father) also exploded with rage; Radha had behaved disgracefully; she was now about twenty and was not to be allowed to go out to meet Krishna and dance with young *gopas*; no more games, dances and songs. He locked her up in the house and walked out angrily saying to her that you are not going to be a disgrace to the family.

Vrishbhanu was pondering over the matter. Kahn was the Chief Nanda's son. In course of time, he would be the Chief of the Shooras. It was certain that Radha could not marry Krishna - the son of the Chief - because her father was just a plain cowherd; and then she was so much older than he was. Moreover, she had already been betrothed to Aiyyan who had now returned from the wars along with his master Kamsa.

### **Krishna pleads with mother and father:**

Situation was difficult. Krishna also thought over the matter. Next day, he went to his mother Yashoda and pleaded for marriage with Radha. For a moment, Yashoda was shocked to say anything and then said to him that she would not make a fine daughter-

in-law; she is a forward, daring girl; the whole village talks about her forwardness; Radha's family is low-born; you are the chief; we have to find a chief's daughter for you. You can't marry Radha. Unable to agree with Krishna's persistence, Yashoda said to Krishna, 'Go to your father.'

So Krishna went to his father Nanda and told him about the talk he had with the mother. Nanda also repeated what Yashoda had said that Vrishbhanu is of low family; the girl is five years older than Krishna; she is already pledged to Aiyyan who is in Kamsa's army. Yielding to Krishna's insistence and to put off the matter, Nanda said that he would talk to family priest Gargacharya who would be coming tomorrow. Next day, the Acharya came and Nanda apprised him of Krishna's request.

### **Gargacharya's advice and Krishna's reply:**

Finding a suitable occasion, Gargacharya looked at Krishna and said, 'My son. I have watched over you with care from the moment of your birth. You were born to be the protector of *dharma*, as the Best of Munis (Ved Vyasa) has said. We want you to be ready for your high destiny.' The Acharya continued, 'Krishna! Listen. Kamsa has returned from the wars. Now he is wickeder than he ever was before. Your miraculous exploits will not remain long unknown to him. We look upon you as our redeemer. You are not Nanda's son. You are the son of prince Vasudeva and Devaki. And so is Balarama. We have hidden you here under Nanda's roof. Sage Narad has prophesied Kamsa's death at your hands. So has the venerable Ved Vyasa. We have lived only in that hope.'

Krishna looked at the Acharya and also at his father and guru Sandipani who were sitting there. He was lost in thought. Then, his brow clear, he looked Gargacharya in the face and said, 'Venerable Sir, you want me to deliver the Yadavas from *adharma*?

'Yes. My boy.'

'Then, is it right for me to start by forsaking *dharma* now?

Asked Krishna.

‘We do not ask you to do so.’

‘You do,’ said Krishna with a smile. ‘Since the day Vrishbhanu’s daughter met me, there has not been a day when she had not waited for me; there has not been a moment when the thought of me has not been in her mind. During these eight years she has never drawn a breath but to live in me. She has sung songs only to offer them to me. And now you want me to start becoming a protector of *dharma* by forsaking and killing - for she is sure to die if I reject her - Vrishbhanu’s daughter who has given me her all?’

Eyes of the three elders present there opened wide, and Krishna was continuing, ‘I live for all those who love me - Father, Mother, my *gopas* and *gopis*, my cows, my bulls. More so, in the case of Vrishbahnu’s daughter. She lives in me. I live in her - and I will do so always - wherever I may be. Without her, my flute will be silent. She is and will always be the spirit of joy - unchangingly ethereal and inspiring. If you want Krishna to protect *dharma* in the world, he can only do so if he is allowed to perform the *dharma* which is nearest to him - to belong to a helpless milkmaid who has given him her all.’

All were silent. Then Krishna prostrated himself before Nanda and said with humility, ‘Father. Give me your blessing. Let me be married to Vrishbhanu’s daughter.’

Gargacharya was almost dazed at the flow of amazing eloquence. It seemed a pity to educate this boy to make him fit to play the part of deliverer. To put off the matter, he said, ‘Son of Vasudeva! Let us think this matter over. Let me also consult the noble Vasudeva and Devaki who have lived in you also these fifteen years.’

And old Nanda forgot his age and dignity and clung to his son sobbing like a little child.

---

Adapted from ‘Krishnavatara’ by K.M.Munshi.



# **Govardhan Puja and Annkoot;**

Indra, the god of heavens is humiliated  
and a new tradition is started.

The day after Diwali is celebrated as Govardhan Puja when Mount Govardhan, near Mathura (India), is worshipped. Pious people keep awake the whole night and cook 56 (or 108) different types of food for the bhog (the offering of food) to Lord Krishna. This ceremony is called ANNKOOT which means a mountain of food. Various types of food – cereals, pulses, vegetables, chutneys, pickles and salads - are offered to the Lord and then distributed as *prasad* to devotees.

## **Legend of Govardhan Puja:**

**Govardhan Puja:-** Vrindavan was getting ready for Indrotsava, the festival in honor of Indra, the rain god. Priest Gargacharya, aided by thirty disciples and several other Brahmins, was preparing 108 sacrificial altars on which mounds of butter, ghee and grain had to be offered. Last year, Balarama was the sacrificer. Krishna was no more a child, and he will be the sacrificer this year, decided Gargacharya, with the consent of all the village elders. When Gargacharya conveyed his decision, Krishna, as the custom was, came to pay his respects. ‘My son,’ said Acharya, ‘We have decided that this year you shall be the yajamana (sacrificer) at the festival. The whole of Vrindavan wants you to be the sacrificer, this year.’

Krishna showed no interest and expressed his hesitation. On Acharya’s asking, Krishna said, ‘I don’t like Indrotsava. Why do we lavish so much milk, honey and butter, and grain and fuel? Because we are afraid of Indra; we fear he will be angry and

destroy us but for the festival. I should like to join in the festivals to the gods who love and bless us. I would be happy if a festival was held in honor of our *gopas* and *gopis*; our cows which bless us with milk, butter and ghee; and dung too for our fires and fields; our trees too which give us shade, fruit, fuel and the framework of our homes.’

The Acharya smiled as Krishna was continuing, ‘and I should like to worship Govardhan, the home of luxuriant grass and shady trees, with its birds of lovely plumage and its streamlets of clear water.’

Old Nanda was in ecstasy and said, ‘My son. You are quite right. The cows, the trees and Govardhan give us everything.’ Expressing his agreement, Sandipani (Krishna’s guru) spoke, ‘If you all agree, we should have a Gopatsava - the festival of the *gopas* and worship Govardhan. The sacrificial ceremonies will be a mere incidental in it, and the offerings only symbolical.’

‘Then, I shall be willing to be the yajamana,’ declared Krishna. ‘The milk, butter and curd which we would have offered to Indra on the sacrificial fire, will provide such enjoyment for days and days as we have never known before.’

**Festival:-** The day of the festival came. People gathered on the outskirts of the village, well-dressed, ready to join the procession to Mount Govardhan. All the cattle were washed, and fed well. Women in gay-colored dresses and ornaments were riding in carts, singing festive songs. The procession started with Krishna and Balarama walking at the head. At noon, the procession reached Giri Govardhan and under the shade of the ancient trees, each family sat down to the meal it had brought. In the evening, the songs and dances began. Night came and then it was morning; the birds sang; the cows were milked and cattle cleaned. When all the people had ornamented themselves with flowers and red powder, they climbed to the top of Mount Govardhan. Everyone felt a

new joy as Garghacharya and Sandipani prepared to worship the Mount. For, hereafter, Govardhan would not only be a lord of hills but a god. Ceremonies started. Gargacharya not only worshipped Govardhan, the cows and the trees, but ended by offering worship to Krishna himself. And Jaya, Jaya (Victory, Victory) issued from every mouth.

**Indra's rage:-** It was the last day of festival. When the darkness fell, each family went to sleep. It was after midnight that one dark cloud after another rose in the sky. Soon, the sky was overcast; the lightning flashed. The god Indra, ruler of rains and storms, had been offended and was going to punish the *gopas & gopis*; they had failed their god and listened to the boy Krishna's foolish advice. The rains came in torrents. The streamlets began to overflow and the ground turned to slush. Men and women had to creep under the shelters of the uptilted carts. The god Indra was angry and in rage. They were all trapped. It was impossible to return to Vrindavan by forest paths which were submerged in water and with the sky pouring down rain cascades.

**Krishna - the savior:-** Night over. With the first faint glimmer of light, Krishna led his friends towards some hollows which the rain and wind had carved out in the belly of Mountain Govardhan. With the help of Balarama and aided by others, Krishna succeeded in removing some boulders and that opened up a big cave. 'Bring the children here,' Krishna said with authority, and the grown-ups ran back to their families to bring the children to the shelter. Meanwhile, Krishna made a gigantic effort to push away a rock which became detached from the hill and would have fallen on them, had not he, aided by numberless hands, held it back. Suddenly, there was a clap of thunder which shook the hill. There was a sharp earthquake. Even Govardhan, they felt, was tottering. Lightning flashed down somewhere. The storm was in strength; and mighty roar of thunder rolled overhead. Again, a tremendous quake shook the earth, throwing everyone off his balance. And, then a miracle happened. Mount Govardhan, the god among hills,

rose higher by a couple of cubits. The rock which Krishna was holding back, rolled over and a huge cavern was disclosed which, due to the rising of the hill, was high enough for men to stand upright in it.

Shouts of joy came from a hundred throats. The *gopas* and the *gopis*, with their children and cattle, rushed to the shelter which Krishna had provided by lifting Govardhan. Protected by the hill, the *gopas* and *gopis* began their festivities again. They began to laugh at Indra. He could now do his worst! There was Krishna with them - their darling and their god.

As Krishna stood in the midst of them all, he saw the devotion and smiles of love in their eyes. They all felt that he was their own and they were his, and that they were all part of him.

The *gopas* and *gopis* continued to defy the anger of Indra till it was exhausted. At last, the rain stopped. The sun came out, shining fiercely. The *gopas* and *gopis* who felt proud of having helped Krishna to raise Govardhan, came to him and said, as they were leaving:

‘Govinda, (for that was the new name which they gave him on that day)!

You are our God now.’

---

Adapted from ‘The Krishnavatara -The Magic Flute’  
by K.M.Munshi and the information found on the  
Internet.

## Releasing Nand Maharaj from the clutches of Varuna.

Goverdhan Festival was over. Indra, the god of heavens, had been humiliated and the life had returned to normalcy. On Ekadshi, the eleventh day of the full moon, Maharaj Nanda observed fasting for the whole day. Next day was Dvadasi. So, early in the morning, he went to the river Yamuna to take a bath. It was rather early. While taking bath, he entered deep waters and was arrested immediately by the servant of Varuna Deva, and taken to him.

When Nanda did not come out of the water for some time, the *gopas* who were waiting on the bank started crying, and then ran to Krishna and informed him of Nanda Maharaj's disappearance in the water. Immediately, Krishna and Balaram came, entered the water and went to the abode of Varuna who received the two brothers with great respect. Thereafter, Varuna said to them, "O Lord! Supreme Personality of Godhead! Let me offer my respectful obeisance unto you. You are the supreme transcendental personality. I am very sorry that my foolish man, by not knowing what to do or what not to do, has mistakenly arrested your father, Nanda Maharaj. I beg your pardon for the offence of my servant. I think that it was your plan to show me your mercy by your personal presence here. O Lord. Be merciful upon me. Here is your father. You can take him back immediately." Then Varuna loaded Nanda with numerous gifts and sent all the three of them back to Vraja.

Such a stupendous happening could not be kept to himself by Nanda. He began to bruit about the tale of his fantastic experience in Varuna's abode, and soon the news spread far and wide. Other

*gopas* also thirsted for a similar experience. Knowing their desire, Krishna took them to a pool called Brahmahradam, or the pool of Brahma, and asked them to take a dip. There, he showed them the vision of Lord Vishnu lying on His serpent couch in the middle of the milky ocean surrounded by celestials and sages. What was more wonderful and thrilling was the fact that they recognized Vishnu to be none other than the son of their Chief! They were filled with bliss and lost their sense of identity, merging in that ocean of bliss for a few exalted moments.

Thus, one by one, Krishna fulfilled the desires of all the inhabitants of Vraja, his parents, his playmates, the *gopas* and his father's friends, the *gopas*. Now all that remained before he left them, was to satisfy the desires of the *gopis*.

---

Adapted from 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Vanamali,  
and from KRSNA by Swami Prabhupada.

## **Radha, Aiyyan and Krishna.**

Radha was born at Barsana (near Mathura in Uttar Pradesh). At the age of six, she had lost her mother. Then her father (Vrishbhanu) and his other wives had left Barsana to settle in Vrindavan, and left her to the charge of her maternal grandmother. She had grown up, laughing, romping, dancing, making fun of the boys and girls of her age – the darling not only of her mother’s family but the whole village.

Vrishbhanu had her daughter Radha betrothed to Aiyyan, the son of a friendly settler in Vrindavan, several years older than herself. But Aiyyan, in his teens, had hated the farm, the cows and forest, and had drifted to Mathura to take service with Kamsa.

Now, that Radha’s maternal grandmother was dead, Vrishbhanu had sent for her. She knew that she had been betrothed to Aiyyan, but to her, he was something distant and intangible, just a name. The talk of marriage which would have stirred the heart of any other maiden of her age left her indifferent. Flowers, fruits, the song of the birds, lowing crows and strutting peacocks, filled her heart, and kept her laughing, singing and forever trying to be everyone’s darling.

When Radha was born, her mother had taken a vow to offer ceremonial worship to the shrine of Gopanath, Gokul’s guardian deity. On her way to Vrindavan, Radha and her brother had stayed for a few days at a distant relation’s house in Gokul, and there she had been attracted to its happy people. But she had liked Kahn, most of all. She could never forget the way he had smiled at her,

even when he lay tied to the mortar. The way he had touched her hair, and his eyes dancing mischievously all the while, were ever-fresh in her mind. The melodious tones of flute had never been so haunting, as and when they issued from his flute.

On arrival at Vrindavan, Radha learnt that Aiyyan had gone to the wars with Kamsa's army and her marriage with him had been postponed. However, she felt no interest in it. Aiyyan had no place in her world. Day and night, she only heard a sweet little voice of the blue boy of Gokul saying: 'I will come to Vrindavan' and she felt that it was a solemn promise and was waiting for it to be fulfilled. And when Yadavas of Gokul decided to migrate to Vrindavan, after a year, because of the nuisance of wolves there, Radha was the happiest; she went around among the boys and girls of her age, talking about Gokul and above all, of Kahn who had killed the demons, Putna and Trinavrit.

When the immigrants from Gokul came to Vrindavan, Radha had her eyes only for one person - the dark blue boy. Forgetting the proprieties, she ran forward shouting, 'Kahn, Kahn'. Kahn was full of joy too. He kept hitting her affectionately on the back till she was red in the face. The children very pleased joined hands and went round and round them merrily.

Kamsa had returned to Mathura after discharging his warlike mission in the company of his father-in-law Jarasandha, the ruler of Magadha who had performed Asvamedha Yajna. For twelve years, he had only been able to pay hurried visits to Mathura. Along with him had returned Aiyyan who went to see his parents in Vrindavan after ten years. He was a brave lad, twenty years old – one of Kamsa's chosen warriors.

The news which awaited Aiyyan on his arrival amazed him. His bride had been taken away from him and promised to the son of Nanda, the Chief. He felt this was a wanton insult to the fair name of his family and a blot on his brave career. True, he



had not seen his wife-to-be; and with his position in the Court, he could find a better wife any day, but this personal affront had to be avenged.

Aiyyan returned to his village Vrindavan in a fury with the resolve to deal properly with Krishna and to see that Vrishbhanu's daughter is re-pledged to him. In the village, he heard that, at the instance of Krishna, most of the villagers wanted to do away with the Festival of Indra, the god of rain, storm and war, to whom he had offered worship every day he had been in the army. He made a plan to fulfill his resolve.

People of Vrindavan had ornamented themselves with flowers and red-powder and had climbed to the top of Govardhan mountain. The *aarti*, the offering of the flames, was ready, when Krishna saw Aiyyan and two of his friends climbing up the hill by a path at the back. His keen eyes perceived their furtive looks and the way they were coming stealthily towards the group of girls in which Radha was standing. A quiet smile played on Krishna's handsome lips and he said to his friend in a voice loud enough to be heard by everyone, 'Shridama! Aiyyan and his friends have come to join the Festival. Invite them here.' Then, Krishna himself addressed to him saying, 'Aiyyan! Please join us in worship.'

Shridama started off towards where Aiyyan and his friends were standing, but on hearing Krishna's voice, they ran down the path by which they had come up, and were not to be seen thereafter.

---

Adapted from Krishnavatara by K.M.Munshi.

## **Mystery solved;**

Devaki's 8<sup>th</sup> child is Krishna.

Kamsa's father-in-law, Jarasandha, began Asvamedha, the Horse Sacrifice, and for that Kamsa was chosen to lead the army which followed the sacrificial horse. Kamsa had discharged his warlike mission with credit. Thus, for a period of over twelve years, Kamsa had only been able to pay hurried visits to Mathura whenever the horse happened to stray into the adjoining territories of the friendly kings. He had, therefore, left his kingdom in the charge of his Prime Minister, Pralamba and General Pradyota.

When he returned to Mathura, he was displeased to find that the thirty-one Yadav clans - the Shooras, Andhakas, Vrishnis and even his own clan Bhoja - had become practically independent. His return did not arouse enthusiasm in them; on the contrary, they were sullen and distrustful. Somehow Kamsa felt that his unquestioned mastery over the Yadavas which he had enjoyed before he went to the wars, had slipped from his hands. Pralamba, the Prime Minister had been struck down by paralysis and was almost dying.

Kamsa was upset and his cunning brain was now devising a plan to bring back the old state of affairs. He stationed the warriors who had returned with him to Mathura in different parts of the city. He also had it announced that his victorious return would be celebrated by *Dhanuryajna*, the Bow Sacrifice. It was going to be an exhibition of his might and also an occasion to levy tribute on the clans and reduce them to vassalage.

Kamsa had already heard from sage Narada that eighth child

of his cousin, Devaki was not a daughter but a son. Now when his General Pradyota brought one of his men Aiyyan and heard the details about Krishna from this man, he turned pale and began to bite his moustache. His hands trembled. After Aiyyan finished his account, Kamsa stood up in a fury; he walked up the terrace, his fists clenched and his eyes clouded with fear.

Though he was now past fifty, Kamsa feared death more than ever. He was determined to solve this mystery, whatever it might cost and, if this boy was Devaki's son, he must destroy him. He strode to the house of his bed-ridden minister Pralamba and asked if he knew that Krishna had killed Puttna and Trinavrit and had also subdued the fearful cobra Kaliya that lived in the Poisonous Pool. On getting an affirmative reply, he again asked him, 'Is this boy Devaki's eighth son?' The old man made an effort with his lips and was able to articulate a feeble affirmative.

'You old traitor! Why did you keep this fact back from me?' Hissed Kamsa venomously and shook Pralamba by his feeble shoulder. 'Why didn't you tell me, ungrateful wretch?'

With sudden energy, Pralamba raised his head, his lips trembled and he muttered, 'Because, the venerable Vyasa spoke the truth. He is the Lord Himself.' Suddenly, his head fell back. The effort was too much for the dying man; his eyes grew wider still. The rattle of death was in his throat, as terror-struck Kamsa got up and fled from the room.

---

Adapted from Krishnavatara  
by K.M.Munshi.

## Kamsa's Summons.

Kamsa had been ruling Mathura for over twenty-five years. When, his father-in-law, Jarasandha, began Asvamedha, the Horse Sacrifice, so as to declare his imperial status, Kamsa was chosen to lead the army which followed the sacrificial horse. Kamsa had discharged his warlike mission with credit. On the successful completion of the mission, Kamsa was honored as a mighty Prince and awarded large areas of the conquered territories.

Thus for a period of over twelve years, Kamsa had only been able to pay hurried visits to Mathura, and now when he returned after the successful completion of the mission, he was displeased to find that Yadava clans had become practically independent; his return did not arouse enthusiasm in them; on the contrary, they were sullen and distrusted. His cunning brain was now busy devising a plan to bring back the old state of affairs. He stationed the warriors who had returned with him to Mathura in different parts of the city. He also had it announced that his victorious return would be celebrated by *Dhanuryajna* -the Bow Sacrifice.

A proclamation went forth that a fortnight hence, Kamsa, the overlord of the Yadavas, was going to celebrate his triumph by holding a *Dhanuryajna*. It was to be a week of festivities, of displays of warlike feats, elephant fights, wrestling, feasts and rejoicing. And, then one day Kamsa called his General Pradyota and said to him, 'My friend. I want you to go to Akrura, the Chief of Vrishnis, and to tell him that I wish to invite all the Yadava chiefs tomorrow afternoon. I want to talk to them and make peace with them. Tell him that all must come - all. I am inviting my venerable father to attend also.'

When General Pradyota reached Akrura with Kamsa's message, the latter was surprised but received the General with a gentle cordial welcome. In the course of discussion, Pradyota informed Akrura that though the Prince is very angry with the Yadavas, yet today he appeared to be in a very friendly mood.

Akrura, the saintly chief of the Vrishnis tribe, thought for a moment and then asked, 'Does Kamsa really mean to be friendly, or is this a trick to have all of us massacred at one time?' Pradyota looked nervously at this saintly relative of his, and seemed to have nodded in the affirmative.

### **Summoned to Mathura:**

Kamsa had been ruling Mathura for over twenty-five years, but he had never once called a gathering of the Chiefs. The Chiefs were, therefore, very surprised and mistrustful of the invitation. At the appointed time, they all came, Chiefs and elders, fifty in all - armed and sullen with resentment. There was, Ugrasen (Kamsa's father), Vasudeva (Chief of the Shoora Yadavas), Devaka (Ugrasen's brother), the saintly Akrura - all seated and ready to listen to Prince Kamsa.

Then, to the surprise of all of them, Kamsa folded his hands and turned to his father and said, 'Worshipful father, venerable grand-uncle, my brothers, I have invited you to join me in celebrating the Bow Sacrifice. I have, by the power of my arms, extended the Yadava domains. Mathura is now a mighty kingdom. You all know our ancient ways. And I want you to help me to make these sacrificial sessions a success. We will have seven days of celebrations.' Kamsa was continuing, 'We shall have lights, music and dancing. Moreover, we shall have feats of military skill, and wrestling bouts, in which wrestlers from other countries will participate. I have given instructions to prepare the sacred Bow with the proper ritual, and whoever at the end of the contests shoots the farthest with it, will receive all the honor which I can confer.'

‘Your Highness. I am indeed glad that you have invited us and you can rest assured that the Yadava Chiefs will not fail in their *dharma*,’ said Akrura, breaking the Chiefs’ silence, and added, ‘What more does Your Highness want of us?’

‘I know that Devaki’s son is alive. I want him to be here and take part in the celebrations.’

‘Why do you want him to be here?’ asked Akrura.

‘I want him to attend the Bow-Sacrifice. I have heard about his exploits. I want him to try his hand at the Bow. I want him to take part in the wrestling. If he is so wonderful as people describe him to be, he will be able to win the Bow and win the wrestling match too,’ said Kamsa.

The Chiefs listened to this soft talk of Kamsa with deep distrust but they had confidence in Akrura’s way of dealing with the situation.

Kamsa then said, ‘Now, Akrura! You must do me one favor. Bring Krishna here - and also Rohini’s son, who I understand is with him. I want to be satisfied that they are growing up as they should. I want them to attend the Bow-Sacrifice and to take part in the celebrations. Also ask Nanda to come and bring the annual tribute. What do you say, Vasudeva?’

Akrura interrupted him saying, ‘Prince. I shall go and bring them here from Vrindavan.’

---

Adapted from ‘Krishnavatara – The Magic Flute’ by K.M.Munshi.

# Day before departure to Mathura;

Krishna meets Radha and reveals the secret of his birth.

## Talk of the town:

In Vrindavan, men and women were talking of only one thing. Kamsa had sent Akrura, the Chief of the Vrishnis, to invite Nanda with Krishna and Balarama and all his known kinsmen to Mathura, bringing with them, of course, their annual tribute. There was going to be Dhanuryajna to celebrate Kamsa's victorious return, and they were all to join in the festivities. A special invitation from the hated prince was a surprise especially when it came for their two boys whom they loved so well. There was something more to it, they felt, than could be seen on the surface.

Radha had heard of Krishna's intended departure and was eating her heart out on her lonely bed, when she heard the flute. The next moment she sprang up, snatched her anklets from the corner where they lay and with flying hair rushed out of the house. Her Kahn was calling to her. The boys and girls had formed a big circle and a smaller one within it, to go round Krishna. Radha left the crowd and went to Krishna and they joined the *rasa*. They sang and they danced. The sky and the earth whirled round. The moon stood still in the sky smiling lovingly. In the frenzy of excitement, several *gopis* swooned and others broke away from the circle utterly tired. Before they could open their eyes, they could feel that two forms had disappeared into the forest.

'Radha! I know you are tired. I want to take you a long way. Today, it was a wonderful *rasa*,' said Krishna.

Silently, Radha clung to him and asked, 'Kahn, will you always be like this? You won't forget me.'

‘How can I? You are my goddess of joy,’ replied Krishna. Then, he said, ‘Radha. Listen. I am not a cowherd. I am a prince and you are a princess.’ Saying this, he became serious.

She was taken aback and searched his face to discover if what he had said was the truth.

### **Krishna reveals the secret of his birth:**

‘Don’t stare at me like that, Radha. You know I am going to Mathura tomorrow and I may not come back for some days,’ said Krishna. ‘I brought you here to tell you a secret which few know. However, the world will know it soon enough. Yadu’s race has been in bondage for years. And sage Narada has foretold that mine shall be the hand to break it.’ His voice was now low and solemn.

Radha looked at him almost in fright, clung to him and said, ‘Kahn, what do you say? Tell me what you mean.’

‘Listen. It was prophesied by sage Narada that princess Devaki’s eighth son, born of prince Vasudeva, would redeem Yadu’s race and destroy the wicked Kamsa. I am that eighth son of Devaki.’ Krishna was continuing, ‘My father Vasudeva brought me to Gokul the day I was born, and left me with my other father Nanda. Balarama is also the son of the Best of Shooras by my mother Devaki; he is not Rohini’s son. It seems that we were brought here so that we might escape Kamsa’s wrath. Now, Prince Kamsa is holding a Bow-Sacrifice and wants us to attend it. Possibly, he means to have us killed, but I know that no harm will come to us.’

‘Oh! What will you do if he tries to kill? asked Radha, terrified.

‘He cannot. They all say that I have come to save *dharma*; and within me, there is the faith; that is why I was born. And I shall defend *dharma* and redeem Yadu’s race from this wicked bondage.’



‘Is there nothing which can stop you from going?’ asked Radha with her mouth open.

‘Nothing. Absolutely nothing. I have to go to Mathura; it is my *dharma*. I have often asked myself: Why can’t I destroy wickedness, tyranny, and fear? But all this time, I pushed the yearning aside; and I now know that I have to do it.’

‘Then what about me?’ she sobbed. ‘What shall I do, with you gone? No. no. Kahn. Don’t go. Something is sure to happen to you. Kamsa is very blood-thirsty.’

‘Radha! Don’t have any fears for me. Kamsa will be destroyed, and our people will walk in freedom and in *dharma*. I will return – or rather I will call you to Mathura. You shall continue to be the joy of my life, as you always have been,’ consoled Krishna to her.

Both lapsed into silence. Then Radha looked up and as if speaking to herself, began, ‘Kahn! You will go to Mathura and will win – I know. I always thought you were a god. And they will make you a king. You will be mighty prince; people will fall at your feet and worship you. You will move among princes as a conqueror and savior.’

‘And you shall be my queen – my life’s inseparable companion.’

‘No. Kahn. I am a poor cowherd girl. I am not fit to be a princess. In the crowd of princesses worshipping you and ready to die for you, I would be just a crude, foolish village girl. Then you would no longer be my Kahn.....You would be a mighty Prince. You would wear a diadem on your head, wield arms, go to wars, move among mighty heroes, who are cruel, harsh and blood-thirsty. No. No. I should not be a burden. I should no longer be the joy of your heart; no longer your twin-self; no longer your partner in the *rasa*.’ And Radha was continuing, ‘Kahn.....forgive me if I give you pain. I cannot come with you to Mathura. My Kahn, who lives in my eyes, has wild flowers in his ears, and a bamboo

staff in his hands. He leads the cows to pasture. He plays the flute. He is joyous and bold – with an eternal smile on his lips. I can't bear to see you a prince .....I can't come to Mathura. And, I know you will never return to Vrindavan; even if you do, you will not be the Kahn I have loved and lived for. Let me continue to live here and serve Father and Mother.'

Radha suppressed a sob and she continued, 'Day after day, I shall wander, as I do now, on the banks of our beloved Yamuna, and wait for your footfall in patient agony. If I ever come to Mathura, I will never find *you* in the Yadava Prince Krishna. Living here I will always be with you. I will see you among the trees and creepers which you loved so well. I will hear your voice in the notes of birds. The dust over which you have trodden so far will tell me of your springing steps and the breezes whistling in the trees will bring me your message; they will sing to me of you as you are now, Kahn.'

Both were silent for a while. Then Krishna, clearing his throat, spoke, 'Radha. You are right. I very much wanted you to come to Mathura, but I can see that I would no longer be what I am now. And you, the joy of my heart, would never be the lovely flower that you are. You were born to be kissed by the rising sun and to spread the fragrance of joy. And, if you come away, Vrindavan will no longer be what it is. With you here, it will be a shrine; you will be its goddess of joy and love. Thinking of you here, I will always find new life, and so will men and women, so long as the world endures.'

'And, my Kahn. I have given you everything. But do me one last favor. When you go, leave your flute with me. You are a prince. I am a cowherd. No one must point a finger of shame at me,' said Radha.

'I understand. The flute and you are one – it shall stay with you,' said Krishna. And then both of them got up to go.

---

Adapted from Krishnavatara  
by K.M.Munshi.

## **Krishna's departure to Mathura;**

Krishna and Balarama leave Vrindavan to go to Mathura.

(Krishna is 16 years old).

Nanda and the cowherds accompanying him were on their way to Mathura with carts laden with tributes.

On the other side, Krishna and Balarama prostrated themselves before Akrura who blessed them. Then Krishna turned to his mother Yashoda, fell at her feet and applied the dust of her feet over his eyes. Radha was also by her side. Her eyes cast a longing look at Krishna from time to time, and each time Krishna replied with a swift glance and a faint smile which conveyed a farewell and which only the two of them understood.

A farewell – a final folding of hands – and Krishna turned away. All eyes were moist and as the people gazed at him, he drew Balarama away and climbed into the chariot. Akrura cracked his whip and the impatient horses sped away. Krishna and Balarama, from the running chariot, returned the loving farewell of the people, and for a moment, in their tender hearts, the light of life was extinguished.

Radha continued to look at the fast disappearing chariot and when it was hidden by the turn of the road, she tried to catch hold of Mother's hand, uttered a cry of agony such as had never been heard before and swooned.

In the chariot, Krishna was smiling and addressed Akrura, 'Uncle. When will Father reach Mathura? Before us or after us?'

‘They should arrive in the afternoon. We ought to reach there earlier. Our horses are fine,’ replied Akrura.

‘But, Uncle, would it be right to arrive before Father?’ asked Krishna. ‘I came with you because you wanted me to; otherwise, I would have loved to go with him in the bullock cart or on foot. I would never ride into Mathura in a chariot whilst Father is trudging there on foot.’

‘Krishna. Forget Vrindavan. The whole of Mathura is waiting for you impatiently for 16 years. Vasudeva and Devaki are longing to see you,’ said Akrura. ‘But you know what is in store for us. I have invited the Yadavas to walk into Kamsa’s trap and am leading you into it.’

‘Why did you allow uncle Kamsa to lay this trap for us all?’ asked Balarama.

‘We have been foolish for years. Kamsa was craft. His minister Pralamba was more far-sighted than we were. And most of the Andhakas were behind them. You know that one of their powerful chiefs, Pradyota, is a loyal follower of Kamsa. Today or tomorrow, when the anointed Bow is worshipped, he will take the final step; he will try to stage a massacre of most of us,’ replied Akrura.

‘Then, why has he invited us?’ asked Balarama. ‘To put us to death?’

Akrura was silent for a little while. Then he spoke, ‘He wants to kill Krishna, first. He is afraid that, if he is left alive, the prophecy will be fulfilled.’

Krishna laughed and said in a reassuring tone, ‘He will be dead and then he cannot kill me. The revered Gargacharya and Acharya Sandipani have told me all about uncle Kamsa’s wickedness. Now, do not think of the past. I know how uncle Kamsa has

broken the pride and strength of the mighty Yadavas; how he has deprived them of their land; how he had driven many of them out of Mathura; how he has robbed the mothers of their now-born babes and the Chiefs' daughters of their honor. He has scoffed at the gods, silenced the voice of the Brahmins, departed from the ways of our venerable ancestors, and holds himself answerable to none. He is the enemy of *dharma*.'

Akrura was listening wonder-struck to this boy of sixteen speaking with the authority of an ancient seer. Krishna was continuing, 'Often I felt something stirring in me, but I did not know what it was. I felt wickedness rolling away from the earth; I saw men walking in *dharma* – their heads raised high in godlike freedom. I felt *dharma* enveloping the heavens, the earth and the lower regions. I felt.....Yes. I felt that .....as if all entered into me. I was not Vaasudeva, the son of Vasudeva, but VAASUDEVA That-is-All,' and he paused.

Was he asleep or awake? Akrura rubbed his eyes and heard Krishna enquiring, 'Uncle, there is a shady place here on the bank of the Yamuna. Shall we halt here? Shall we go and bathe?

'Yes, Krishna, if that be your wish,' said Akrura.

'Now, you two go and take your bath,' said Balarama sleepily. 'I will sleep awhile. I must get ready to fight uncle Kamsa and all his men.'

'Brother, you will require all the strength you have before we have done with Kamsa,' spoke Krishna and both the brothers smiled.

---

Adapted from Krishnavatara by K.M.Munshi.

## **Krishna's arrival at Mathura;**

Confrontation with Kamsa's washerman.

Upon reaching the entrance to Mathura, Krishna and Balarama got down from the chariot and shook hands with Akrura who then proceeded to the palace to give Kamsa the news of fulfillment of his mission. Meanwhile, party headed by Nanda had arrived and was joined by Balarama and Krishna.

Next day, Krishna and Balarama accompanied by other gopas proceeded to see the City of Wonders - Mathura. The city gate shone like crystal with shutters lined with gold and ornamental arches, granaries made of copper, moats filled with lotuses and gardens and parks. The roads were flanked by splendid mansions with beautiful gardens. There were Assembly halls, and rest houses with gates, inlaid with gold and set with gems. The main street was swept and watered, and the markets and courtyards were strewn with flowers. The entrances of the houses were decorated with hanging bunches of luscious fruit, palm trees and festoons of silken scarves. It was as if the city of Mathura had decked itself to meet its future Lord. The women were thronging the terraces and balconies to get of the One about whom they had heard so much.

While Krishna and Balarama were passing in this way, they saw a washer man and dyer of clothing coming toward them carrying the king's clothes. When Krishna asked him for some clothes, the dyer abused them in furious terms: You village idiots; these are the king's clothes not meant for urchins like you. Abusing thus, he raised his hand to strike him. But Krishna dodged the blow and hit the burly palace washer man with unexpected vigor. The blow was well aimed. The washer man fell down in a dead faint

and lay sprawling on the ground. His employees immediately fled in terror, leaving the clothes. Both brothers and the gopas entered the shop, selected the clothes they liked and changed into them.

In the meantime, a devotee tailor took the opportunity and prepared some nice clothes for the two brothers. Thus nicely dressed, they looked like gods. The elder one was dressed in blue, the younger one with the lovely curls in yellow had taken the peacock feather from the old head-dress and fixed it on the golden one which he wore now.

When the boys came out of the shop, a flower-seller, Sudama was his name, and had his shop opposite, came forward. He honored them and presented them with garlands made of select flowers and joyfully garlanded the boys. Krishna gave an affectionate pat on his back and asked him to choose any boon he wanted. The garland-seller choose three boons which the Lord granted him with pleasure - unflinching devotion to the all-inclusive Being, friendship toward His devotees, and kindness to all creatures.

---

Adapted from 'Krishnavatara' by K.M.Munshi,  
and 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Vanamali,

## **Krishna - the Healer;**

Trivakra (thrice crooked) is healed with the touch of Krishna.

### **Trivakra (thrice crooked):**

Malini was hardly twelve years old when she was married to Angaraka, the son of Kamsa's chief royal mahout. Her mother was one of the attendants in Kamsa's palace; her duties were to supply the perfumes which were daily needed for the Prince Kamsa and his consorts. Malini would give a helping hand to her mother.

Immediately, after marriage, Malini fell seriously ill and became a deformed, hunch-backed young woman. Her husband, shocked at the strange caricature of a woman that she had become, would not accept her. She was now known as Trivakra (thrice crooked). Everyone would laugh at her shape; some made vulgar remarks at her face about her deformity; children often followed her with abuse and shouts of derision, but nothing affected Trivakra's geniality. She was a favorite mascot of the women's apartments in the palace. Even Kamsa, who rarely laughed or enjoyed a joke, laughed when Trivakra made fun of herself.

For years and years, night after night, Trivakra had prayed and believed that the great God who had denied to others the privilege of seeing her as she really was, would accord them that privilege. Now three days ago, she had heard a rumor that Devaki's eighth son, the promised Savior, was alive and that some day he would be coming to Mathura. With this new-born hope, her prayers acquired a new intensity. 'Lord. Send Devaki's son to Mathura soon. He will make these blind people see me as I really am – and not as thrice crooked.' And, she offered this prayer with tears in her eyes – day-in and day-out.



Then, she heard the news that Nanda's son was coming to Mathura to take part in the *Danush yajna* organized by Prince Kamsa. Her joy knew no bounds. The palace was alive with strange rumors. Nanda's son was no other than Devaki's eighth son. He had killed demons, defied the god Indra and even raised Mount Govardhan high on the tip of his little finger. Many said that, according to prophecy, he was going to kill Kamsa. If all this were true, thought Trivakra, Nanda's son was a god such as she had only dreamed of.

She heard that Nanda's two sons had arrived in Mathura. Next morning, she got up very early. With her silver box of scents shining brightly, she took the road to Akrura's mansion. On the way, she saw a large crowd standing in front of the palace dyer's shop. When she came nearer the shop, she heard some altercation between the dyer and two boys. The dyer was abusing the young boys and had just raised his arm to hit them that the young one with the dark blue skin, dodged the blow and hit the burly dyer with unexpected vigor. The blow was well aimed and the dyer fell down, dead faint and lay sprawling on the ground.

The people gathered there thoroughly enjoyed the bully's discomfiture. Trivakra also joined the gathering and cursed the dyer that this hefty fellow had started a quarrel with these young boys. On enquiry, a bystander told Trivakra that these were the sons of Nanda, the cowherd chief of Vrindavan and had come to watch the *Danush yajna*. She was already fascinated by the younger boy. Now, hearing that the dark skinned boy was Nanda's son, her lips half-parted in a smile. Pushing aside one-two bystanders, she stepped forward and spoke thus:

'Nanda's son, Krishna. I have come to you. Lord! I have been waiting for you, for so long.' With a voice choked with emotion, she prostrated herself before Krishna.

'Were you waiting for me? How nice? How did you know that

we were coming and who are you, sister?’ asked Krishna.

‘I am Trivakra. I am in charge of the scents and perfumes at the Prince Kamsa’s palace.’ So saying, Trivakra applied the perfume to Krishna’s hands and cheeks, and the sandalwood paste to his forehead. Then, she applied the same to Balarama also who enjoyed the unfamiliar smell, sniffing it with childish pleasure.

Then Trivakra, with an effort, fell at Krishna’s feet, buried her head in his feet and cried piteously, ‘Lord! Lord! I am ugly.’ That was all she could murmur.

‘You are not ugly,’ said Krishna in the tone of a loving mother. He bent down and lifted Trivakra from the ground. ‘Sister. Who says that you are not beautiful? Have faith and stand up.’ And Krishna helped her stand up.

Trivakra rose from the ground and tried to stand up in the way she was accustomed to. She felt something strange coming over her, a sudden influx of energy. She tried to stand; she could do so. She drew her legs together and they were straight. She tried to raise herself to her full height and she stayed erect. Almost, with a shock, she realized what had happened to her. She forgot how a well-born woman ought to behave herself; she jumped with joy. The people gathered there stood looking at her, awestruck.

‘Lord. Lord. You have made me shapely and straight,’ she muttered and flung herself at Krishna’s feet, trailing her long hair over his feet in ineffable gratitude.

---

Adapted from ‘Krishnavatara’ by K.M.Munshi.

# Krishna meets Rukmini;

First meeting.

## In the streets of Mathura:

After arriving at Mathura, Krishna and Balarama were going through the streets of the city to see its wonders when they heard the shouts from a section of a crowd. The chatter of horse's hoofs was heard and also the sound of lashes and the shrieks of the injured. Evidently, a horseman was making his way through the crowd, cracking his whip across the shoulders of whoever came in his way or pushing his horse through everyone.

By temperament, Balarama was slow to move and slower still to speak, but when his anger was roused, he was carried away by it. He stepped forward in front of the horseman and tried to halt the rushing animal. The rider in a temper lashed out at Balarama, but before he could use his whip again, it was wrested from him and he was pulled down to the ground. The crowd, which had never seen resistance to those in power applauded and cheered Balarama enthusiastically.

Balarama had not only halted the horse, but pushed it back. It tried to rear and tried to resist by throwing its weight on to its haunches, but all resistance was useless. Step by step, Balarama pushed right back against the bullocks of the chariot which was following.

The bullocks, frightened by the backing horse and the shouts of the crowd, turned aside, almost overturning the chariot. Two ladies who were riding in the chariot – one, a fine young woman of about twenty-five and the other, a lovely girl of sixteen – shrieked

in terror. The princely rider, though badly bruised, rose from the ground and shouted to two riders, who were following the chariot, but they could not come up to him, for the chariot and the bullocks which were now standing across the road proved a formidable barricade. He turned to pursue Balarama but Krishna caught hold of him by the neck. The prince turned to him angrily and shouted, 'Fool! Don't you know who I am? I am Rukmi, the Prince of Vidarbha and the guest of your master, Prince Kamsa.'

### **Meeting Rukmini:**

'Now that you say it, I know who you are,' replied Krishna coolly. 'You had better go back to your women-folk and stop molesting the people.'

'You scoundrel!' Shouted Rukmi and tried to unsheathe his sword. But before he could do so, Krishna twisted his hand with expert skill and threw the Prince off his balance. Then he pushed him up to the chariot, lifted him before he could offer resistance and threw him into it as if he was a sack of corn. Both the women seated in it began to shout at Krishna in high excitement. 'Let go my brother, you wicked fellow,' said the beautiful girl.

Krishna smiled in his characteristic way which always won hearts. 'Is this your brother? As a princess, you should try to teach him the manners of a prince,' he said.

'Oh. What have you done to my brother?' cried the girl.

Krishna's eyes showed signs of mischief. 'Don't worry, young lady. Your brother has lost nothing except his conceit. I am sure he will behave better hereafter, even to you,' he said with a laugh. In spite of her tears, the princess of Vidarbha could not help smiling in return.

Krishna then walked up to the bullocks and patted them gently.

He threw the reins on to the lap of the bullock driver. 'Look after the bullocks well. They are very fine,' he said, smiling mischievously at the girl. Soon the chariot departed followed by Rukmi, now highly chastened, on his horse, and Rukmini mesmerized by the smile and strength of the dark bluish boy.

---

Adapted from Krishnavatara by K.M.Munshi.

# The sacred Bow;

Krishna breaks the Bow. Kamsa is worried.

## Krishna breaks the Bow:

The news of what had happened to the washer man and Rukmi travelled fast and reached the authorities. General Pradyota himself, with a small retinue, rushed to the place where the incidents had taken place and after making inquiries overtook Krishna and Balarama who were walking about the city in a leisurely way. On seeing them, the General dismounted from his horse and said, 'You, the sons of Nanda – aren't you? – who have been invited by my lord? I have been trying to find you since the morning. I am sorry that I could not do it earlier.'

On Krishna's query, the General said, 'I am Pradyota, the Andhaka chief. I am Prince Kamsa's General.' And, he looked at Krishna with a new understanding. This was Devaki's eighth son whom he was under a commission to kill. Continuing, he said, 'I should like to show you our city. Would you like to see some of the sights?'

Krishna folded his hands. 'We are happy to meet you, best among Andhakas. You are a great warrior. Certainly, I and my elder brother Balarama would like to see the city, and also the great Bow about which we have heard so much.'

And they all proceeded to the *mandap* where the Bow was being worshipped. When they were near it, Pradyota turned to the brothers and asked, 'Has either of you drawn the long bow?'

‘We have, but not of your kind. We select our own bamboo or wood, make our own bows out of them and shoot at wild animals.’ While they were gazing at the Bow which was being worshipped by the priests and guarded by the royal guards, Trivakra, on a hint from Pradoya, spoke to Krishna: Lord, why don’t you try to lift the Bow now? It is a marvel prepared by uncle Pradyota’s experts.

Krishna again glanced at the Bow, made up his mind, turned to Pradyota and said, ‘I am not an expert bowman. I am just a cowherd. But I hope to shoot an arrow on the last day. May I try to lift the Bow now to see how heavy it is?’

‘Yes. You may, Nanda’s son,’ replied Pradyota, exchanging a glance with Trivakra. ‘But you will not be able to do it.’ And a thought flashed across his mind. Was he really the Savior? Or would he fail his people? ‘Try it, then,’ said he.

Krishna looked at the Bow for sometime very carefully. Then, he suddenly bent down and lifted the Bow with a sharp jerk. The spectators crowding round him were dumb-founded.

‘Is this the Bow which we are to handle the day after tomorrow?’ asked Krishna. ‘Yes’ said Pradyota, with his voice full of a new respect.

‘Is it difficult to handle it?’ asked Krishna innocently. Thereafter, he scrutinized the Bow closely to find whether there was anything exceptional about it. To the horror of all present, instead of placing the Bow back on its pedestal, Krishna placed his foot on one end of the Bow and bent the other end abruptly, concentrating all the strength of his arms on it. The Bow cracked and broke. Krishna threw away the pieces and laughed.

It was a feat unheard of – an insult to Kamsa – a sacrilege!

Afterwards those who saw the brothers walking away in complete indifference, stood in silent awe. And Pradyota's heart was full of repentance and of joy as well.

### **Kamsa's worry:**

When Pradyota reported the breaking of Bow to his master Kamsa, the latter's face was as grim as death. 'How was Krishna able to break it? The Bow was strong and tough.'

'All the experts said it was perfect. You even saw it yourself, my lord,' Pradyota replied respectfully.

'Why did you let the boys handle it?' asked Kamsa.

'What could I do?' replied Pradyota with folded hands. 'The rules of *Dhanur Yajna* permit those who intend to enter the contest to find out for themselves what the bow is like.'

To a question by Kamsa, he replied: I have already consulted the learned Brahmans. They say that another should be prepared immediately and ritually anointed.

'Do it immediately,' ordered Kamsa. 'We shall complete the sacrificial session, if not tomorrow, the day after. Tomorrow, we shall only have the wrestling matches. Now, go and have it announced that *Dhanur Yajna* will be completed day after tomorrow. Only the wrestling matches will be held tomorrow.'

---

Adapted from Krishnavatara by K.M.Munshi



# **Kamsa is killed; Prophecy fulfilled;**

With the killing of Kamsa, Krishna comes to the forefront of Yadavas.

Hail to Thee, Lord Krishna, the preceptor  
of the universe, son of Vasudeva, the  
supreme bliss of Devaki and the Destroyer  
of Kamsa and Channora.

## **Krishna in the arena:**

The day came. The conchs sounded. The Brahmins, the *Kshatriyas*, the Vaishyas and the Shudras came into the court and took their places in their respective enclosures. Then the royal athletes entered the arena, slapping their biceps and their thighs. At the head moving jubilantly were Chanur and Musthika, the leaders of the wrestlers.

At that time, Kuvalayapida (the elephant) with mighty tusks and large flapping ears, entered the courtyard. Angaraka, the mahout, was riding on it. The elephant came in front of the Prince Kamsa, raised its trunk as a salute and trumpeted cheerfully. And, then the mahout brought it near the main entrance.

Kamsa was surprised. Kuvalayapida who always walked in heavy but sharp strides, was moving in a leisurely manner today. His eyes, usually angry and impatient, looked wily. As Kamsa was watching the incoming crowds, he saw a strange sight. A large crowd of people were following the two young boys, whose feet men and women rushed forward to touch, wiping the dust from their feet and applying it on their own eyes. There was no mistaking about the One with dark blue color; it was Devaki's

eighth son – his enemy who, as the prophecy had declared, was to destroy him, but whom Kunalayapida would now destroy.

No sooner Krishna stepped to one side to pass, that the elephant waved its trunk that way. Krishna moved to the other side. That way also, his path was barred by the swaying of the trunk. Some people in the crowd were alarmed and came forward to protect Krishna and shouted to frighten the elephant. Kunalayapida looked at Krishna as if he was his long-lost friend. Krishna stepped forward, all the while talking to the elephant in the affectionate way which had so endeared him to the stud-bulls of Vrindavan. The elephant extended its trunk, lifted Krishna on it, slowly raised him, enveloping him in his trunk gently and then lowered him. There were shouts of ‘Victory, Victory’ from the crowd. Then, it began to sway itself first on one leg and then on the other, bent its mighty legs, slid to the ground, and stretching out its trunk, closed the eyes. Instantly, the jubilant crowd surged through the main gate and Kamsa sought the support of the wall.

Note:- It is said that the night before, Trivakra and her husband Angaraka were busy feeding Kunalayapida, the elephant, with armful of herbal drugs. Trivakra knew the secrets and the effects of herbal drugs which she had learnt from her mother.

Krishna and Balarama now entered the court. The drums were announcing the arrival of the champion wrestlers. All the enclosures were full of men. With jovial face, Chanur along with Mushtika moved round the enclosures. When he came to the enclosure in which the cowherds from Vrindavan were sitting, he stopped and pointing to two young boys spoke, ‘Nanda raj, are these your boys? Why don’t they join in the tournament?’

‘No. They are not going to,’ replied Nanda.

As if he didn’t hear anything, Chanur addressed Krishna, ‘Why

do you listen to your old father? I have heard that both of you are expert wrestlers. People talk a lot about your wonderful exploits. Come into the arena and show your might, my boys.'

'With you?' replied Krishna. 'I am far too young.'

'Are you afraid to wrestle with me, my gay friend? Yes. You can dance with milk-maids only.' Before Chanu could say anything else, Krishna made up his mind, stood up with folded hands before Nanda saying: Father! Don't withhold permission.' And, next moment, he was in front of Chanur telling him in a defiant voice, 'Chanur. I am ready.'

### **Wrestlers are killed: Chanur by Krishna and Mushtika by Balarama.**

Once Krishna accepted Chanur's challenge, Mushti-ka, the tall athlete leered at Balarama, 'And you! Why do you hesitate? Are you a girl?' he asked as he stepped towards Balarama.

Balarama's eyes flashed with terrific anger. He stood up, jumped in the wrestling arena with a thud and gave a powerful right arm shot to Mushtika before he could understand anything. The unwary champion, hit in the face, felled on the ground. Soon, the two giants were locked in a fierce embrace.

Krishna had also stepped into the arena and warily observed the heavy body of Chanur. When Chanur tried to engage him, Krishna began to step back, little by little towards the royal enclosures. Now they were in front of Kamsa. Keeping pace with Krishna's swift movements for some distance had already some effect on Chanur. He began to breathe a little harder. He was annoyed that Krishna, whom he thought only a beginner in the art, should be so active in eluding his grasp. He set his lips hard, came near and swung his arms together to lock Krishna in them. With a swift dive, Krishna escaped the athlete's grasp. The champion lost his

balance and his heavy body tottered almost to the ground. Loud laughter shook the vast crowds.

Meanwhile, Balarama had thrown Mushtika to the ground with such terrific violence that the champion's skull was broken. He lay on the arena unconscious, blood trickling from his nose.

Chanur soon realized that he was almost out of breath, while Krishna so far had shown no sign of being tired. Chanur was furious and to destroy his opponent, he tried to bring the steely strength of his muscular body on Krishna, but was not able to fall upon the latter, as he had expected. By a side movement, Krishna evaded the full and direct impact of the champion's weight.

Chanur fumbled in the air. He stared at Krishna with blood-shot eyes and again went on him. Krishna sprang from side-to-side, backwards and forwards. He would not touch the opponent's arm, elude his grasp and jump aside. Chanur was coming to the end of his strength; he could not keep up this struggle against this clever antagonist. His vision also was failing.

Then, before Chanur realized, Krishna jumped on the athlete with the agility of a panther and pressed him down to the ground. Unruffled by the thunderous applause which greeted his ears, Krishna looked at the champion's blood-shot eyes and roared, 'Chanur! Admit defeat and save yourself. The only response was a sudden movement on his part to throw Krishna off and to reach Krishna's throat.

Krishna could see what the champion was at and decided to show him no mercy. He suddenly stopped pressing the champion's head, smashed Chanur's nose with his fist and then hammered at his eyes, mouth and ears. Chanur's nose was broken. His teeth were smashed. His eyes were all but blinded. Blood flowed copiously from his nose and mouth, and the champion fell back unconscious – dead.

There were thunderous shouts from the crowds. In rapturous enthusiasm, the Yadavas rushed out of their enclosures and ran forward to hail Krishna.

### **Kamsa is killed:**

Things moved fast, as if in an instant. Krishna saw the Prince growling like a wild beast, rose from his seat, sword in hand and rushed out of the royal enclosure – only to be intercepted by Akrura. At that moment, he also saw an armed Magadhan warrior, pointing a sword at his father, Vasudeva. But before the Magadhan's sword could do anything, he was struck down by General Pradyota.

The next moment, Krishna heard a sudden uproar from the royal enclosures where the Yadava chiefs could be seen grasping their weapons. The Magadhans had fallen upon them.

Though all this happened almost simultaneously, Krishna understood its full significance. He rose from kneeling on the dying champion and took a step forward to where Akrura had intercepted Kamsa. Akrura was trying to stop Kamsa shouting: No. No. Krishna also saw the grim murderous look with which Kamsa turned towards the saintly Chief of the Vrishnis and gave him a blow hard enough to send him full length to the ground.

Kamsa having felled Akrura to the ground, turned to Krishna. As he did so, his diadem fell from his head and his long hair was within easy grasp. Krishna jumped behind him, caught hold of his hair and pulled him to the ground. Kamsa was dazed. His sword fell from his hands. In a momentary flash, the memory of the prophecy dawned upon him. He saw his arch-enemy, triumphant as a god, and the fear of God whom he had always repudiated, entered his heart.

Meanwhile, Balarama had sensed the danger which threatened Vasudeva, and snatching a mace from a Magadhan warrior, rushed

to the help of the Yadavas who were fighting to protect his father.

Utter confusion prevailed. Unarmed people were fleeing. Women were shrieking. Arms clashed; the Yadavas and the Magadhans closed on one another. Krishna saw that there was only way to stop this mad carnage. The MOMENT HAD COME. He picked up Kamsa's sword which lay near his feet. It flashed and descended; and Kamsa's head, severed from its body, rolled to the ground.

He picked up from the ground gold-bordered conch which had once hung on Kamsa's shoulders and blew a sharp and shrill blast on it. The tumult was stilled. The people were taken aback first. Then they realized what had happened. They saw Vasudeva's son standing with a sword in one hand over the severed body of the tyrant, blowing the trumpet of victory. Inspired by a wave of exultation, they rushed to hail him – the SAVIOR.

Krishna threw the sword away and went to the spot where Vasudeva stood, protected by Balarama's mace. He prostrated himself before his father and said with humility: Father. Give me your blessings.

Vasudeva, overcome with emotion, lifted his son and embraced him. As he did so, he sobbed aloud, his head on the shoulder of the son for whom he had waited so long.

THE PROPHECY HAD COME TRUE.

---

Adapted from 'Krishnavatara by' K.M.Munshi.

# Who should be the king of Yadavas?

Krishna rejects the throne.

## After Kamsa's death:

Kamsa, the ruler of Mathura was killed by Sri Krishna and the prophecy was fulfilled. Immediate question was: who should be the King of Mathura? Yadavas knew that Jarasandha, the emperor of Magadha will never forgive them for the killing of his son-in-law - Kamsa -, and they have to move fast. Consultations started at a hurriedly convened meeting of the Yadava Chiefs and then the old Ugrasen spoke to the Chiefs thus: 'I have heard everything. I agree that we must have someone to lead us in this crisis. I am old and physically broken. For years, I have been in prison and lost touch with the world. I had one son and now I am sonless. I want Krishna to be my son and to succeed me as the King.'

Everyone applauded the idea. In fact, the old Ugrasen only reflected the general wish and the gathering responded by saying: 'sadhu, sadhu,' (well-said).

## Krishna rejects the throne:

During all the discussions between the elders, Krishna sat quietly. When his name was mentioned, he stood up with folded hands and in tone of high respect said: 'Lord. You have conferred on me a high honor, the highest perhaps in the world; for Mathura is the crown of the earth. But, I am not fit for this responsibility. I know only the way of a cowherd. I cannot be the king.'

‘No; No. My son: You are the fittest choice.’

‘Lord of the Yadavas. Have mercy on me. I know what qualities, a ruler should possess. I have not these qualities. Lord of the men! You alone possess the qualities of a ruler which can keep the Yadavas together; you are loved by the people and you should rule yourself. Venerable father and uncles Akrura & Pradyota shall carry the burden under your directions. I shall be at my Lord’s side always. But, first we have to be initiated into *Kshatriyahood*, master the Vedas and learn the art of warfare.’

Balaram began to laugh by himself. Only three days ago, they were just cowherd boys; and now they are the princes. Krishna had rejected a throne. Balaram went to him and said, ‘Brother Krishna! You are wonderful.’ ‘Because, I have a brother like you,’ replied Krishna. And both smiled.

---

Adapted from ‘Krishnavatara’ by K.M.Munshi.



## **Eternal Friends – Krishna & Arjuna.**

From Krishna's promise was born a sacred kinship.

Wicked prince Kamsa of Mathura had been killed and the throne was restored to Ugrasen, his father. Vrishni Chief Akrura and Shoora Chief Vasudeva were to be the ministers of the king, with Pradyota, Balarama and Krishna as advisers.

From Hastinapur had come Kunti, Vasudeva's sister, along with her five sons and Vidura, the minister to attend the *upanayana* ceremony of Balarama and Krishna. And from the kingdom of Chedi had come queen Shrutashrava, the sister of Vasudeva. Her husband, king Damaghosha could not come and her son - Sishupala - had contemptuously turned down the suggestion to attend the ceremony saying that he had nothing to do with the ceremony of cowherd boys.

Balarama, Krishna and the five sons of Kunti soon developed deep friendship with one another; they would play together and often talked endlessly about the childhood exploits of each other. One day, after taking a bath in the river Jamuna, Krishna asked, 'Arjuna! Is it true that you were born of god Indra?'

'The venerable Vyas told me about this. And so did mother,' replied Arjuna.

'That explains it.' Krishna said.

'What explains it?' inquired Arjuna.

Now that he had asked the question, Krishna wanted to

disclose to him what none but he knew. Krishna started saying: ‘Arjuna. You know that in Vrindavan, I induced the people not to celebrate the festival sacred to god Indra. People were doing it out of fear of the god. I told them not to worship the god out of fear. So, we began to celebrate the festival in which we worshipped mount Govardhan, the trees and the cows. Then god Indra was angry. He thundered, poured rain and lightning on us. All our people would have been washed away but for Giriraj, the Lord of mountains who rose several cubits higher to make place for us. Thus we vanquished god Indra.’

‘What happened afterwards?’ asked Arjuna.

‘When Indra was humbled, we performed a sacrifice in his honor. Then one day, as I was grazing the cows, he came to me in a day dream and said, ‘Krishna. You were right. I want the worship out of love, not of fear.’

I did him honor by prostrating myself before him and then said, ‘Yes. I want you to love us, not to frighten us.’

He said, ‘I only frighten cowards; the brave I love and honor. Will you do me a favor?’

I said, ‘Certainly.’

The god said, ‘I have a son. Stand by him. Promise me.’

I said, ‘Yes. I promise. Then he disappeared without telling me who his son was and where he was to be found. I have been all along wondering where I would find Indra’s son. Then, the other day, mother told me that you are Indra’s son. Now I have found you.’ Saying this, Krishna led Arjuna by the hand.

‘I wish we could always be together,’ Arjuna said sincerely.

‘We shall,’ Krishna said for he felt sure of it. Now he had not one but six brothers. The vista rose before Krishna that all seven of them working together could re-establish *Dharma* and reform the sordid world which surrounded them. At the same time, he felt convinced that that would depend on his being able not to dissipate his energy like other Princes but standing for *Dharma* above everything else, and gathering around him all those who were prepared to do so.

---

Adapted from ‘Krishnavatara’ by K.M.Munshi.

## Secret of Arjuna's Success;

Arjuna confides to Krishna.

Three days after Kamsa's death, Kunti, the sister of Vasudeva and the widow of king Pandu of Hastinapura came to Mathura to attend Balarama's and Krishna's *Upanayana* ceremony. Her five sons and the minister Vidura were also with her. Krishna was about sixteen years. Arjuna was a little younger and was about Krishna's own size - perhaps a little thinner. He was well-shaped and remarkably well-mannered. Both developed good friendship immediately.

One day, Krishna and Arjuna were alone. Krishna said, 'Arjuna! Tell me the latest you have learnt in archery. I am told that you are a master of the art.'

'The latest I learnt was to shoot at a target in the dark. That annoyed Gurudeva Dronacharya very much,' said Arjuna a little modestly.

'What happened?' Krishna asked.

'One day, while I was sitting at my meal, there was a strong wind and the light was blown out. While I continued to eat, the thought came to me that if my hand could carry food to my mouth in darkness, why could I not send my arrow too to its target in darkness. Then, I started practice, night after night, shooting at a target in the dark. It required long and continuous practice. But, then ultimately, I could do it,' said Arjuna, looking at Krishna to find out whether his narration was taken by him as a boast.

‘Your Guru must have been happy about it,’ Krishna said.

‘I think, he was. But as things are at Hastinapura, he could not show that he was happy. If we ever outstripped our cousins, he would immediately be blamed for not teaching them well,’ confessed Arjuna.

---

Adapted from ‘Krishnavatara’ by K.M.Munshi.

# Krishna - the Brahamchari;

A page from the life of Krishna.

## After Kamsa's death:

Krishna had led a free and easy life in Vrindavan. He was past sixteen years when he came to Mathura and had killed Kamsa - the evil ruler of Mathura. On hearing the news of Kamsa's death, queen Kunti along with her five sons (Yudhishira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakul and Sehdeva) and the minister Vidura had come to Mathura from Hastinapur to offer condolences to Devki (Krishna's mother) - the cousin sister of Kamsa and her sister-in-law. At Mathura, Arjun and Krishna became good friends - being of equal age. One day, Arjuna told Krishna that years ago, he and his brothers had been invested with the sacred thread and had led the hard life of a *brahmchari* - celibate student - and their teacher was more than satisfied with their self-imposed discipline. He also informed Krishna that at that time he was a small boy and that he would now find it hard to undergo the rigor of that life.

'Not a bit', Krishna answered. 'I must undergo the rigid discipline of a *brahamchari*. I can't be true to *Dharma* if I don't prepare myself for standing for it. That is all the more reason that I should make up for lost years and I am determined to do it - do it thoroughly. I cannot enjoy life unless I know how to enjoy it and where to stop, so that the enjoyment never ends in gluttony.'

The day after the ceremony of investing Krishna and others with the sacred thread began. At the ceremony, the heads of all the three (Balarama, Krishna and Uddhava) were shaved except for the sacred tuft, and then they wore the sacred thread to the

chant of *mantras*. Each of them was given a deer skin to wear over his shoulder - straps by day and to lie on at night; also a staff, a *kamandalu* (bowl hewn out of wood) and a pair of sandals. Krishna and Balarama now left their father's palace and went to live with Guru Sandipani who put them in a group under the charge of his ablest disciple, Shvetaketu. Others in the group were: Vinda and Anuvinda, the twin princes of Avanti (Ujjain), eighteen years old Sudama whose father had been the friend of Guru Sandipani, and Uddhava.

Now, Krishna was 'reborn' as the *shastras* say: that is, he was a full Arya charged with sacred duties; he had entered the stage of *brahmcharya* (celibate studenthood) during which he was expected to observe strict discipline. As a *brahmchari*, he had to beg for his food. So he stood before mother with his bowl in his hand and uttered: Bhavati, bhiksham dehi. (Lady, give me food by way of alms).

Next day, Krishna went to Trivakra (the hunch-back maid of late Kamsa) who had cooked the nicest food with her own hands and offered it to him when he held out the bowl to her. But, wherever he went for food during these days, prince Rukmi's sister - Rukmini - was sure to be there with Trivakra. She too would insist on putting a fine little morsel in his bowl whoever the lady giving him the food might be. And every time, she did so, she smiled. She was very pretty but forward too.

(Rukmi, the prince of Vidarbha, along with his wife Suvrata and sister Rukmini had come to Mathura as a guest of Kamsa to watch the wrestling match where Kamas was killed by Krishna. After the death of Kamsa, he had agreed to stay for the mourning ceremony because of Guru Sandipani's pressure).

## Krishna's education:

On the twenty-fifth day after the death of Kamsa, Acharya Sandipani and his wandering school took the road along the banks of river Yamuna. Ugrasen, Vasudeva, Devki, Rohini, Akrura together with members of families of some of the chiefs, and a huge crowd of towns-men came to see the departing pupils. Devki was very glad that her son had rejected the rulership of Mathura and gladder than ever that under a master like Sandipani, his son's education, neglected so far, would be completed. After the farewell had been bidden, the caravan took to the road by the side of bank of river Yamuna. Sandipani's school always camped for the night near some village within the easy reach of river.

Shvetaketu, the leader of the group, had never seen a pupil like Krishna who had such a good receptive mind. Once a *mantra* had been chanted, Krishna would reproduce it with meticulous accuracy. If a canon of conduct was once explained to him, he would never forget it and follow it up in the minutest detail. Very soon, Krishna acquired the Vedic knowledge. Then the Guru instructed him in all the intricacies of Vedic wisdom and in supplementary literature such as the Upanishads. They were specially trained in military science, politics and ethics.

There are many rules and regulations to be followed for a *brahmchari*. Krishna and Balarama strictly followed those regulative principles. They underwent the regulations of *brahmcharya* with great devotion. In particular, Krishna could establish friendship with anyone who came in contact with him. He served all with a cheerfulness which made others feel small.

No one could match Krishna and Balarama at running and wrestling. Day after day, under the direction of Guru Sandipani, they practiced archery and wielded the mace and the battle-axe in the way the master taught them. Whereas, Balarama soon excelled in wielding the mace and other weapons which would enable him



to smash the hostile warriors, Krishna liked the *chakra*. From his boyhood, he had an unerring eye and accuracy of aim in throwing a noose around the neck of an obstinate bull. He had lassoed the Kaliya snake under impossible conditions. And, he could easily master the art of whirling the discus around his forefinger and speeding it by giving it a circulatory twist which, after cutting the target in two, would return to him. A few had practiced the use of this weapon, but to Krishna, it was a weapon of weapons.

For sixty-four days, Krishna and Balarama underwent training in arms. They learned all the necessary arts and sciences required in human society and mastered them.

---

Adapted from 'Krishnavatara' by K.M.Munshi,  
and 'KRSNA' by A.C.Swami Prabhupada.

## **Guru Dakshina;**

Krishna's search for Guru's son, and securing *Panchjanya* conch.

In sixty-four days, Krishna and Balarama learned all the necessary arts and sciences. They had acquired Vedic knowledge. Because they were *kshatriyas*, they were specifically trained in military science, politics and ethics.

Guru Sandipani and his pupils were at Prabhasa Tirath (modern Prabhasa). Krishna who had never seen the sea before, fell in love with its constant motion and imperturbable immensity. He also learned how to row and navigate a boat in the sea.

One day, at midnight, when the sea was flooded by moonlight, Krishna saw his Guru walking along the shore, his eyes gazing fixedly at the distant horizon. He could guess the reason for this unhappiness: the Guru was, of course, thinking of his kidnapped son. He went to his Guru and said, 'My Master. I know what is making you unhappy. Can I not do anything to relieve you of your distress? You have called me your favorite pupil. You have been to me more than a father. Let me do something to make you happy,' he said with folded hands.

### **Guru Sandipani's unhappiness:**

'What can you do, Krishna? No one can make me happy. A man's son is his own-self. In life, he is your staff; in death, he saves you from hell. He can never be replaced and never can be forgotten.' On Krishna's insistence, Guru said: Last year, my son Punardatta went to the sea to bathe. There, Panchajana demon of Punyajanas tribe kidnapped him, took him to his ship and sailed

away. He takes his ship to all the seven seas; he may have been killed or sold away him in some far-off land, who knows?

‘Well, I shall try to find that out,’ said Krishna.

Uddhava was Krishna’s earliest playmate and had completely dedicated himself to him. He joined Krishna in making inquiries about the Punyajanas’ ship and came to know about the ship which had arrived. On the fourth night, the master of the ship, Panchajana had made his last deal in Prabhasa and left in a small boat for his ship which was anchored a little out to sea.

### **In search of Guru’s son, Punardatta:**

About midnight, Krishna and Uddhava swam and boarded the ship where they were caught by the crew and next day, brought before the Panchajana, the master of the ship. On being questioned, Krishna said, ‘Noble Chief. We have come to you because we want to join Punardatta who went away with you last year. We loved him as our brother. We want you to take us to him.’

Panchajana appraised the beauty and grace of the boys; they were sure to fetch a big price, he thought. Then, he asked Bhikru, the ship-pilot, to look after the boys properly. While staying with Bhikru, Krishna came to know from him that Punardatta had been taken to Vaivasvatapuri, the City of the Sun, and was bought by its king. It was a strange land where the queen was the Divine Mother and the king was the God of Death, they learnt.

While on the ship for four days, Krishna learnt that a young boy of seventeen was administered six lashes by Panchajana for some misconduct. The boy writhed, shrieked and sobbed in pain, while Panchajana was looking on with a happy smile. At night, Krishna and Uddhava sponged the boy’s wounds with a rag wetted in a little water.

Next day, when this information reached Panchajana, he ordered both the boys to be brought before him and asked them as to why they were tending the boy, last night. Krishna replied that they were trying to send the boy, whom he had got whipped yesterday, to sleep. This infuriated Panchajana while Krishna was saying that ‘our *Dharma* is to go to the help of the poor boy. We are going to look after everyone whom you have whipped.’ This was a sufficient provocation for Panchajana; he lost his patience and snatched the whip from his body-guard, Hukku. The whip came down on Krishna’s back with a whishing sound. With a sudden movement, Krishna caught hold of the whip-cord and jerked the whip out of Panchajana’s hand, and lashed it on him till he fell down on the deck, bleeding

Panchajana was in terrible pain, shrieked aloud and asked for help. Both of his body guards (Hukku and Hullu) would not move; they were terrified and lost in admiration at the boy’s performance. Panchajana lay on the deck in a faint, when Krishna turned to Uddhava and asked him to take Panchajana to his cabin. With the Uddhava’s tending, the ship-master got some relief, and he began to abuse Krishna filthily.

### **Securing the *Panchajanya* Conch:**

Panchajana’s conch lay on the ground – small in size, pink in color and faultless in shape. Krishna applied it to his mouth, played upon it to announce the event and was fascinated with the rich musical notes which issued from it. ‘I will take this conch. I have never seen such a thing of beauty, nor heard such wonderful tones. I shall call it *Panchajanya*, the gift of Panchajana,’ he told Uddhava.

The ship continued to sail merrily, under the pilot (Bhikru)’s directions. It was after midnight that, with his alert senses, Krishna felt some presence drawing near him. He could see a dark crouching form coming near him with what looked like a short

sword uplifted. He jumped up and caught hold of Panchajana's hand which had been raised to kill him. Suddenly, another dark form sprang upon Panchajana from behind, lifted him up in powerful arms and flung him over the deck. The ship passed on as the sea swept away the struggling form of its master, and the star-studded sky looked down in all its splendor.

---

Adapted from 'Krishnavatara' by K.M.Munshi.

**Notes:-**

**Vaivasvatapuri:** One of the ancient sites on the Arabian Sea is said to bear the name of the City of Light. There was also a city near Babylon called Larsa which is translated as the City of the Sun.

According to K.M.Munshi, Vaivasatapuri was situated somewhere across the seas from Saurashtra.

**Panchajana:** A sea-going *rakshasa*

**Punyajanas:** A sea-going people known for their adventurous spirit and dishonest ways. Arabian Sea was the sphere of their activities.

# Krishna recovers Guru's son and restores him to Guruji.

## In the City of Sun:

As the ship was nearing Vaivasvatpuri, the ship-pilot Bhikru told Krishna all he know about it. The City of the Sun, as it is called, was situated in Nagalok near Patala and is ruled by a family of *Nagakanyas* who could fight like men. The king, the husband of the queen, was only the first servant of the queen.

When the ship came in sight of the fort, Krishna sent Uddhava and one of the boys who knew the language of the town a little, to the queen seeking her permission to land. With the permission granted, next day Sri Krishna and Uddhava appeared before the Crown Princess who was the one that counted, not her husband. The Princess welcomed Krishna who replied to the welcome with befitting courtesy and said: 'Divine Princess. I, son of Vasudeva, the Lord of the Shooras and the disciple of the Best of Gurus, Sandipani, salute you.' Looking at the Prince – the husband of the Princess and who was standing nearby - , Krishna felt convinced that he was no other than Punardatta, Guru Sandipani's son.

In reply, the Divine Princess, with royal dignity, replied: 'I offer you, Vaasudeva, a hearty welcome to the City of the Sun on behalf of the Divine Mother.'

Krishna and Uddhava were led to an apartment for the night stay where the young Princess took leave of them. At night, the Prince was ushered in by a stout Nagakanya officer who had come to meet Krishna. After exchanging salutations, the Prince

stood nervously for sometime not knowing how to begin the conversation. At that time, Krishna addressed him, ‘Punardatta. I am glad to find you. Gurudeva has sent you his blessing. He has not forgotten you, even for a moment.’

To Krishna’s query if he was a prisoner here, Punardatta replied: ‘Krishna. Your coming here is going to spell calamity for us all. I cannot return to the father. Even if I can, I will not return. I live here in luxury and have considerable power.’

Krishna was puzzled at this attitude of the Prince. He paused and resumed in slow, affectionate tone, ‘Punardatta. Do you not care for the *dharma* of our glorious ancestors? Has it never struck you that to lead a life of fear and fraud, weltering in the delights of the senses as you have been, is to live as a pet animal.’

Punardatta was listening to Krishna and then he said: It is true that I am sunk in the mud. I cannot leave this land now. Even if I wanted to leave it, I cannot. When I was brought here by the Punyajana *rakshasas*, I was cordially received by the Divine Mother and the Festival of Choice was held. It is the greatest and the most exciting Festival. When the Festival was held, I had to fight the then husband of the Divine Princess. When I killed him, I was wedded to the Princess; in fact, I had no choice. If I had been killed, the other man would have continued to be the Prince. So far, the Divine Mother has not spoken. But if she so commands, you will have to obey and fight in the Festival of Choice. If you refuse to obey, the ancient ordinances are clear; you will be killed by the King.

Krishna became thoughtful for a moment and said with determination: Well. I will discover a way to escape and take you with me.

### **In the presence of Divine Mother:**

Next day morning, Krishna and Uddhava were led to the presence of Divine Mother. The Divine Father, the only person

who had the privilege of being fully armed, stood on one side. At a sign from the Father, the Prince (Punardatta) came forward and invited Krishna to give his message.

After Krishna had introduced himself and offered salutations & presents, the Divine Mother commanded that the new guests (Krishna & Uddhava) shall live with us forever and they shall be one of us. And the Mother returned to her chamber, before Krishna could say anything.

Next day afternoon, when Krishna was discussing with Uddhava their plans for making an escape, the message came that the Divine Mother has issued commands that Krishna will fight for the hand of the Crown Princess, in the Festival of Choice. Hearing this, Krishna was shocked; he could scarcely believe that he had been chosen by the Mother Divine to fight (and kill the Prince – Punardatta) and wed the elder princess. It was at this time that Krishna was called before the Mother Divine and the King in the palace. Unhesitatingly, Krishna said that he doesn't want to fight the Prince; why should I kill the Prince who has done me no harm? He asked.

‘Orders have already been issued to hold the Festival of Choice the day after tomorrow,’ said the King decidedly and explained that if Krishna won't fight the Prince, then he shall have to kill him; there was no scope for discussion.

Once, out of the palace, Krishna met the Prince who spoke in a sullen voice: Vaasudeva. You have been trained in arms under my father, Guru Sandipani, the greatest teacher of warfare. I cannot fight you. You are sure to kill me and his eyes were filled with tears.

Krishna consoled the Prince saying: Don't give up hope; we will find a way out.



Next day, the residents of Vaivasvatapuri assembled at the open space surrounding the arena to watch the fight between Sri Krishna and the Prince. Divine Mother accompanied by the Father came out of the fort, and also the Princesses and the courtiers. Both the contestants entered the arena; soon the attacks and the counter-attacks started. Both combatants appeared equally matched in performance. Punardatta understood what Krishna wanted. He was staging a shadow fight, so that neither of them could be killed by the other. Audience was growing tired of the stalemate. Suddenly, Krishna, by an adroit stroke, sent Punardatta's sword flying into the air, and at the same time letting his own sword flip out of his hand as if by the impact of their swords. Next moment, both the combatants hugged and ran towards the jetty on which the crew of the Punyajana ship were standing. Before the King and the guards could understand the situation, the jetty was cut loose from its moorings with Krishna, Uddhava and Pundardatta having jumped in it, and it was floating in the water – away from the shore. Krishna and friends were now on the ship and looking at the King and the guards who stood near the water – fully dazed.

---

Adapted from 'Krishnavatara' by K.M.Munshi.

Note:- Vaivasvatapuri was situated somewhere across the seas from Saurashtra. The region of Hyderabad in Sind was called Patala, right up to the advent of Alexander. Some island in the Arabian sea or a port was ruled by the Naga king Dhumravarma who gave his daughters in marriage to one of the ancestors of Sri Krishna.

(From 'Krishnavatara' by K.M.Munshi.)

## Gopis visit Mathura to see Krishna;

Gopis & gopas in the palace of Krishna.

Krishna never returned to Vrindavan from Mathura. It is as if he wanted to teach a lesson that life is an ever-rolling wheel of time. The wise person is the one who, like the child, lives entirely in the present, unburdened by the memories of the past, however sweet, unworried by the prospects of the future, however dark. Krishna's life became that of a prince and the adviser of princes, though. He never accepted the throne himself. Henceforth, he lived in the palaces and courts and council chambers of monarchs, with as much ease and grace as he had lived in the hills and dales of forests of Vrindavan.

It is said that on one occasion, unable to bear their separation from Krishna, the *gopis* and *gopas* made a pilgrimage to the city of Mathura. It was the time of the harvest festival when the earth lies fallow for a while, so that the people may rest. When Krishna heard of their arrival, he had them brought with all state and dignity into the audience chamber meant for kings. Krishna received them with the greatest of love, dressed in the robes and jewels of a prince. But the rustics (*gopis* and *gopas* of Vrindavan) would not look at him. With eyes cast to the ground and heads averted, they stood there, uttering not one word, casting not one glance in the direction of the prince who stood before them, overwhelming them with his magnificence. Then Krishna understood what the matter was and, going out of their presence for a moment, he put off the robes and jewels of state and came back to them clad in the simple attire of the cowherds. On his head was the tiny circlet with the peacock's feather. In his right hand, he carried the flute, around his neck was the garland of wild flowers (*vanamala*) and his feet were bare. When they saw him like this, in the form of

Gopalakrishana, the cowherd Krishna, they were overjoyed. They begged him to play the flute for them; they romped and frolicked and sang all day with him in the royal gardens, as they used to do in the meadows and woods of Vrindavan. Recalling the happy days of the past, they reminded him of his boyhood pranks, and the lord played and danced with them with as much abandon and as much skill as he played the game of king-maker.

---

Adapted from 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Vanamali.

## **Jarasandha's march on Mathura;**

Krishna and Balarama flee; Mathura is saved.

Balarama had returned home (Mathura) from Sandipani's ashram a little earlier. Krishna returned after restoring Punardatta - the Guru's son - to the latter. When he arrived at Mathura, the whole town, led by king Ugrasen, came out to receive him. Jubilations were held and, by a unanimous verdict of the Yadavas, the young son of Vasudeva, the savior, was invited to lead them.

### **Jarasandha's march on Mathura:**

Jarasandha - the emperor of Magadha - was in ungovernable rage. His son-in-law, his able lieutenant had been murdered by his nephew; his two daughters had become widows in their teens. The power that he had built around his ambitious son-in-law had been demolished, and that too, by two boys!

His widowed daughters wailed and wailed, and cursed the father who could not protect their husband, the brave and loyal ruler of Mathura. Then the Emperor swore on oath: 'I swear by the Lord of gods that I shall never rest till I send the sons of Vasudeva to the land of Yama, the God of death. He summoned his staunch allies: Damaghosha of Chedi (present Bundelkhand), Rukmi - the Prince of Vidarbha, Vinda and Anuvinda - the Princes of Avanti (Ujjain), Varda - the Chief of Trigarta, king Shalva and others, to join him in his march on Mathura. The two sons of Vasudeva must pay the price of their heinous crime.

## **Panic in Mathura:**

Messengers ran to and fro. After the preparations were complete and the rainy season was over, Jarasandha, the emperor of Magadha marched on Mathura. When he was a few days' away from Mathura, the news came to the Yadavas that the mighty conquerer was approaching the town to demand the heads of Krishna and Balarama.

Mathura learnt of the approach of the confederate forces of Jarasandha and a universal panic followed. King Ugrasen immediately called the council of war of the principal Yadava chiefs. Among them were Vasudeva and his brothers, Akrura and Vikadru, the guardian of the fort, Gada and Shanku, leaders of the younger chiefs. Krishna was there, seated at the right hand side of the King. With him were Balarama and Uddhava. On his left was the old Gargacharya, the sage.

On the strength and defence of Mathura, Vikadru gave an account to the gathering thus: Prince Kamsa, now in heaven, was sure of the strength which his alliance with Jarasandha gave him, and left Mathura practically unguarded; our fort has not yet been fully repaired; the moat has been in neglected condition for years; we have not a sufficient stock of arms, or of food stuffs to stand a siege; we cannot stand a siege for more than a few days.

Akrura detailed the situation thus: Our friends have practically deserted us. King Damaghosha of Chedi is inscrutable; he owes his kingdom to Jarasandha and has joined the march of Jarasandha. I returned from Hastinapur practically with empty hands. The venerable Bhishma was very sympathetic, but was not ready to pledge support. King Dhritrashtra was elusive; his son Duryodhana thinks that we are allied to the sons of Pandu and, though he did not say so in words, was hostile. If Mathura becomes powerful, he is afraid, his cousins will grow powerful too.

King Ugrasen sighed and spoke, 'It is clear that we cannot stand our defence for long. Unfortunately, all the kings who surround

Mathura are not disposed to help us. Krishna! We have implicit confidence in you, your foresight and your wisdom. Suggest to us the best course possible.’

‘Lord. I have no doubt about the course to adopt. We are too weak to resist the enemy at present. Jarasandha only wants two of us. The best thing, therefore, will be for us to leave the town for some distant spot. On learning that we have fled, Jarasandha will not waste his time in besieging Mathura, but try to follow us,’ said Krishna.

### **Flight from Mathura:**

Reluctantly, Vasudeva (Krishna’s father), king Ugrasen and other chiefs agreed to the proposal thus made. But where should they go? King Damaghosha of Chedi, King Bishmaka & his son Rukmi of Vidarbha were dependent on Jarasandha for their existence. King Dhritrashtra of Hastinapur was elusive. Therefore, on the advice of sage Gargacharya, it was decided that Krishna and Balarama should go to Gomantaka Hill where Parsuram Bhargava lives and is closely known to the sage. The sage assured that he himself would go to Bhargava and beg him to look after the young boys.

After leaving the court, Krishna went to take leave of his mother Devki. Her voice was choked and she complained in a motherly tone, ‘My son. Am I never going to have you to myself? To be free from anxiety about you?’

Krishna assured her smilingly that she need not worry about him because he was born of a goddess and he further informed her that Uddhava was coming with them. And, next day, before dawn broke, Krishna, Balarama and Uddhava rode on the best horses that Mathura could provide and speeded on their way.

---

Adapted from ‘Krishnavatara’ by K.M.Nunshi.

## On the way to Gomantaka\* Hill

According to mythology, Sahya mountain is situated in the northern portions of the Western Ghats - the mountains of the Konkan. The mountain Mahendra is also situated in the northern part along with Sahya mountain.

\* Goa was initially referred to as Gomantaka.

### Meeting the sage Parsurama:

After a long and tedious journey, Krishna and Balarama reached the slopes of Mount Mahendra, and with a feeling of reverence, approached the *ashram* of sage Parsurama Bhargava and prostrated themselves before him. Thereafter, they introduced themselves to the sage saying: Lord of wisdom, Guru of all gurus, we, the sons of Vasudeva, seek your blessings. After some discussions and knowing the circumstances in which Krishna and Balarama left Mathura to seek a safe haven, sage Bhargava said, 'Farther away, I know of the Gomantaka Hill on the shores of the sea. That would suit you.' He further explained to them, 'It is an inaccessible hill. A very harmless and hospitable people live there. They are called *garudas*, because they march to battle with eagle faces. They are devoted to me because once I saved them from destruction. Their chief is a very kind man. He will make you happy and will never fail you.' Both the brothers agreed.

In the footprints of the sage, Krishna and Balarama climbed the winding trail which ran up the steep incline to Gomantaka. On the top was a fairly large plateau with running streams and groves of shady trees. When the people residing on the hill learnt of the arrival of the sage, they flocked to him - men, women and children - and fell at his feet, offered coconuts and flowers, and sought

his blessings. The sage hailed them affectionately - many by their names.

Then the Chief of the *garudas* came with his sons; they all wore masks which made their faces look like eagles - a mark of royal dignity which they wore on important occasions. Their womenfolk also followed and offered worship to the Master.

After Krishna and Balarama had begun to feel that they were welcome there, the Master prepared to depart. Just before leaving, he said to Krishna: Son of Vasudeva. I know all you have done and what you are. Don't forget, you have a mission; to secure the triumph of *Dharma* which affirms life and makes it god-like. Your people who call you a god are right. They have faith in you. But you must have faith in yourself. You can be a god only if you fill yourself with the faith that you are one. I will now go. Perhaps, I will not meet you again. But my blessing is with both of you. And if you need me, send one of the *garudas*. He will find me out wherever I happen to be.

So saying, the Master blessed them and also the worshipping crowd of the *garudas* which had gathered to bid him farewell and beg him to return soon. Then, with the battle axe in his hand which he was never separated from, he stepped down the hill with the agility of a youngster, a living symbol of unfading might.

While at Gomantaka Hill, Sri Krishna and Balarama were preparing and sharpening their armaments with the help of *garudas*. Krishna made the bow & arrows, and the mace which he had fashioned for himself. He also made a Chakra - discus - shining like the midday sun with a hundred tiny, razor-sharp spikes on its rim. The bow was named Sharnga, the mace Kaumodaki and the Chakra (discus) Sudarshana - the names destined to resound through time. Balarama fashioned a mace for himself out of the trunk of a big tree and it was named Samvartaka. Then, they worshipped them and invoked in them the strength of the gods.



‘And Garuda, my friend, shall be guardian of my arms. He shall always bear my standard, and whenever he is not present, my standard shall bear his image,’ declared Krishna. ‘Now, let Jarasandha come,’ roared Balarama.

---

Adapted from ‘Krishnavatara’ and ‘Bhagvan Parasurama’  
by K.M.Munshi, and other classics.

## **Jarasandha is humiliated;**

Krishna saves him from death.

### **Jarasandha's chase:**

Emperor Jarasandha along with his forces was marching to Mathura and was camping on the banks of river Yamuna - two days' march from Mathura. A messenger brought the news that three persons had come from Mathura to meet the emperor. When the three, Akrura, Brihadbala (the son of Vasudeva's brother, Devibhaga) and Gada were brought in, they after salutation informed the emperor that Krishna and Balarama had left Mathura by night three days ago. They requested the emperor humbly that it would scarcely be Dharma to destroy Mathura for the fault of sons of Vasudeva who had fled; even if he destroyed Mathura, his pledge to kill the two boys would remain un-redeemed. Akrura again requested, with due humility, forgiveness for Mathura.

After listening to Akrura, emperor Jarasandha asked him to wait outside, and then he talked in a flattery language to Brihadbala assuring him of his being placed on the throne of Mathura.

From Brihadbala, he came to know that the two boys have gone to a far off place to the South. Then, recalling Akrura inside, the emperor announced that he would not levy a heavy tribute on Mathura and would be satisfied with twenty-five elephants, a hundred chariots and two men's weight in gold; he warned them that if ever Krishna and Balarama return to Mathura, they must be handed over to him.

Now, Jarasandha turned to his friends - king Damaghosha

of Chedi, Rukmi - Prince of Vidarbha & others, and came to the decision that it will be easy to find the two boys; he will only take twenty chariots and fifty riders, so that they can catch up with the fleeing boys with ease, and that they must go straight from here, as soon as the tribute is paid by Mathura.

### **Krishna and Balarama at Gomantaka Hill:**

While at Gomantaka Hill, Krishna and Balarama were surveying the hills and had kept themselves busy in making armaments for themselves and the *garudas*. One day, a *Garuda* youth who had gone down the Hill, brought back the news that the King Jarasandha of Magadha had arrived with forces and was camping down the Hill; there were other kings also with their forces. Krishna and Balarama knew the reasons of Jarasandha's arrival and camping.

Jarasandha and his friendly kings were camping at the foot of the Gomantaka Hill, hoping to punish the two young Yadavas boys in a couple of days. But as they studied the steep, unscalable slopes of the Hill, their hopes turned to doubts. Attempts were made to find a way to climb the Hill. One narrow, tortuous path, where barely two persons could climb abreast, wound itself to the top, crossing pointed rocks and finding deep ravines. Some adventurous soldiers decided to reconnoiter and began to climb the Hill. They had only gone a little way when those in the camp saw some men coming at the top and pushing boulders over which hurtled down the path. The rocks rolled on, hit the climbers and carried them into the ravine below.

At things were, two men on the top of the Hill could defy a whole army for many days and there appeared to be quite a few hundred on the top.

For two days, Jarasandha had consultations with his council of war and after detailed consultations, it was decided to set fire, in

the night, on all sides, as the slopes of the Hill, right up to the top, are covered with dry grass. By tomorrow, the forests on the top will have caught fire and destroyed everyone there, including Krishna and Balarama. And, the next day, the evil plan was implemented by setting fire to the dry grass.

Krishna was awakened by a screech from young *Garudas*. Led by *Garudas*, Krishna and Balarama rushed to the edge of the Hill and saw it engulfed by fire from all sides. A strong wind was blowing and the approaches to the Hill were enveloped in a rapidly devouring conflagration. Cries of distress from *Garudas* arose as they saw the dried grass on the slopes catching fire and lighting up the dark moonless night with its leaping flames. The Chief fell at Krishna's feet, praying and seeking his protection from this hell-fire.

'Come with me, all of you, men and women. Light your torches. Take whatever you have - clubs, maces, ploughs, whatever is handy. We will quench the fire. I will show you, how?' said Krishna and then he turned to his elder brother and said: Balarama let us put on our armors and take up our arms.

Soon, they were at the place what looked like two ridges but which, years ago, were man-made dams. A little scrapping uncovered the walls of uneven stones. With a little more effort, a breach was made in the dam and sea water rushed in. Then they ran to the other side of the Hill. A breach was made in the other dam also and the water rushed into the moat-like depression which surrounded the Hill and started gushing down.

### **Jarasandha is humiliated:**

It was past midnight when the hiss and roar of rushing waters work up Jarasandha and his allies who were busy in merry-making. They rubbed their eyes and looked on helplessly as the base of the Hill was girdled from both sides by torrents of sea water, quenching

the fire. A panic seized them. No one said a word, though all felt that the son of Vasudeva who was reputed to possess miraculous powers had done this. Jarasandha's brow was clouded; he, his allies and their forces were thrown in utter confusion.

When the eastern horizon was tinted by the rising dawn, the dazed kings and their men saw in their midst the giant, Balarama, spreading terror and destruction with a plough. On the other side, on a rock stood Krishna, stringing a mighty bow. Each arrow sped from it with unerring precision and claimed its victim. As the sun arose, the allied kings saw the weird-looking, walking eagles with flint arrows and hatches rushing forward with screeches towards the bowmen and servitors of their party who were hiding behind trees and bushes. Soon, Balarama was face to face with Jarasandha shouting: where are you, Jarasandha? I have come for you! Come on, Jarasandha. The two combatants were well matched. Furiously, the combat continued, all the others around them standing still to watch it knowing well that if Jarasandha died, an empire would collapse.

Soon, Jarasandha felt the crushing weight of the arm of his opponent. The folly of such adventure as he had undertaken flashed into his mind. He tried to look around for some escape. But, before he could find a way, a shattering blow came from Balarama and Jarasandha found himself felled on the ground with his mace falling away from his hand.

‘Brother. Stay your hand. His time has still to come’, said Krishna, arresting Balarama's arm ready to bring down the mace on Jarasandha's head.

Jarasandha saw Balarama's threatening arm arrested and shook in such awe as he had never felt in his life. He had heard of Krishna but had never seen him before. Now, he felt the presence - the graceful body, the face of charm and dignity, the eyes flashing an irresistible smile of triumph.

‘Take, take the Chakravarti in your chariot. He is not well,’ said Krishna to prince Anuvinda who had sided with Jarasandha. Both Krishna and Anuvinda were the pupils of Guru Sandipani, and Anuvinda was spared his life in this battle by the former.

Jarasandha felt more humiliated than ever before. He, the great conqueror was given the gift of his life, by this young cowherd, the person he most hated. A fury raged in his heart. But he felt impotent. He hurriedly climbed into Anuvinda’s chariot; some straying horses were caught, yoked to it and the emperor was rapidly borne away.

And, young Garudas, in wild ecstasy, let out screeches so full of triumph that it echoed along the slopes of Gomantaka.

---

Adapted from ‘Krishnavatara’ by K.M.Munshi.

# **Shrigalava, the king of Karavirapura\* is killed by Krishna.**

\* Present-day Kohlapur

## **Uddhava sent on the mission of peace:**

In the ancient times, there was a sect which worshipped VAASUDEVA as the Supreme Being. Galva *rishi* belonged to this sect and had come all the way to Karavirapura. He had great influence on the ruling family and had established an ashram there. When a son was born to the young king of Karavirapura with his blessings, the infant was named Shrigalava. After Galva rishi died, the king of Karavirapura, being egoist, disbanded the ashram and made himself the head of the sect. In due course of time, by threats, bribes or punishment, he made most of the people join the sect. Later, he proclaimed himself VAASUDEVA, the God of gods.

Jarasandha, the emperor, had been defeated by Krishna and Balarama at the foothill of Gomantaka and there was a big celebration by the *Garudas*. For two days, the party celebrated the victory. On the third day, Krishna sent Uddhava to Karavirapura with a message to the king there that they would like to pay their respects to great Yadava king there. Balarama disagreed with the friendly overture and informed Krishna that he would not be going.

Uddhava rode to Karavirapura accompanied by some fleet-footed *Garudas*. At the gate of Karavirapura fort, only Uddhava

was allowed to enter the town. Escorted by a fair-skinned officer, he was taken to a stone rest-house intended for the distinguished guests. Next morning, he was sent for by the King. When Uddhava entered the court, he noticed that a number of men and women were offering *aarti* to the King, waving a hundred lights in front of him and singing hymns. What shocked Uddhava most was that some Brahmins who looked like Acharyas, stood all-around the King - offering obsequious worship. After the ceremonies were over, Uddhava offered due salutations to Shrigalava who roared out a question to him, ‘Who are you, stranger? What is your name? And what favors do you want from Lord VAASUDEVA?’

On Uddhava’s reply that he does not seek favors but has come on behalf of his cousin, Krishna Vaasudeva of Mathura, the King thundered saying that he has nothing to do with Krishna who has killed his maternal uncle and son-in-law of his friend, the lord of Magadha, Jarasandha. When Uddhava mentioned that Krishna and Balarama have already driven away Jarasandha who is now fleeing back to Magadha, and had wounded Rukmi - Prince of Vidarbha -, Shrigalava glared at him and said, ‘Uddhava. Go and tell your friend Krishna that we will permit him to see us only if recognizes us as VAASUDEVA, the Supreme Lord of the three worlds.’

### **Uddhava is imprisoned:**

Uddhava lost his patience and instinctively uttered: Krishna Vaasudeva. Before he could say anything, the King again thundered: Uddhava, you have committed a sacrilege; you will go to hell unless you acknowledge us as VAASUDEVA - the Supreme God. And on King’s gesture, twenty attendants, with lances in their hands, fell upon Uddhava and binding with ropes, led him away from the King’s presence. Uddhava was brought up to what looked like the mouth of a well, and unceremoniously flung into it.



Uddhava noticed that he was in a cave. At the other end of the cave, he saw some elderly Acharyas. While he was wondering, that a familiar voice came from behind and Uddhava saw Punardatta, the son of his guru Sandipani, standing before him. Both embraced each other and then Punardatta explained to Uddhava that his maternal grand father - Rudracharya - had been imprisoned by the King because the former had declined to accept the King Shrigalava as the Supreme Being; his father - Sanidpani - had sent him to negotiate the release of the grandfather with the King who did not yield; instead, he put him also in this prison. Thereafter, Uddhava narrated his story to Punardatta of his being thrown in the prison.

‘We must find a way out, as we did at Vaivasvatpuri,’ said Uddhava.

Sometime in the afternoon, two men - an officer and his assistant - were lowered into the cave in a basket. As soon as they came out of the basket, that Uddhava grappled with the officer and Punardatta with the assistant. The way the officer was grappled, he felt puzzled and asked the grappler if he was the guru Sandipani’s pupil. And, Uddhava quickly recognized that it was Shvetaketu, the guru’s pupil under whom he had got his training. Both recognized each other. Then, Uddhava and Punardatta narrated their stories as to how they happened to be here in this hell, while Shvetaketu’s assistant was lying unconscious.

### **Shvetaketu’s story:**

Shvetaketu started saying: Before you, Uddhava & Krishna left in the Punyajana ship, I happened to go to the shrine of Mahadeva (Somnath), God of gods and there saw a tall, slim and beautiful girl. She would smile at me whenever I looked at her. She praised my chanting of *matras* and my senses darkened my mind. She took me to the grove where the party from Karavirapura had camped. She was a princess, the daughter of the brother of king Shrigalava.

Her name was Shaibya.

We used to talk and walk together. She told me many things about king Shrigalava and Karavirapura, and one day asked me to accompany her to her kingdom. She looked at me with loving glances and spoke in such a way that I surrendered - unwilling though I was to leave guru Sandipani and the ashram. I did not go back to Gurudeva and accompanied Shaibya to her kingdom.

I was received by king Shrigalava with honors and knowing about my knowledge of arms, the king made me head of their school of military training. Soon, I was called to more confidential duties.

While Shvetaketu was narrating his story, Punardatta's grandfather, Rudracharya, paused in front of them and said, 'Tell him, if you dare, my son! There are still men in this world who prefer death to accepting untruth and Shrigalava is a living lie.' Saying this with quiet dignity, the old man slowly went on his way, and Uddhava said to Shvetaketu if you are to be true to Krishna, your beloved comrade, then help find a way to escape.

Shvetaketu, overwhelmed by a sense of shame, looked down and said, 'I will help you escape. Tell me, how?' And then, Uddhava put on the regulation, loin-cloth, silver-belt, necklace and armlet of the assistant who still lay unconscious, and went up with Shvetaketu in the basket as a subordinate official of Shrigalava.

## **Shrigalava is killed by Sri Krishna:**

Next day morning, Shrigalava, the self-proclaimed VAASUDEVA, the God of gods, reached the place where the offerings had been stalked. Chants of praise for Lord VAASUDEVA were sung. As the ceremonial was at its climax, the keeper of the fortress came riding on the horse, and after due prostration informed the king that Krishna, the Yadava of Mathura has arrived at the gate and wanted permission to enter the fort to pay his

respects to the Lord. On King's bidding, Shvetaketu left the court on his horse, went to the fort-gate and came back to report that the visitor (Sri Krishna) has come alone, leaving his brother and his men behind, to make friends with the Lord of Karavirapura; he has asked for one boon: to send his friend Uddhava back to him and release the Acharyas who have been detained; if Uddhava and Acharyas are not released, then he will force open the fort-gate and release them himself.

Shrigalava laughed contemptuously. His face was aflame and he declared that he shall go himself and destroy the cowherd with his own divine hands.. Chariot was immediately brought by the Master of the Chariots. The King stepped in, took his seat on its high-set throne and clattered through the streets to the fort-gate.

No sooner did Krishna see Shrigalava's chariot rushing forward through the gate, than he pulled at the reins of the horses and blew out the conch, *Panchajanya*, greeting the King and said, 'King Shrigalava Vaasudeva of Karavirapura, I, Krishna Vaasudeva of Mathura, salute thee and offer thee my greetings.' Shrigalava disregarded the greetings, drew an arrow from his golden quiver and shot at Krishna roaring, 'There is only one Vassudeva in the three worlds.' The arrow missed its target.

Sri Krishna stood up in his chariot-seat, unloosed the Chakra from its throng and whirled it, as he alone knew how. Before Shrigalava could aim his second arrow, the Sudarshana Chakra had sped from Krishna's finger and slit the throat of Shrigalava and had spun back into Krishna's hands. Shrigalava's body tumbled from the chariot; his charioteer, frightened, could not control the horses which ran wherever they liked, dragging the golden chariot behind them.

Krishna entered Karavirapura with his chariot-Garuda screeching in wild delight. Shrigalava being dead and Shvetaketu, the commander, absent, there was practically no resistance from

the warriors of Karavirapura. Soon Balarama also arrived and Punardatta, Shvetaketu and the learned Acharyas found themselves free from the hell.

Shrigalava was cremated with royal honors. His magic of Vaasudeva worship with himself as God, was dispelled in a day. When the thirteen days' mourning had passed, Shakradeva (Shrigalava's minor son) was anointed the King of Karavirapura with the Queen Padmavati as his guardian. Rudracharya accepted the office of royal preceptor and Punardatta was deputed to be the tutor of the young King. Queen Padmavati offered gratitude and tribune to Sri Krishna.

Damaghosha and Krishna had long talks with Shvetaketu and thereafter they took to their respective destinations.

---

Adapted from 'Krishnavatara' by K.M.Munshi.

# **Krishna returns to Mathura;**

On the way, Balarama wins a bride.

## **Balarama wins a bride:**

Emperor Jarasandha had been defeated and humiliated, and the king Sriganava of Karavirapura had been killed. It was now the time for Krishna and Balarama to return to Mathura. By slow stages and stopping on the way whenever the rains impeded their progress, both the brothers along with king Damghosha were returning back to their home, with Uddhava placed in charge of the caravan.

The caravan reached Ujjayini (Ujjain), where in Guru Sanidipani's ashram, both the brothers met king Kukudmin who was once the ruler of Kushasthali (Dwarka) and now, after being defeated and driven out of his kingdom by the Punyajana *rakshasas*, was living in a cave there. With the help of king Damgoshha, Uddhava and the king of Prabhasa, a contingent of more than one hundred and twenty warriors under the command of Balarama attacked the Punyajanas, recaptured Kushasthali and anointed Kukudmin the king there. In gratitude, the king offered the hand of his only daughter Revati to Balarama who accepted it without hesitation.

## **Krishna arrives at Mathura:**

Meanwhile, Krishna was on the way to Mathura. When he reached Mathura, the whole population headed by king Ugrasen and Vasudeva came to receive him. Their redeemer had returned victoriously, having vanquished no less a king than the Chakravarti

Jarasandha. It was a triumph such as Mathura had never witnessed within the living memory. Everyone talked of the great events - the achievements at Gomantaka and Karavirapura. The Yadavas, after drifting aimlessly among quarrels and intrigues had found a soul. They, by a common unspoken impulse, responded to Krishna's sentiments when he announced that the walls of Mathura were to be strengthened.

### **Yadavas of Mathura are furious:**

Yadavas were furious. None of the Yadava chiefs of Mathura had been invited at Rukmini's swayamvara. It was an insult to them. Their honor is stake, the chiefs felt. At the same time, they agreed that the swayamvara is just a facade for Rukmini's marriage to Shishupal. It was already settled that the kings and princes selected by the emperor Jarasandha will be as the guests and the emperor would see to it that no-one seriously competed with Shishupal who could then win the bride as a matter of course. This is *adharma* - Yadavas said.

The Chiefs discussed the situation thus created. There was no doubt that it was aimed at humiliating the Yadavas and in a way to isolate them from the community of royal houses. It was, however, equally clear that any attempt on the part of Yadavas to intervene by force would prove disastrous. Nonetheless, the younger group led by Satyaki and others were all for taking strong steps to retrieve their honor. They wanted to go to swayamvara uninvited and, if necessary, to carry the princess by force. At that time, King Ugrasen turned to Krishna who had remained silent all the time.

'Vaasudev! You have not spoken a word. What do you think we should do?' asked the King.

'Lord. Forgive me if I disagree with what has been said so far. King Bhishmaka is right in not inviting us,' said Krishna and

continued, ‘There is no insult offered to us at all. In a swayamvara, only the kings and princes are generally invited. You, Lord, at your age cannot be expected to compete and no crown prince has been installed by you so far. Further, king Bhishmaka would want his daughter to marry not to a Chief, but to a king or crown prince. Best of Kings! None among the Yadava Chiefs has a place in the swayamvara of Bhishmaka’s daughter.’

There was silence in the assembly when the King Ugrasen intervened to say, ‘You, Krishna, are more than a crown prince. I am willing to offer you the throne. You only have to agree and I will hand over my kingship to you.’

‘I still think the same way, Lord,’ said Krishna with a smile. ‘Best of Kings! You have always been very kind to me but I am content to be what I am - a *gopala*. But if you are pleased to listen to my advice, install a crown prince of your own choice. Lord! You were thinking of installing Brihadbala as *yuvaraja*. Install him as *yuvaraja*; thereafter, send a message to Bhishmaka that an invitation be sent out to Prince Brihadbala,’ resumed Krishna. ‘If he refuses, it will be an insult; then if the venerable Lord so decide, we can avenge the insult.’

Note:- Brihadbala was the son of the deceased prince Kamsa’s sister. When he came to know of his being installed as *yuvaraja*, he went to Ugrasen and pleaded, ‘Lord! Krishna was very generous when he suggested that I should be *yuvaraja*. But, Krishna is the real savior of the Yadavas. If he is not a god, he is god-like in every way. Unaided, he and Balarama have routed Jarasandha and his friends. He is the noblest of us all, the most heroic, the most devoted to *dharma*. It would be wrong of me to take advantage of his goodness and displace him.’

Considering the situation, all those present at the assembly said in one voice, ‘Govinda. We have complete faith in you. Do as you think best.’ And Krishna said in an apologetic smile, ‘First

things first. Join me in making the Yadavas build a good strength; and I have already told you that false swayamvaras are sinful; so is the kidnapping of unwilling princesses.’ It was then decided in the assembly that all the Chiefs and the young Yadavas should undergo intense training under Guru Sandipani, and be prepared to go to war, if necessary.

In the meantime, Acharya Swetaketu who had come to the town informed Krishna that, in no circumstances, princess Rukmini will marry Brihadbala, Shishupala or any other king or prince. She is devoted to Krishna and will marry him and him alone.

---

Adapted from ‘ Krishnavatara ’ by K.M.Munshi.



# **Jarasandha's strategy & Rukmini's Resolve;**

Protestation against marrying Shishupala.

## **Jarasandha's strategy:**

Jarasandha had been defeated by Sri Krishna and Balarama. He felt more humiliated than ever. He, the great conqueror was given the gift of his life by this young cowherd, the person he most hated. A fury raged in his heart, but he felt impotent. The sons of Vasudeva had grown very powerful. There was no doubt, they could not be eliminated easily; he would have to work up patiently to a situation in which he could do so. Wounded and hurt, he was fleeing away in prince Anuvinda's chariot, but his scheming brain had arrived at a conclusion.

A few days later, when he reached Kundinapura, the capital of Vidarbha, the king Bhishmaka received him with hospitality. There, Jarasandha explained his strategy to Bhishmaka which was that he would like Rukmi to wed his (Jarasandha)'s grand-daughter, and Rukmini will be wedded to Shishupala, the son of Damaghosha - the ruler of Chedi. That will bring into a closer alliance, the three royal houses - strong enough to defeat the Yadavas and Vasudeva's two sons. Bhishmaka was surprised at the glow of happiness on the face of his son, Rukmi who thought that he would now be in the same position as Kamsa, the emperor's son-in-law was and would be the right hand man of the emperor. Interrupting enthusiastically, Rukmi said, 'I would like to have Shishupala as my sister's husband. He is a brave man and generous too. He would make a fine husband for Rukmini.'

To a suspicion expressed by Bhishmaka that in his family, the daughters are wedded after a swayamvara, and only to the king/prince who is chosen by the bride for his valor, the emperor explained, ‘Bhishmaka. I can manage the swayamvara. Shishupala is a great warrior; he will win the bride all right. Leave it to me. I will see that there is nobody else to compete and win the bride. And, in Magadha, we don’t follow the custom of swayamvara. As soon as Rukmini is married to Shishupala, you must all come to Girivraja and we shall celebrate the marriage. Let us keep this to ourselves. I will have a talk with Shishupala first. Damaghosha will readily agree to the scheme. In the meantime, when the rains are over, noble Bhishmaka can send invitations to the kings and princes whom we select to attend the swayamvara.’

Preparations started for holding the swayamvara by Bhishmaka and Rukmi. Messengers were sent to invite the chosen princes to come to the swayamvara.

### **Rukmini in tears:**

When Rukmini came to know of the preparations being made for her swayamvara and the strategy of Jarasandha to get her married to Shishupala, she went to her father, king Bhishmaka, with tears in her eyes and said, ‘Father. Is your plan to sell me complete?’

‘Why you talk like this, Rukmini. We all are doing this for your good,’ replied her father. Rukmi, the crown prince of Vidarbha happened to come there at that time and said, ‘Father. Rukmini has no sense; she cannot understand what is good for her.’

‘Don’t I?’ She replied sarcastically. ‘Listen, my brother. Jarasandha is a great emperor. He has lost his prestige; his son-in-law has been killed by a cowherd. You can take his place by marrying your sister to Shishupala, and in return, the emperor will marry his grand-daughter to you; then you will be the master of all and lead Jarasandha’s army to Mathura, get hold of that cowherd

and cut his throat.’

In utter helplessness, Bhishmaka folded his hands before his daughter. ‘Please, please, Rukmini. Don’t talk of such inauspicious things, when we are discussing your wedding. I wish I could help you. The swayamvara must be held. You can, if you like, choose any other prince, rather than Shishupala, but he won’t accept you. Jarasandha wants you to be wedded to Shishupala only.’

‘You want it too?’ Rukmini asked.

‘Of course, I do,’ said Bhishmaka. ‘I have not forgotten how Jarasandha made my father retire and seated me on the throne. If we resisted, the Vidarbha chiefs would have been destroyed and Kundinapura reduced to ashes. You don’t know, my child, what we had to pass through then; you were not even born.’

‘So, I am the key to open the door to imperial power. I know the scheming of my brother,’ Saying this in anger, she left with the resolve that she will not allow the scheming of his brother to succeed.

---

Adapted from ‘Krishnavatara’ by K.M.Munshi.

# Rukmini's Swayamvara;

Krishna disturbs Rukmini's swayamvara and frustrates Jarasandha's plan.

## Arrival at Kundinapura:

Regular exercises started. The chariots were made ready and stuffed with war material. A couple of days ahead of the swayamvara, four hundred chariots, with two Yadavas each were on their way to Kundinapura, the capital city of Vidarbha. Riding in a chariot, Satyaki went in advance, reigned in the horses of his chariot at the city gates and blew the conch. The keeper of the city gates came out and received the message: The best of Yadavas, Krishna Vaasudeva has come in peace and friendship to pay his respects; our men are going to camp half a *yojna* from the fort; the noble Vaasudeva wants to come in just by himself accompanied by his friend Uddhava and a few nobles. I am awaiting permission to convey the King's commands to the noble Vaasudeva.

King Bhishmaka, by temperament, a timid man, was in despair when he heard the message. Immediately, he drove to his father Kaishika's palace. Jarasandha, Rukmi and other royal guests were baffled at this unexpected turn of events. Grandfather Kaishika was firm. Krishna was a great hero; he has come to pay him his respects; the laws of Aryan hospitality were clear. Krishna was to be received with all honors.

Next day, Krishna was welcomed with auspicious *mantras* by king Bhishmaka's ministers, as the king had fallen sick. After welcoming with auspicious *mantras*, he was driven to the palace of grandfather Kaishika who received him with full courtesy and affection. Preliminaries over, Kaishika said, 'Vaasudeva. I am so

sorry when Bhishmaka decided not to invite you to this swayamvara. I blamed him for it. However, there was an insuperable difficulty; even the Acharyas found it hard to find a way.’

## **Swayamvara is fraud:**

Krishna smiled in an understanding manner. ‘Venerable Bhoja. I know the difficulties well. I am not a *yuvaraja*. I am not even the eldest son of a chief. I was a cowherd once and I am not sorry that I tended cows. I have no place among the kings. I know it better than Jarasandha or Rukmi. However, Grandfather! What king Bhishmaka is holding is not a swayamvara. It is a fraud and I have come to stop it.’

King Bhishmaka had also come, in the meantime, and had paid his respects to Krishna who continued in a firm tone, ‘Let us talk to each other frankly, Best of Bhojas. You agreed to overlook the Yadavas at the instance of their enemies. If king Ugrasen had attended, the false swayamvara could not have been carried through. I have not come to force myself into a royal family. I am a cowherd and cannot take my seat with Princes in a royal swayamvara, I know. But I have a duty to perform towards the Arya Dharma. In the swayamvara, the bride must freely choose the bridegroom from amongst those invited by the father, as the ancient sages have prescribed; but here, you have left no alternative to the Princes; the choice of the bridegroom is already made by the emperor Jarasandha and other guests have agreed to accept it. Is it *Dharma* to use the crown jewel of Bhoja maidens, your daughter, as a pawn in the emperor’s game of destroying the Yadavas of Mathura. Tell me the truth. What have we done to deserve such an act of unfriendliness?’

Bhishmaka was silent for a while. Then he said, ‘It is difficult to postpone the swayamvara, having invited so many noble princes for the purpose. It will be a blot on the fair name of Bhojas.’

‘Would you rather leave it to the Yadavas of Mathura to uphold the ancient law and stop the *adharma*,’ asked Krishna and his tone carried a threat.

## **Swayamvara postponed:**

King Bhishmaka was stunned. Hurriedly, he held consultations with Rukmi, Kaishika, Jarasandha and other allies; it was decided to postpone the swayamvara and not to invite a conflict. Any false swayamvara for an unwilling princess, with a thousand Yadavas warriors in Kundinapura, was out of question, especially when the invited princes had not brought their contingents of warriors, as they were sure that the princess will garland Shishupala only who had the full support of the Emperor. They even expressed their willingness to attend a proper reception to Krishna.

For a moment, Jarasandha was in wild rage; the cowherd had again frustrated his plans. Krishna came with the armed Yadavas but not to fight; he came to stop the swayamvara which he thought was a fraud, but had no intention of wedding the princess himself; he came with presents for the old Kaishika, universally respected among the princes, and had won the hearts of all. An outburst of temper, thought Jarasabdga, would only make matters worse. He regained control over himself and laid aside all his pride and disappointment. To the gathered kings and princes, he said, 'Krishna has come in peace and it is unfair to fight him.' To Rukmi and Shishupala who were furious, he mollified by the promise that he would see that the plan of matrimonial alliance would go through in good time - both cursing their fathers for their cowardice.

A day after, when Krishna along with Uddhava and other Yadavas were readying to start the return journey to Mathura, the whole town was gay with rejoicings. People were dancing, singing and laughing everywhere. Shouts of 'Victory to Krishna Vaasudeva' were renting the air. The happiest amongst all was Rukmini.

---

Adapted from 'Krishnavatara' by K.M.Munshi.

# **Yadavas' departure from Mathura to Dwarka;**

Amazing leadership of Krishna.

To avenge the death of his son-in-law Kamsa, the emperor Jarasandha besieged the city of Mathura not only once but seventeen times. Each and every time, he was defeated by the Yadavas under the leadership of Krishna and Balarama. Jarasandha was now trying to attack Mathura for the eighteenth time.

## **Conditions at Mathura:**

Mathura was under siege. On one side was the emperor Jarasandha with his forces to avenge the killing of his son-in-law – Kamsa – by Krishna, and on the other side was the siege by Kala Yavan, the demon king with his ferocious hordes to loot and destroy the Yadavas and the city of Mathura. King Ugrasen of Mathura and the chiefs of Yadavas knew very well that they cannot save the city and its citizens against this danger. They were simply a terrified people. Forgetting their differences, the king and the chiefs approached Krishna who asked, ‘Are you prepared to die rather than submit to Jarasandha and Kala Yavan? If we have faith, we can still live and be free. I can show you the way if you are ready to die in order to live free.’

‘Please, Krishna. Tell us what to do and we will do it – even if it be to immolate ourselves on the funeral pyre to save our honor,’ said the king.

Krishna explained, ‘Kala Yavan will reach Mathura earlier

than Jarasandha, but still he will take a month or more. Let us leave Mathura, all of us – men, women, children, servants, horses, cattle and elephants – before he arrives here. There is a land where we can go; a land where the king and the people are ready to welcome you with open arms. Big brother (Balarama) has conquered Kushasthali (Dwarka) for king Kukudmin who is ready to give his throne and his daughter to Balarama. There, we will be safe both from Jarasandha and Kala Yavan, and be the masters of our own lives.

‘But Kushasthali is far, far away,’ said one chief.

‘It is nearer than the land of the God of death,’ said Krishna with a mocking smile. ‘If you don’t want to leave Mathura, make up your mind, here and now. I am willing to abide by your wishes. But, then be ready to face death; and before the enemy arrives, let our women and children court the fire so that they may not fall into the hands of the barbarians. But I give you hope – the hope of a great future. It is a race for life. We have to elude the hordes of Kala Yavan. Have faith and energy; we shall win the race.’

‘Suppose, we don’t?’ asked one.

Krishna continued, ‘We can die only once. There is no choice before us. We may die either way; so let us make a bid for life. My big brother and Uddhava know the way to Kushasthali. It is true that it runs through forests, deserts and swamps. But with them as our leaders, we can’t lose our way and there is no time to waste.’

‘And what about you?’ asked the king Ugrasen.

‘I will keep my word. I will leave Mathura only after all of you have done so. I will watch over your safety, guard the rear and, when need arises, will face Kala Yavan alone if he tries to catch up with you. I don’t want to live if Yadavas are going to die. Noble king! Give us your commands and blessings. On Monday morning



before sunrise, four days hence, the Yadavas shall march forward to a new life.’

### **Exodus starts:**

The Yadavas crawled through forests, swamps and deserts to find safety and freedom on the distant, unknown shores of the sea of Saurashtra.

Balarama and Uddhava led the march of Yadavas’ families. The caravan consisted of chariots, carts drawn by bullocks, horses, mares, cows, camels and elephants. The rear of the caravan was guarded by several young Yadavas led by Satyaki on horseback. With them was Krishna on horseback, pledged to see them all to safety.

It was an arduous journey. Some people died on the way; so did the cattle, horses which could not bear the strain of the journey. Ultimately, they reached the river Lavanika which though usually shallow, was flowing turbulently because of monsoon showers. Most of the procession crossed the river successfully. However, four more days were necessary before the families and their cattle could cross it.

In the evening, Krishna confided to his friend, ‘Listen, Satyaki! Our people are in great danger. Last night, I saw the western sky lit up. The light, I think, proceeds from the camp fires of the army of Kala Yavan. The people who are left on this side of the river cannot cross it in two days; it will require at least four days. If we don’t all cross over before Kala Yavan arrives, he might give up his march to Mathura and follow us; he is a savage brute.’

Krishna continued, ‘I am leaving you now, Satyaki. I will go and meet Kala Yavan alone and somehow or other halt him for two or three days. That will give you time to cross over. Let us hope that the demon does not know about our exodus.’

‘But, my Lord, that demon, Kala Yavan, will kill you,’ said Satyaki.

‘That is what I expect he will do,’ replied Krishna coolly. ‘Why worry? What is death after all? I shall only change old clothes for new; one body for another. I have already shown you the way. Stand by *dharma* and you will never perish. In that faith, I have lived and I want you to live in it. And, Satyaki, there is no time to lose.’ So saying, Krishna embraced Satyaki who was almost in tears, bade him well and rode along with his guide to meet Kala Yavan.

### **Krishna offers Mathura to Kala Yavan:**

Krishna rode into the darkness and arrived at the camp of Kala Yavan at dawn and sent a message that he, Krishna Vasudeva, had come to surrender Mathura. On receiving the message, Kala Yavan was surprised and issued orders to have the visitor brought to him.

Krishna stood in the presence of this Yavana of ill-repute. ‘King of the Yavanas, I have come from Mathura,’ said Krishna with due courtesy. ‘I am Krishna, son of Vasudeva, the Shoora Chief and the disciple of Gargacharya who was once your guru. I have come on behalf of the Yadavas to ask you to take Mathura. You need not take the trouble to conquer it. The Yadavas offer it to you. They would prefer you to take over before Jarasandha does. I have come to show you the way to Mathura.’

‘Have you come to play trick on me?’ asked Kala Yavan threateningly, with his hand on the sword.

‘How can I play trick on you? asked Krishna with a smile. ‘I am alone and unarmed. You have men as innumerable as the stars in the sky.’

‘I shall see what to do with you,’ said Kala Yavan threateningly and issued orders to his General who took charge of Krishna. Afterwards, Kala Yavan held consultations with his principal lieutenants and the army continued to encamp on that spot for the day.

Next day, Krishna was brought before Kala Yavan who was in a less distrusting mood today and he asked, ‘How can we take over Mathura before Jarasandha reaches there?’

Krishna said, ‘I want to show you the shortest way to Mathura. If you continue to travel by the north bank of Lavanika river, you take longer to reach Mathura, by about twenty days. I can show you the shortest way which passes through Agravana and will take you to Mathura much before Jarasandha reaches there.’

‘How do I know that you are telling the truth,’ asked Kala Yavan suspiciously.

‘Come with me with your guides. Ascertain it yourself. My guide and I will lead you,’ replied Krishna.

‘If you try to mislead me, I will burn you alive,’ said Kala Yavan with an ugly grimace.

‘I know it,’ replied Krishna coolly with a smile. ‘Either way, you have sworn to kill me. So it does not matter.’

Kala Yavan laughed aloud at this bold reply. He had never met a man who did not tremble in his presence. ‘I will come with you myself. But if you made the slightest attempt to run away, I will cut you down,’ said Kala Yavan savagely.

For two days, Krishna and his guide led Kala Yavan through the deserts northwards where he pointed out the north-easterly route through the desert which joined the main route from Mathura. On

the third day, Krishna was happy. By now, Satyaki would have crossed the Lavantika. On the fifth day, Kala Yavana with Krishna duly guarded returned to the camp. The camp was soon disbanded and the sprawling army took to the new route. Kala Yavan armed with his shield, sword and lance, kept to the rear; he saw to it that Krishna, on horseback guarded by four armed men, was never out of sight; he kept a wary eye on his prisoner who showed no sign of any intention to escape. On the contrary, the prisoner appeared to be cheerfully reconciled to his fate, looked after himself and fed his horse, as if this was his normal way of life.

### **Krishna face-to-face with Kala Yavan:**

Some days later, the army reached the main route going to Mathura. Kala Yavan was surprised to see signs of a huge crowd having passed the way, cooking fires long extinguished, vultures hovering over the carcasses of cattle and horses; bodies of elephants eaten into by jackals. Kala Yavan ordered his men to search some fugitives. With great difficulty, two men residing in a small helmet were caught. When questioned, these men could only say that men in chariots with cattle and horses had passed along the route several days before. When brought before Kala Yavan, he roared and asked, ‘Do you know who they were?’ The frightened men bowed and said, ‘We do not know who they were; they were mighty lords. We only remember one name which they shouted and that was: Krishna Vaasudeva.’ On hearing this, Kala Yavan shouted at his men and ordered that Krishna, the prisoner (who was on the horseback) be brought before him.

Summoned by a lieutenant, Krishna brought his horse near enough to be able to talk to Kala Yavan. ‘Was this the man called Krishna Vaasudeva?’ Kala Yavan asked the villagers pointing to Krishna.

The men who had so far been dazed with terror, looked at Krishna and immediately recognized him. There was no mistaking

the dark blue color and the beautiful face. He was the man who had fed them and their families while passing on the way and his was the name which the trekkers had shouted. They were torn between gratitude and terror. Krishna saw the situation and spurred his horse nearer to Kala Yavan. ‘Why ask them about me? I passed here over a month ago,’ Krishna said facing Kala Yavan.

‘Who were with you?’ asked Kala Yavan, his hand on his sword.

‘The Yadavas of Mathura,’ said Krishna unhesitatingly.

‘Then you told me a lie,’ said Kala Yavan with a frown.

‘No. I did not. Mathura is lying there vacant and undefended to be taken over by you,’ said Krishna .

‘And the Yadavas have fled away. Is that so? You traitor!’ Saying this, Kala Yavan, drawing his sword, spurred his horse towards Krishna who had been waiting for the fateful moment which had come. He dug his heels into the sides of the horse which reared, took a leap, cleared the ring of guards and galloped away southward.

## **Kala Yavan’s death and Krishna’s arrival at Dwarka:**

For a moment, Kala Yavan and his men were taken aback. He spurred his horse to a gallop and went after Krishna; some of his men followed him.

(Krishna led, with Kala Yavan and his guards following, his horse into dense forests; to steep hills, and ultimately to the caves of Muchukunda where Kala Yavan was killed by the great old ascetic – Muchukunda -, while the Lord was looking on).

After staying for some days with Muchukunda, the Lord went to Prabhasa to have the *darshan* of Somnath, the God of gods. There, he heard that a large number of Yadava heroes had gone in ships to some far-off land. He could not understand why so soon after their arrival, the young Yadavas should have left it so suddenly. He therefore went towards Kushasthali which now was called by the name of Dwarka. On the outskirts of the seaport of Dwarka, hundreds of hutments had sprung up to house the newcomers. Cows which he immediately recognized as having been brought from Mathura were grazing peacefully in the fields. Farms were being hedged in; in some of them, ploughing had begun.

Krishna was happy to see all this. Exodus was complete and successful. He was now set to see this mother, father and other members of the Yadava clan.

---

Adapted from 'Krishnavatara' by K.M.Munshi, and  
'KRSNA' by Swami Prabhupada.

# Caves of Muchukunda;

Life is not futility. It should be lived fully with strength and vigor and with beauty.....I want life to be lived as it is, so long as it is lived in Dharma. That makes it worth living.....

said Krishna.

## Who was Muchukunda?

Muchukunda (5500 B.C.) was born in the great family of king Ikshvaku, in which Lord Ramachandra was also born; he happened to be the son of a great king known as Mandhata. He was a great soul and was known popularly as Muchukunda, as he was a strict follower of the Vedic principles of *brahminical* culture. He was truthful to his promises and was so powerful that even demi-gods like Indra used to ask him for help in fighting the demons.

Kartikeya, the commander-in-chief of the demi-gods, was happy for all the help the king Muchukunda had given to them. Once he addressed him, ‘O Muchukunda! You have sacrificed everything for the sake of demigods; you left your kingdom, neglected your opulence and possessions, and never cared for fulfillment of your personal ambitions. Due to your long absences from your kingdom while fighting the demons, your queen, children, relatives and your ministers have all passed away in due course of time. Ask for any benediction.’

King Muchukunda had not slept for many, many years. He was always engaged in the duty of fighting and was, therefore, tired. He replied, ‘Kartikeya. The best of the demigods! I want to take rest and sleep now; anyone who disturbs my sleep and awakens me untimely should get burnt to ashes, by my mere glance.’ The demigod agreed and gave him the benediction asked for.

## **Kala Yavan pursues Krishna:**

Kala Yavan, the barbarian king, was pursuing Krishna. The latter had the advantage of a light body and was unencumbered by arms, whereas Kala Yavan was heavily-built and armed with shields, swords and lances, and massive leather helmet. Both were on the horses. All of a sudden, Krishna realized that his horse had stumbled and the pursuer would soon come upon him. He looked around in the dawn-light. A path, just wide enough for one man or goat to pass, ran into the forest.

Looking back with compassion on the horse that he was leaving on its fate, Krishna took to the narrow path leading to the forest. He walked carefully, lest he might be hurt by the rocks and thorns on the way. He heard his pursuer's horse halting where his own horse lay; then, a curse muttered in an angry tone which he recognized was Kala Yavan's and footsteps coming towards him along the very path he had taken.

Krishna ran as fast as the terrain would let him. The sun rose, throwing a golden light on the forest path. He stopped for breath and looked around. The pursuer who he could see clearly, was Kala Yavan himself and was now gaining on him. In order to relieve himself of the encumbering weights, he had thrown away his shield, helmet and the sword. It was now a race of muscle and staying in power.

Krishna looked around to see if there was some way of escape. He saw a hill, a little further away, on the top of which he noticed certain caves from which smoke was curling up to the heavens, indicating that they were inhabited. That was his chance, he decided. Making a super-human effort, he ran towards the hill. He reached its foot, halted and looked back. Kala Yavan had slowed down a little; evidently, he was becoming exhausted.

Krishna began to climb the hill at a running pace on a foot-path. He went a little distance and then looked down at the path below. His pursuer had halted at the foot of the hill and was throwing the last of his swords, with which his speed was being encumbered. He smiled at his pursuer. Now, both of them were equally unarmed.



If the fight came, it would be hand-to-hand wrestle. But, he knew that Yavana wore a knife at his hip.

Krishna labored on, halting for breath, slowly gaining the top of the hill. When he reached the top, he saw six caves in front of him and in some of which fires were burning. Cautiously, he slowed down to a walk. He looked back; his pursuer was still only half-way up the hill.

### **Kala Yavan's death:**

With slow steps, Krishna approached the cave in the middle. It was the largest of the six. He peeped into it. A very old man, practically naked, with a yellow mane and a beard reaching down to his waist, was lying asleep, his body covered with ashes. In the corner of the cave was a fire which had burned down to its embers. Krishna took off his yellow scarf which he had tied around his waist and covered the old man with it. Then noiseless, he walked to a recess in the cave which was enveloped in darkness.

There, he waited to regain his breath, watching the entrance to the cave, all the time. Time passed. Then, he heard the hard breathing of a man who had just come up the hill running. He saw the mouth of the cave darkened by the shadow. Kala Yavan stepped into the mouth of the cave, looked warily and saw resting what he thought was Krishna, covered by his yellow scarf. Kala Yavan whipped out his knife from its sheath, rushed towards the man who was sleeping, gave him a kick and thrust the knife into his side, and shouted, 'You wretch!'

The old man sat up, blood dripping from his arm. His ancient eyes, covered by yellow, bushy eyebrows, opened in anger. In spite of his age and heavy mane, he sprang tiger-like at Kala Yavan; twisted the arm which held the knife; pushed the demon into the corner with unexpected vigor, threw him on the embers and kept him pressed there till the Yavana shouted in agony.

Hearing the noise, from the adjoining caves, four old men - all naked - ran into the large cave, brandishing copper tridents, and thrust them viciously into Kala Yavan till he was bathed in his own blood. He fainted, his body scorched. The old men lifted the

unconscious man (Kala Yavan) and rolled him unceremoniously down the hill.

## **Identity revealed:**

Krishna was watching all this conflict. He came out, prostrated himself before the old ascetic, tore off a strip from his *pitamber* and fell on his knees before him to bandage his wound. ‘Who are you?’ asked the old ascetic and muttered himself: *Hara Hara Mahadeva*.

‘Venerable master. I am a Yadava of Mathura; Krishna Vaasudeva - the younger son of Vasudeva, the lord of the Shooras,’ replied Krishna bandaging the arm of the ascetic carefully.

‘Krishna Vaasudeva!’ muttered the ascetic who was pleased to hear these words and asked, ‘Then why are you here?’

Krishna shortly told the ascetic what had happened and how he came to be at the caves. The old ascetic made Krishna comfortable and asked him to stay for some days.

## **What the Life is?**

Krishna was surprised at the curious ways of these ascetics. For long hours, they would sit surrounded by a fire in the blazing sun, muttering the name of Mahadeva, the great God. One day, out of curiosity, Krishna respectfully asked the old ascetic, ‘Master. Please tell me why you live here?’

‘My son. We have been here for many many years,’ said the old ascetic. ‘Perhaps, your father was not even born when we came here to these caves. These were then known as the Caves of Muchukunda, after the name of a great king in the *Satya Yuga* who fought for the god Indra and came here to rest. Now people also call me Muchukunda.’

‘But why did you select such a lonely spot?’ asked Krishna.

‘Because, I saw the futility, the wickedness and the ugliness of life as it was led by men. I was once a powerful chief, had wives, sons and friends. But I gave them up in search of peace and I have

found it here,' said the old ascetic.

'Master! Life is not futility,' said Krishna respectfully. 'It should be lived fully with strength and vigor and with beauty. That is *dharma*, as I understand it.'

'The ascetic shook his head and said, 'When you reach maturity, my son, you will see how futile the life is. Then if I am alive, I will make you welcome here. To give up life, which is all misery, is real *dharma*.'

'Master. Forgive me. I have never been able to understand. If to escape life is *dharma*, why did Brahma create it?' asked Krishna.

'How would you lead your life, son?' asked the ascetic.

'I want life to be lived as it is, so long as it is lived in *dharma*. That makes it worth living,' replied Krishna.

The ascetic laughed dryly. 'You have no experience of the world, my son. You have not seen its wickedness as I have.' He said passionately, thinking how misled Krishna was. 'If you want peace, give up life.'

'Master, I have found peace without giving up life,' said Krishna.

'How can that be?' asked the ascetic.

'Yes. Through right deeds done in the best way I know, regardless of what they bring,' replied Krishna.

'You are a wonderful boy, my son,' said the ascetic. 'You have found life by living it. That is a strange doctrine.'

'Yes. I am trying to live it, Master,' answered Krishna.

Krishna was anxious to leave the ascetics and join his people in Kushasthali. However, he had to postpone his departure. Some of the disciples of the ascetic who used to go to the plains every day told him of the roving bands of Yavanas, wandering in the vicinity to find the whereabouts of their king. It was, therefore,

very dangerous, to leave for Saurashtra, thought Krishna.

However, after a few weeks, when the ascetic and his pupils were going on a pilgrimage to Prabhasa to have the *darshan* of Somanatha, the God of gods, Krishna joined them, trident in hand and covered with nothing but ashes.

---

Adapted from 'KRSNA - The Supreme Personality of Godhead' by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, and 'Krishnavtara' by K.M.Munshi.

# **Krishna and Kashmir;**

Gonand, the ruler of Kashmir gets killed by Balarama.

Jarasandha, the king of Magadha besieged the city of Mathura not only once but 18 times and each time, he was defeated by Yadavas under the leadership of Krishna and Balarama.

## **Krishna and Kashmir:**

The known history of Kashmir runs side by side with the period of Mahabharata. At the relevant time, Gonand was the king of Kashmir. Magadha king Jarasandha led an armed campaign against Yadavas of Mathura. On the banks of river Yamuna near Mathura, a battle between Jarasandha and Sri Krishna was on. Since Gonand was a friend and a relation of Jarasandha, he went with a big company of soldiers to help Jarasandha. Gonand surrounded Krishna on all the sides. It encouraged Jarasandha and he too moved to kill Krishna. After a terrific battle, the joint operation of Gonand and Jarasandha failed. Krishna defeated Jarasandha, and Balarama, brother of Krishna ended the life of Gonand.

After the death of Gonand, his son Damodar was installed as the king with full religious ceremonies. Damodar was sad because of the martyrdom of his father in the battlefield at Mathura. He, therefore, challenged Krishna to a fight. That time, Krishna was participating in a *swayamvara* at Gandhar. Like a wise politician, Damodar had thought it fit to launch an attack on Krishna at that very juncture. But as an adept in politics and warfare, Krishna gave a befitting reply to Damodar. In the ensuing battle, Damdador was killed.

## **After king Damodar's death:**

Damodar had no son. So, Krishna resolved the issue of succession to the throne of Kashmir. He installed Damodar's wife, Yashowati, on the throne of Kashmir as per his plan and scheme. The presence of kings and rulers from whole of India at the coronation of Rani Yashowati indicates that Kashmir had friendly relations with rest of the states of India. At the time of coronation, Rani Yashowati was pregnant; she gave birth to a son who was named Gonand. This boy became famous in the history as Gonand-II.

By this time, the family feud between the Kurus and Pandavas had assumed the shape of a major political struggle, the result of which was the Mahabharata War. The reason for Kashmir having not taken part in this War was that Gonand-II was young and nobody had told him to participate in the war. Possibly, Sri Krishna's plan was to keep Kashmir away from the flames of war. Thus, this seat of Indian philosophy was protected from the heat of battlefield.

---

Adapted from Rajtarangani by Kalhana, as found on the Internet.

## **Krishna marries Rukmini;**

Krishna abducts Rukmini from swayamvara, carries her to Dwarka and marries her there.

### **Jarasandha's rage and new strategy:**

King Jarasandha was in wild rage. Coming uninvited, Krishna had disturbed the swayamvara of Rukmini and had again humiliated him. He was burning within himself but outwardly, he praised Krishna and told the gathered kings and princes with a show of magnanimity that Krishna had come in peace and it was unfair to fight him.

Yadava warriors had returned to Mathura where Krishna pleaded to king Ugrasen that it was not the time to dampen the spirits of the Yadavas; they need to grow strong and self-confident because Jarasandha's plan had been reduced to nothing for the present, but he was sure to come again and burn down Mathura to ashes.

Krishna knew that Jarasandha, in spite of his close contacts with the Aryan kings, had no respect for the code of Aryan morals. He realized that there was no other possible explanation for Jarasandha's secret talks with Salva, and then the latter's visit to Kala Yavan of ill repute, except that the Emperor had gone back to his old strategy of overwhelming the Yadavas by swift and brutal force.

### **Rukmini's grim resolve:**

Shattering news came to Kundinapura, the capital of Vidarbha, that the Emperor Jarasandha was going to march on Mathura,

having sworn on oath to reduce it to ashes; the more disturbing news was that the barbarian chief Kala Yavan, whose savagery was proverbial, was going to join hands with Jarasandha. Now, there was no hope left for the Yadavas.

It was at this time that Bhishmaka, the king of Vidarbha received a firm and unyielding message from the Emperor that Rukmini's swayamvara was to be held on the third day of the bright half of the month of Vaisakha. Invitations were to be issued immediately to the princes whom Jarasandha wanted to be present; he himself would come to attend the wedding of Rukmini and Sishupal, son of Damghosha. Messages to the same effect had also been sent to king Damghosha of Chedi, said the messenger who brought the message to king Bhishmaka. The orders were peremptory. No choice was left either to king Bhishmaka or to king Damghosha.

Rukmini thought that the prospect was grim. Nothing had been heard about the Yadavas. There was no prospect of Krishna coming to her rescue; death was left to her as the only escape. Still there was a lurking hope in her heart. Krishna was a worker of miracles. He was a god, as they said and she had come to believe. Even at the last moment, he might take her away. But her commonsense told her that it was a foolish dream. No one knew how the Yadavas had fared on their way to Saurashstra. It was far, far away on the shores of an unknown sea at the end of the earth. Nonetheless, she summed up the last vestige of hope which she had, composed a letter by herself and gave it to a trusted Brahmin for being delivered to Krishna at Dwarka.

### **Rukmini's message to Krishna:**

When Brahmin arrived Dwarka, the Lord asked him, 'What part of the country are you coming from? Why have you taken the trouble to cross the sea and come to me? Are you in some trouble? Is there anything I can do for you?'



Without preamble, the Brahmin who knew well the urgency of the situation, bowed and said, ‘O Lord! I have not come for my own sake but for the sake of your devotee, the Princess of Vidarbha who has sent a letter through me for your kind perusal.’ So saying, he handed over the letter to the Lord. The message in the letter was -

*O Bhuvanasundara (handsome one in the entire world)! Having heard of your qualities, my heart has left its keeping forever. O Granter of liberation, who is the girl of noble birth who has attained marriageable age, and will not choose you for a husband if she could have you? Therefore, I have chosen you and offer myself to you, if you will deign to accept me as your wife. Do not allow the prince of Chedi to appropriate me, for I belong to you alone! Whatever merit I might have acquired by way of sacrifices, austerities and charities, I now offer in exchange for the honor of being accepted as your wife. If you will deign to accept this offering of my veryself, then please present yourself at the swayamvara which has been arranged for. Defeating the armies of Chedi and Magadha, please capture me and marry me according to rakshasa rites, the bridal money paid on the occasion being nothing else but your might! If you are wondering how I might be carried away, I will give you a hint. On the morning of the swayamvara day, there will be a procession going to worship at the shrine of goddess Parvati, situated outside the palace. The bride will accompany this procession. This will be the most convenient time for you to stake your claim. O Lotus-eyed One! If you fail to be gracious to me, I shall not despair. I shall fast unto Death. This, I shall do life after life until I get you as my husband.*

After reading the message, the Lord smiled. Then, with a full determination, he ordered his charioteer Daruka to bring the chariot fully loaded with his arms and left immediately for the country of Vidarbha without waiting for the return of his brother Balarama who had gone on an expedition. On return, when Balarama heard of Krishna’s destination, he followed him with a battalion, as he had already left without taking a fight force.

## **Swayamvara at Kundinapura:**

Months had passed. Rukmi, the brother of Rukmini had come to dominate the scene. He began making preparations for the swayamvara in right earnest with enthusiasm.

Mathura where he had been insulted by Krishna had been burned to the ground by the Emperor Jarasandha. The Yadavas were now far away and the miracle maker was no longer their leader. He was also glad that Rukmini seemed to have reconciled to the inevitable fate that awaited her; she had now given up all resistance.

Emperor Jarasandha had arrived with a long retinue at Kundinapura. With the burning of Mathura and the Yadavas away to far-off Dwarka, any hope of restoring some balance of power had gone. On the other hand, Shishupala had emerged as the strong man of Chedi. Slowly, he had wrested from his father the supreme authority in the affairs of state. The way before him was now clear. He will marry princess Rukmini and Rukmi will marry the granddaughter of the Emperor.

Kundinapura was well decorated for the swayamvara of its princess. Just as Bhishmaka, the king of Vidarbha was doing for his daughter, Damghosha, the king of Chedi was doing for his son, Shishupala, the proposed bridegroom. The bridegroom party was received with a royal welcome by the princes of Vidarbha and taken to a special mansion reserved for them. A large number of kings such as Jarasandha, Salva, Dantavkra and Paundraka - all allies of Shishupala - had also assembled.

The citizens of Vidarbha were attired in their best, adored with jewelry, sandal paste and flower garlands. All the night, the learned Brahmins chanted *mantras* from the Vedas to offer protection for the bride from the adverse psychic forces.

Next day morning, the ladies of the royal family, headed by Princess Savrata (Rukmi's wife) gave the bride a ceremonial

bath and smeared her body with turmeric powder - the Brahmins chanting the mantras. Then the bride put on a rich dress; she was decked up with ornaments by the ladies, singing bridal songs. The time was approaching for the bridal procession to start for the temple of goddess Parvati. Accompanied by a glittering array of married ladies, Rukmini set out on foot to worship the Divine Mother, but her mind was absorbed on the lotus feet of her Lord. Observing a vow of silence, she walked down the avenue, lined with soldiers bristling with swords, for Rukmi had heard rumors of Krishna's arrival and his vow to abduct the bride. On reaching the temple, Rukmini washed her hands and feet, performed the purification rites with water and entered the shrine, outwardly composed but inwardly agitated.

### **Krishna abducts Rukmini:**

Worship was offered to the goddess as well as to the married Brahmin ladies who had accompanied Rukmini, and they in turn blessed her and gave her the consecrated remains of the offerings. Now, she could break her vow of silence and she came out of the temple, holding the hand of her lady-in-waiting. As she came out, she lifted her veil for a moment as if to make an offering of her beauty to the Supreme Being embodied in Lord Krishna. Delicately stepping forward on her rose-petal feet, she scanned the line of royalty for one beloved face. Suddenly, she sighted Achuyta, the Unchanging Being. He who never falls and who never allows His devotees to fall. Sitting in his eagle crested chariot and smiling was He, to whom her heart had been given from the early age of five. Boldly, she stepped forward to the chariot that had been conveniently placed in the middle of the path. Now that she was sure He had come, she lowered her eyes as befitting a modest bride, but as she reached the chariot, her delicate hand laden with jewels was raised as if to make it easier for him to grasp it. Seeing this, Krishna smiled and lifted her up to the seat beside him, slowly and deliberately, in full view of her brother and other princes, like a lion lifting its prey from the midst of a pack of jackals.

Krishna then whipped up the horses and flew through the crowded streets. The citizens made way for him and cheered wildly, for they were filled with joy at the thought that their prayers had been answered. And, as if mesmerized, the rest of the kings watched this drama of the Princess being abducted, right under their nose. Then, pandemonium broke loose. Precious minutes were lost to clear the roads of the citizens who blocked it as soon as the lovers had gone.

Violently, angry at the slight of their names, the other kings pursued the pair. They were stalled by Balarama and Yadava army who had arrived on the scene in the nick of time. Sensing his bride's fear, the Lord reassured her with a smile. Seeing the determined resistance of the Yadava forces, Jarasandha and other kings gave up and returned to their camps for such incidents were commonplace in most swayamvaras.

Rukmi, however, was determined not to give in. He had given his word to his friend Shishupal and did not know how he could face him if the bride was not brought back. He caught up with the eloping couple and challenged Krishna to a duel. Krishna defeated him but refrained from killing him at Rukmini's entreaties. He satisfied himself with cutting off Rukmi's topknot which was considered to be an insult worse than death, and proceeded towards Dwarka in his chariot, along with his bride.

In the meantime, Dwarka was preparing itself to welcome the divine couple. The citizens were thrilled to hear the romantic abduction of the Princess of Vidarbha by Krishna and the couple was met with joyous hails of welcome. The wedding was conducted on a grand scale as it had been the marriage of Lord Vishnu with Lakshmi Devi, as indeed it was, for was not Krishna the incarnation of Vishnu and Rukmini of Lakshmi?

---

Adapted from 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Devi Vanamali, Vanamali Gita Yogashram, Rishikesh, India; and from 'Krishnavatara' by K.M.Munshi, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.

# **Rukmini's unparalleled love for Krishna;**

Krishna – a perfect householder.

Rukmini proved to be an ideal Aryan wife, asking for nothing, demanding nothing, but finding her greatest happiness in the service of her husband who was her Lord and God. At no time, had she ever opposed her husband, Sri Krishna's wishes or in any way expressed her opinion at variance with his, as the headstrong Satyabhama used to do. She was Lakshmi Devi incarnate.

## **Krishna's accusation:**

One afternoon, the Lord was resting on the swing bed with Rukmini gently fanning him. She presented a picture of rare beauty. Seeing her looking so lovely and beautiful, the Lord said with a mischievous smile, 'O Princess. Many a ruler who was equal in wealth to the divinities, who was as noble as charming, as endowed with looks, generosity, strength and valor, came to your swayamvara, including Shishupala, the prince of Chedi. Without caring for any of them, why did you choose me who am inferior to them in all things, who has taken up shelter in the middle of the sea out of fear, who has abandoned all claims to the royal throne, and whose way of life is steeped in mystery and transcends the way of the world. I am One without any possessions and am fond of those with nothing. Therefore, O princess of Vidarbha, if it was without knowledge of these failings that you chose to marry me, then it is still not too late for you to seek some noble Kshatriya prince like Shishupala who will be a real match for you and enable you to fulfill your aspirations in this world and the next. I took you by force, only to destroy the pride of those evil kings. We, who

are established in the equilibrium of wisdom, have no need for women, offspring or wealth. We are ever satisfied with the bliss of the Atman, the true-self, and we act the role of the uninvolved witness, in the affairs of the world.

At the beginning of this unprovoked attack, Rukmini had looked up startled, wondering what she had done to provoke this tirade. But as the harangue continued unabated, her lips started quivering, her eyes filled with tears, and a terrible sorrow clutched at her heart and threatened to tear it apart. Any minute now, she expected to hear the fateful words banishing her from His divine presence, forbidding her ever to return again. The final straw was the mention of the hateful word Shishupala. If there was anyone whom the gentle princess detested, it was the prince of Chedi. Her tender heart could bear no more. Her bangles slipped off her limp arms and without a sound, she crumpled to the ground. Seeing this drastic reaction to his teasing, the Lord jumped from his seat, lifted her up tenderly, massaged her face with his lotus palms, did everything to bring her back to consciousness, and then proceeded to soothe and pacify her. At last, her lovely eyes fluttered open.

“O beautiful one,” He said, “don’t be angry with me. I was only teasing you for the pleasure of hearing your reply. Differences of opinion happen in all marriages. In fact, that is the only to be had from marriage. What you should have done was to defend yourself against my unjust accusations and then we could have spent a happy hour arguing and quarrelling with each other, as husbands and wives do. I never expected you to take my teasing so seriously and certainly never expected you to swoon.” Then, he comforted her and tenderly kissed her tears. At last, with heaving breasts and smothered sobs, Rukmini spoke with quivering lips.

### **Rukmini’s reply:**

“I find no pleasure in anything but your service, O Lord! Your smiles, your glances your commands – these constitute my life-

breath and if I cannot have these, I would rather die.” Then taking up each of the points which he had declared to be detrimental to him, she pointed out that these very points were a matter of pride to her.

“O lotus-eyed Lord! What you said about my not being a fitting match for you is indeed true. For what are you, the all-pervading Being, the master of all powers and excellence, and am I, a creature constituted to the three *gunas*? It is true that you have taken your residence in the deep sea, for you are the pure Consciousness which is ever resident in the ocean of our hearts. Your ways are mysterious and no doubt none can conceive of them. You are indeed a pauper, for there is nothing outside You that you can possess. You are the embodiment of all values. Men abandon everything the world prizes to follow. They are the noble ones with whom you have affinity. That is a true marriage when a person attains union with You. That is only a relationship of the body.

“It was by hearing of your greatness from the ascetics who have no possessions but You, that I came to love You, rejecting all lesser mortals. Having driven away the assembled kings by a mere twang of your bow, you took me away, for I am your rightful property. Who is the woman with even a little of sense who would go after a man who is nothing but a walking corpse, in preference to you who are the abode of all excellence? Who is the woman who will care to leave you, after having once experienced the perfume of your lotus feet, the abode of Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune. I have sought shelter in you, the Supreme Soul, and the one who fulfills all the aspirations of everyone, here and hereafter, for you are the only match for me. Revolving as I am in this cycle of birth and death, may your feet be my shelter. Only those women who are steeped in ignorance and who have never known the fragrance of your lotus feet, would go after human husbands who are nothing but corpses clad in skin and bones and flesh.”

The Lord said, “O noble one! It was only to hear these words of yours that I teased you. It would be difficult to find even one household with a wife like you. Your single-minded devotion and dedication to me shall go uncompensated, for they are too noble and pure to be rewarded by anything I can do for you.” Then the Lord blessed and comforted her.

This small episode in the Life of Sri Krishna shows how he played the role of typical householder to perfection, as He played every other role.

---

Adapted from ‘Sri Krishna Lila’  
by Devi Vanamali, Rishikesh, India.



# **Krishna's sister: Subhadra;**

Marriage by self-abduction

## **Arjuna in Dwarka:**

On the advice of sage Ved Vyasa and consented to by Sri Krishna, it was agreed and decided that Draupadi (after having been won by Arjuna in swayamvara) would spend one year each with each of the five Pandava brothers; in case, she is with a Pandava brother and the other entered the room, then the latter will incur the penalty of exile in the woods.

One day, in the middle of night, a brahmin who was in distress sought Arjuna's help. To get his bow, Arjuna entered the chamber when Yudishtira and Draupadi were inside, got the bow and removed the brahmin's distress. This was in violation of the rule established earlier, and Arjuna proceeded to the forests despite requests from his brother to desist since there was no displeasure in his mind.

It was during his wanderings that Arjuna married Ulupi, the daughter of king of Nagas, passed through Gaya, crossed the river Ganga, visited Kalinga, Manipur and ultimately reached the sacred spot Prabhasa on the western coast. When Krishna heard of Arjuna's arrival at Prabhasa, he went there personally to receive his friend and then both returned to Dwarka.

Krishna had a half-sister, Subhadra who was younger than him. Once, at the mountain festival, Arjuna chanced to see her and was attracted towards her. On knowing her identity, Arjuna said to Krishna: Tell me, O Janardana, by what means I may obtain her. To get her, I will do anything. To this, Krishna replied: Carry away my beautiful sister by force, for who knows what she may do at a

self-choice. Then Krishna and Arjuna settled as to what should be done, and sent some speedy messengers to Yudhishtira informing him of everything. As soon as Yudhishtira heard it, he gave his assent to it.

### **Balarama's promise to Duryodhana:**

Duryodhana had been learning the art of wrestling and the use of mace from Balarama who was impressed by the former. During this period, Duryodhana expressed a wish to marry Subhadra and Balarama promptly agreed to the proposal, fancying at the same time the idea of an alliance with the Kurus. But Krishna was none too happy to hear the news, for he knew Duryodhana's nature only too well and he did not want his sister to suffer at the hands of this unprincipled and haughty man. However, he kept silent, for he knew that his elder brother had given his word and would not back down; some stratagem would have to be devised to avoid Subhadra's marriage to Duryodhana.

### **Arjuna abducts Subhadra:**

One day, when Balaram had gone to an ancient temple that Krishna announced to Arjuna that a chariot with his own four horses would be stationed at the palace gates to take Subhadra for a religious function. He also hinted that an opportunity once lost may never return. Hint was also given to Subhadra as to the course of events.

Arjuna who was never slow on the uptake, lost no time in grabbing the hand of the willing Subhadra who just happened to come into the room at that time. He hurried her quite unresistingly into the chariot and whipped up the horses.

The news of Subhadra's abduction was carried to Balarama who returned at once from the temple site. Without waiting to consult Krishna, he sent off some soldiers, after the erring couple, and thought that the capture would be an easy matter. But he had

reckoned without his sister's foresight. Not for nothing was she the sister of such valiant brothers. Taking over the job of driving the chariot, she gave Arjuna the bow and arrows which she had concealed and with which he managed to stall the pursuing soldiers.

In the meantime, Balarama stalked into the palace and demanded an explanation from Krishna. He was annoyed to find his brother innocently engaged in a game of dice and spoke harshly that he did not do anything to stop the abduction. On hearing the elder brother, Sri Krishna said thus: By what he has done, Partha has not insulted our family; instead, he has without doubt, enhanced our respect; this alliance is very proper; Subhadra is a renowned girl; Partha too is a renowned warrior. Perhaps, thinking of all this, Arjuna has taken her away by force. Who is there that would not desire to have Arjuna for a friend. I do not see in all the worlds, the person that can by force vanquish Partha in battle except the three-eyed god, Mahadeva. Then, Krishna pointed to chariot which was yoked with his horses and Subhadra helping Arjuna with bow and arrows to punish the pursuers. He also explained to the elder brother that Duryodhana could hardly find fault with him for having broken the promise because he knew nothing about this affair.

Balarama's anger was appeased and he decided to make the best of a bad job. The couple was brought back and the wedding celebrated at Dwarka with full religious ceremonies. After the marriage, Sri Krishna called upon his sister and in a lighter vein said to her, 'I suppose, I can take away my chariot and the horses since you have no more use of them.' Subhadra blushed and thanked her brother.

Arjuna passed a whole year at Dwarka. The last year of his exile, he passed at the sacred region of Pushkara. After the exile-period was complete, he along with the bride returned to Indraprastha.

---

Adapted from 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Devi Vanamali, Rishikesh, from Mahabharat by Kesari Mohan Ganguli, and others.

## **Krishna's son: Samba;**

Marriage with Duryodhana's daughter.

### **Samba:**

Samba was born to Sri Krishna by his wife Jambavati. He was a brave warrior and was very close to his mother. He came to know that swayamvara was being held of princess Lakshmana - the daughter of Duryodhana and his queen Bhanumati. He decided to carry her by force, just as the famous capture of Rukmini by his father; he wanted to emulate his father and did not let such an opportunity deter him in his ambition. He went uninvited to the swayamvara and took away the bride by force from the assembly. The Kuru elders viz., Dhritrashtra, Bhisham, Vidur, Duryodhan and others thought it an insult to their family tradition, and decided to punish the kidnapper. They pursued Samba, arrested him and clapped him in jail. Lakshmana was restored to her parents.

When the news of ignominious ending of his son's romance reached Krishna, he was furious and distressed. He decided to go himself and rescue his son, but he was stopped by Balarama who said that Krishna was incapable of dealing politely with Duryodhana who being Balarama's disciple, would listen to him more favorably. He was sure that Duryodhana will listen to him and will agree to the Lakshmana's marriage to Samba, and this will avoid fighting between the Kurus and Yadavas. Krishna agreed and allowed his elder brother to have his own way.

### **Balarama arrives at Hastinapura:**

Balarama proceeded towards Hastinapura in his chariot,

accompanied by the learned brahmins and the elderly members of the Yadu family. When he reached the precincts of the city of Hastinapura, he did not enter; instead, he stationed himself in a camp outside the city in a small garden house and sent Uddhava to Duryodhana.

Duryodhana came to the garden, out of respect for his tutor. After formalities were exchanged, Balarama said to Duryodhana: We have heard the news of Samba's arrest but we are not agitated because we are intimately related to each other. I do not think we should disturb our good relationship; we should continue our friendship without unnecessary fight. Please, therefore, immediately release Samba and bring him, along with his wife, Lakshmana.

Hearing this, Duryodhana grew furious and spoke thus: What? Has the jackal started commanding the lion? Since when have the cowherds become daring enough to command the king of the Kurus? Who are these Yadavas? Upstarts, all of them, led by the cowherd Krishna? Everyone knows that he fled in terror of Jarasandha and is now hiding at Dwarka where he knows Jarasandha cannot penetrate.' Uttering these insulting and unmannerly words about Yadu dynasty, Duryodhana strode off angrily and returned to his palace.

Listening to the haughty language used by Duryodhana, the lord Balarama became so furious that he felt like drowning the city of Hastinapur and its rulers in the river. He had not said a word in reply but he was boiling with rage. He stood up steadily and taking his plough in his hands, began striking the earth with it. He went to the city wall and placed his favorite weapon, the ploughshare, beneath the ramparts. Then he started uprooting the entire city and tipping it into the Ganges. The city of Hastinapur started shaking and quivering as if there had been an earthquake, and it seemed that the whole city would be dismantled and thrown in the river Ganges.

## **Duryodhana yields and marries Lakshmana to Samba:**

When Duryodhana and other members of the Kuru family saw that their city was about to fall in the river Ganges, and heard their citizens howling in great anxiety, they immediately came to their senses and understood what was happening. Without waiting for another second, they rushed to please the lord Balarama; they took Lakshmana with them and also released Samba. All the members of the Kuru family begged pardon with folded hands. Hearing their pleadings and pardons, Balarama became softened and assured the Kurus that there was no cause of fear; that they need not worry. The whole matter was settled amicably and in great pomp.

After the marriage was solemnized, Balarama accompanied by the newly-wed couple and other members of the family returned to Dwarka where he was received with all the respects and pomp by Krishna, Jambavati and other elders.

---

Adapted from 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Devi Vanamali  
and from 'Krishnavatara' by K.M.Munshi.

# Krishna is worried;

Where are Pandava brothers?

## Where are Pandava brothers?

Having migrated from Mathura, the Yadavas were now well-settled in Dwarka. In three years, Sri Krishna's leadership gave them not only freedom from fear, but strength and riches. Their horses and cattle had multiplied. Their ships would fare forth from the port of Dwarka on to the high seas and brought back immense wealth from unknown shores.

During these years, while looking after the interests of the Yadavas, Krishna had never failed to follow the happenings in the outside world. Even in the prosperity which had come to Yadavas, he had never forgotten that the fate of *dharma* was ultimately bound up with the fortunes of Aryavarta.

Krishna had also never ceased to cherish the memory of happy days he had spent with Arjuna and Bhima who, one after the other, had visited Mathura, and he had followed their career in the distant North with great interest.

It was Guru Sandipani's school which steadily maintained a flow of communication between the different parts of the country. The Guru himself, on account of the confidence which was placed in him by the kings and the *rishis*, was an authority on the policies of both of these.

The Brahmins too kept the common consciousness flowing throughout the Arya world. In their visits from one place to another, they never missed visiting the holy shrine of Somanath at

Prabhasa, and when there, invariably received generous hospitality and lavish gifts from the Yadavas, and in return gave an account of whatever they had learned in the countries they had been visiting.

Krishna, therefore, knew what was happening in the outside world. During this period, Duryodhan had come to Dwarka, on the pretext of perfecting the art of mace combat under Balarama. When, after a year's stay, Duryodhana left for Hastinapura, Krishna could see that things would now be not too easy for the five brothers. The time, therefore, had come for him to go North, give strength to his cousins, the Five Brothers, and forge an alliance which would stand as a bulwark for *dharmā*. Meanwhile, he received a pressing invitation from Yudhishtira to come to Hastinapura. In response, Uddhava had been sent in advance to announce that he, Krishna, was coming.

Guru Sandipani had arrived at Dwarka with a proposal from king Drupad for his daughter (Draupadi)'s marriage with Krishna. From him, Krishna came to know that the Five Brothers were banished by king Dhritrashtra to Varanavata. Hearing this, Krishna got worried and said to Sandipani: I feel that something is going to happen to the Five Brothers. I must reach Hastinapur first, before going to Kampilya (Capital of Panchal Desh) to discuss with the king Drupad, the proposal of Draupadi's marriage. He then asked Satyaki to get ready within two days with sixty chariot warriors and the necessary retinue.

## **In Hastinapura:**

On the way to Hastinapura, Sri Krishna, Satyaki and the party camped at Pushkara Tirtha which was ruled by the Yadava Chief Chekitana. Krishna had already sent advance message summoning Uddhava to Pushkara and he had arrived there earlier. On seeing Sri Krishna, Uddhava flung himself unto the arms of Krishna and said, 'Brother Krishna. A calamity has overtaken us. The Five Brothers are dead.' On being asked by Krishna, Uddhava detailed



the situation:

Situation in Hastinapura was worrisome over a plot reported to have been hatched by Duryodhana with the assistance of his uncle, Shakuni, Karna and Aswatthama, to kill the Five Brothers. While Bhima was making preparations for counter-action, grandfather Bhishma, after holding a long consultation with king Dhritrashtra, summoned Yudhishtira, so as to find a way out. The king told Yudhishtira that the only way to prevent a fratricidal war was for him to go for a few months to Varanavata where a festival was being held. Yudhishtira agreed without hesitation and two days later when they left Hastinapura along with their mother Kunti, a large crowd saw them off. I (Uddhava) also accompanied them to Varanavata and lived with them for some days, and then left for Utkochaka. After a few days, the news came that the palace which had been constructed for the Five Brothers and where they were living caught fire and the Five Brothers along with mother Kunti were burnt alive. The news is that the said palace was lightly made, plastered with some strange substance.

After listening Uddhava's version, Krishna sat silently for a little while and then said, 'I must pay a condolence visit to Hastinapur and meet the venerable Bhishma. There, I will fathom the mystery which surrounds the death of the Five Brothers.

Krishna and his party were received with due ceremony at Hastinapura. On reaching the city, the mourners – the guests as well as the hosts – walked to royal palace along the main street. Krishna's heart was weighed down with sorrow not only at the death of aunt Kunti and the Five Brothers, but at the genuine grief of the people who appeared to have cherished a deep affection for the Five Brothers. He paid a ceremonial visit to the king Dhritrashtra who all the time was anxious to convince Krishna that he had held the Five Brothers in great affection. He was sorry, said the king, that he had given his consent to the Five Brothers for going to Varanavata.

When Krishna was received by grandfather Bhishma, he asked, ‘Could you not have prevented it?’ Bhishma explained, ‘Vidura and I thought about that for a long time. In spite of the great affection for the Five Brothers, I could not have helped them if a bloody conflict had begun.’ Then Krishna turned to Vidura and asked him if he was sure that the Five Brothers were burnt alive, and the latter could reply: That is what is said, noble Vaasudeva.

It was the evening of the day that Krishna was invited to the old Empress, the most venerable Mother (Satyavati, now 70 years old), as she was called. Vidura was with him. While talking to them, the Venerable Mother looked around to see whether any person, beyond the two, was within hearing distance, and then assuming a solemn look, she said, ‘Krishna. Will you stand by the Five Brothers?’

Krishna heard and exclaimed! Does it mean that the Five Brothers are alive? The venerable Mother was whispering: They escaped from the burning palace by a tunnel which Vidura’s man had dug; Vidura had kept a boat ready for them to cross the Ganga, but after they left, they disappeared into the forest; I want you, Krishna, to find out where they are and whether they are safe. If you find them, take them away to Dwarka, without anyone knowing it.

Krishna looked, his face glowing, and he said, ‘Venerable Mother. Your commands shall be obeyed. The Five Brothers shall be found.’

---

Adapted from ‘Krishnavatara’ by K.M.Munshi.

# Why Krishna declined to marry Draupadi?

Don't you like me? Am I so unfit to be your wife?' asked Draupadi.

## Message from king Drupada:

Krishna was getting ready to go and receive Gurudeva Sandipani when Rukmini entered the room. Looking at her, Krishna said with a mock solemnity, 'Today, Gurudeva is coming and he is going to decide whether you are keeping your husband happy or not.'

Rukmini looked at him and replied with a smile, 'I am going to complain that my husband is keeping everyone happy except his wife.'

Guru Sandipani was coming after having met king Drupada of Panchala; he had a message for Krishna. When Krishna and Guru Sandipani were alone, the latter said, 'Krishna! I bring a message for you from king Drupada of Panchala. He offers you his daughter Draupadi, in marriage. If you like, I can speak about it to king Ugrasen and your noble father.' While Gurudeva waited for reaction, Krishna started smiling and spoke, 'Gurudeva! How have I merited this favor from so great a king? Everyone, except myself, seems to have forgotten that the kings would not sit with me, a gopal. In what way, could I be of service to the noble lord of Panchala?'

'Krishna! You know that Drupada has suffered brutal humiliation at the hands of Dronacharya, the military leader of

Kurus. He wants you to help him avenge this humiliation. Draupadi, his daughter is devoted to her father; she will marry none but the most redoubtable hero in Aryavarta; she thinks you are the best of them or perhaps the only one she would choose. And, she is the finest woman in existence. Drupada's hate for Dronacharya is consuming him day and night. He may even offer Draupadi to Jarasandha and precipitate a war with Kurus. Then, even the gods cannot save the Aryas.'

Krishna thought for a while and then said, 'That disaster must be averted, Gurudeva! We shall have to think over this matter. Please convey my homage to Drupada and tell him that I will visit **Kampilya** (capital of Panchala desh) to pay my respects to him.'

(Meanwhile, Krishna was worried about the welfare of his cousins – Five Pandava Brothers. He had received an invitation from Yudhishtira for a visit to Hastinapura, and he had to go there first before visiting Kampilya.)

## **Krishna in Kampilya:**

Krishna first went to Hastinapura and enquired about the where about of his cousins, the Five Pandava Brothers. After a few days stay there, Krishna and a few members of his party took boats to go to Kampilya. Other members were left behind to go to Nagakoota, the headquarters of king Aryaka, the maternal grandfather of Vasudeva. They were to go there in search of Pandava brothers.

At Kampilya, king Drupada received Krishna at the head of the courtiers and a crowd of citizens. While welcoming, the king addressed Krishna thus: Panchala (present-day Rohailkhand) is very lucky to welcome you here, noble Vaasudeva. Then, the king invited Krishna to ride with him on an artistically painted elephant. The procession passed through the main street to the palace, the drums beating and the fifes playing a joyous welcome.

Next day, after morning meal, king Drupada opened the topic saying, ‘Vaasudeva, I have invited you here to make a very strange offer. Guru Sandipani must have told you about it. Will you take Draupadi, my daughter, for a wife?’ Then he quickly added, ‘I feel humiliated at having to make this offer to you myself.’

Krishna replied with modesty, ‘Noble Lord! Your offer has already been conveyed to me by Guru Sandipani. Forgive me, Lord, if I am frank about it. I do not feel equal to it and I hate to be put in a position in which I cannot fulfill the expectations of such a noble king as yourself.’

‘Are you afraid of Drona?’ asked the king.

‘No. Lord; but I would not like to be cause of war between the Kurus and the Panchalas. Our dharma can flourish if both the Kurus and the Panchalas defend it. If they fight each other in a bitter war, where will we be?’ asked Krishna.

For a few moments, Drupada looked steadfastly at the ground; then he said in a determined voice, ‘There cannot be any peace between the Kurus and Panchals as long as Drona is in Hastinapura. He will have no settlement with me, nor will I have with him. Even if the five sons of king Pandu had been alive, they would never have become friendly to me; they were very loyal to Drona. But, what is your dharma?’ Drupada asked bluntly.

‘To help righteousness - particularly in kings,’ replied Krishna. ‘For, an unrighteousness king is the cause of chaos.’

Drupada flared up: Vaasudeva! I have never done an unrighteousness action. I have stood for dharma all my life. I have protected the ancient ways; I have looked to the happiness of my people; I have honored Brahmins; if you come to my help, we will be able to consolidate Aryavarta in the ways of our ancestors.

‘I have still to see how the Panchalas would gain by an alliance with the Yadavas who are far away and could not render much help,’ said Krishna.

King Drupada felt sorry at having let himself go before a youngster, but pulled himself up. ‘Well, if you do not accept my offer, I must think of other ways. I may accept Jarasandha’s offer; he has sent an offer for the hand of Draupadi for his grandson, Meghasandhi. With him on my side, I can overrun the Kurus.’

‘Noble lord. Have you any idea what an alliance with Jarasandha means? You know the fate of Damaghosha of Chedi (present Bundhelkhand) and Bhishmaka of Vidarbha. An alliance with Jarasandha spells death; he is living in adharma. Forgive me, noble lord, for asking: If Draupadi accepts Jarasandha’s grandson for a husband, will she be happy with him?’

‘Find out for yourself. I have no objection to your meeting her. She also thinks that my pledge can only be redeemed if you accept her,’ said Drupada.

‘Certainly. I will meet her, if those are your commands, Lord.’

## **Krishna meets Draupadi:**

Next day morning, Draupadi accompanied with her brother, came to the mango grove. Looking at her, Krishna opened the topic saying, ‘It is rather contrary to custom, noble Princess, that I should see you thus. But the noble king wanted me to do so.’

In a beautiful and graceful voice, Draupadi replied, ‘I told my father to let me meet you. I wanted to ask you myself whether you would come to our help.’

‘How can I help? The Yadavas are far away and perhaps not

very strong. And I am not a king,' said Krishna.

'We have been thinking of you for the last two years,' interrupted Draupadi. 'In fact, since the time you led the Yadavas to Saurashtra and Dwarka, you are more than a king. You are a god, so rumor goes. They say that you live to vindicate dharma. We only want you to vindicate dharma, by helping us. Do you know how brutally we were treated by Drona? At a religious festival, Bhima and Arjuna bound our father, the noblest king in Aryavarta, and dragged him to Drona, as if he was a thief. All this, at the bidding of Drona. Our father would not have taken it to heart if Arjuna and he had fought each other as warriors should. But Drona did not have it in him to fight a battle. He wanted to take the father by surprise, to humiliate him before his people, and to force him to crawl. Ultimately, father was set free only after he had offered an apology for having broken his promise and had relinquished a big part of our land.'

Krishna who was listening intervened to say, 'If I do not agree to help, have you decided to accept Jarasandha's offer?'

With boldness on her face, the Princess replied, 'My father has discussed the matter with us. If you refuse to help, we will accept Jarasandha's offer. When Draupadi is married to his grandson Meghasandhi, the allied armies will be led by my father against the Kurus.'

Krishna was lost in thought. Then turning to Draupadi, he said, 'Suppose I promise help. Will you accept my help even if I don't accept the offer of your hand?'

'Don't you like me? Am I so unfit to be your wife?' asked Draupadi, throwing a mischievous glance at Krishna.

'You know I am a cowherd and I am not fit to be a princess's husband. And I hate the way the princesses are bartered away to

secure alliances. Marriage is not a matter of commerce,' Krishna said and was again lost in thoughts. The situation was serious. A crisis was developing. He could not run away from it. He must play his part, whatever it might cost. Anyway, Drupada should be prevented from aligning himself with Jarasandha. His mind was made up.

### **Krishna's reply:**

Next day, Drupada asked Krishna what decision he had come to, after he had met his daughter. Krishna replied, 'Lord, I have met the noble Princess, your daughter. I have promised her that if you are willing, I am ready to help as best as I can. I pledge that I shall stand by you so long as you consider me your friend. But please, I beg of you, don't ask me to marry the Princess.'

'If you pledge yourself to stand by us, why don't you marry her? She is willing,' said Drupada.

'Do not misunderstand me, Lord,' said Krishna. 'I would not allow her to choose a husband because he is clever enough to kill warriors in battle. But she has made up her mind. She wants to marry the best warrior in Aryavarta. I will, therefore, help her fulfill her pledge in the way she likes.'

'What if she prefers to marry you,' Drupada asked.

'Noble king, let us not forget what her heart is set, at the present moment. She has taken a pledge to marry a man who can vanquish Drona's pupils in war. She must have such a one as her husband and will be happy with no other,' explained Krishna. 'May I suggest to you that you hold swayamvara for her. Such a swayamvara will reveal the best warrior in Aryavarta.'

The idea of swayamvara took Drupada by surprise. He took some time to realize its implications. While Krishna continued,



‘Most of the powerful kings and expert warriors, who are desirous of aligning themselves with you, will come to swayamvara. In this way, you will be the center of power on that occasion. You will acquire more allies. You will not alienate anyone, for you will have the credit of being fair to all. In the end, you will emerge strong, I assure you. Anyway, the Yadavas will be on your side and I will keep my pledge.’

Drupada looked at Krishna in a new light and then spoke slowly, ‘Vaasudeva! The swayamvara that you suggest is sure to enhance my power. I do not know why I have come to acquire such confidence in you in so few days or whether I am doing the right thing in accepting your advice. But, somehow I am inclined to accept it if you stand by your promise to help me to redeem my pledge.’

‘Noble lord, if the swayamvara goes well, as I think it will, you will have grown so powerful that you will have avenged your humiliation without striking a blow. You will win the best marksman among the Aryas as your son-in-law. His friends will then be your friends. Drona, inspite of Kurus being there to help, will no longer be worth a thought. My pledge to help you stands. The Yadavas will come with Balarama at our head to stand by you.’

And the next day, king Drupada made an announcement that swayamvara will be held next year in the month of Chaitra.

---

Adapted from ‘Krishnavtara’ by K.M.Munshi.

# Night before Draupadi's Swayamvar;

Krishna at the height of His divinity. Unaided & unarmed, he enters the tent of king Jarasandha - his enemy -, and makes him abandon the idea of kidnapping Draupadi.

-----

**It is story of a man Who was also God  
and of God Who was born a man. There  
is no tale comparable to it in all times.**

Devi Vanamali  
in  
Sri Krishna Lila

## **Krishna goes to Jarasandha's camp:**

It was midnight. Draupadi's swayamvar was to be held tomorrow. Two strangers approached the tent of king Jarasandha. One of them moved a step forward and said in a clear voice to the guard, 'I want to see the Chakravarti.'

'See the Chakravarti! At this time of the night!' exclaimed the leader of the guards. 'Have you gone mad?' he asked.

The man who had spoken, took the scarf which covered his head and shoulders, disclosing a radiant diadem, a necklace of jewels, luminous ear-rings and sword with a gold-hilt - the insignia of very high rank. The guards were taken aback at the strange visitor - a prince, at least! They automatically folded their hands; their leader respectfully said, 'We cannot let you pass, noble Prince. Our orders are strict.'

'Who is the Prince in charge of the night watch? Will you take

me to him? Or better still, will you bring him here? The mission on which I have come here does not brook delay,’ said the visitor with a note of urgency in his voice and continued. ‘The matter affects the life of the Emperor; I need to see him without any delay. Don’t hesitate to go. Call prince Vidanda; he will thank you for doing so. If you do not, I will blow my conch; it will awaken the whole camp and the Emperor will not forgive you for being awakened so unceremoniously.’ Hesitatingly and being mortally afraid, the guard went to call prince Vidanda.

‘What do you want?’ Prince Vidanda asked as he approached the visitors.

‘I am Yadava; Krishna Vaasudeva and this is Uddhava, my friend. I want to see the Emperor. Will you wake up him and let me see him?’ replied Krishna quietly.

Krishna Vaasudeva! Vidanda opened his eyes wide. He could not believe them. He knew the feelings of hostility they all, particularly the Emperor, bore towards Krishna. ‘He will not see you, Lord,’ he said apologetically.

‘If the Emperor refuses to see me, will you convey my message to him? If you cannot do it yourself, do it through Yuvaraj Sahadeva. Tell the Emperor, ‘Once at Gomantaka, Vaasudeva saved your life. He wants to save it again if you will let him do it.’ And add this also, ‘Krishna Vaasudeva says that if you do not see him now, nothing in the three worlds can help you.’

Vidanda reflected for a while. The matter was serious. ‘Will you please wait, noble Vaasudeva?’ He pleaded, ‘I will convey your message to the Yuvaraj. Do both of you want to see the noble Chakravarti?’

‘No. Uddhava will wait here,’ said Krishna. ‘Tell the Yuvaraj that I have no other arms except my sword and even that I intend to leave here in the keeping of Uddhava. I have come on a mission

of peace.’

‘As the noble Vaasudeva pleases,’ said Vidanda, still wondering at the curious message he had been asked to carry to his Emperor and left. Shortly, prince Vidanda returned accompanied by prince Sahadeva. ‘Is it the noble Vaasudeva?’ asked Sahadeva, but his voice betrayed his annoyance. ‘Do you want to see the Chakravarti at this time of the night?’

‘Yes, Yuvaraj,’ said Krishna. ‘I can understand your surprise and also your suspicion. I am not the Emperor’s friend nor is he mine. I have come to see him alone. I propose to go with you completely unarmed. I am even leaving my sword here with Uddhava. That should satisfy you that I have something important for him - even at considerable risk to myself.’

‘Is it so very important?’ asked Prince Sahadeva.

‘It is. Do you think that I would have come to your camp at midnight, were it not very urgent?’

Sahadeva, realizing the validity of the argument, entered the tent and gently walking up to the Emperor, told him of the strange visitor. The Emperor ordered that Krishna be brought in.

## **Krishna & Jarasandha; Face to Face:**

Unable to restrain himself, with anger on his face, Jarasandha burst out at Krishna, ‘Why are you here?’

‘I will tell you, why,’ said Krishna in a matter-of-fact voice. ‘You sought me in vain, in Gomantaka; also in Mathura. Now you find me here in your camp, at dead of night, alone and unarmed.’

‘You are my enemy,’ growled Jarasandha, glaring at Krishna angrily.

‘Yes; I know. Yet I am delivering myself into your hands,’ said Krishna with a smile.

‘Why have you come?’ Jarasandha asked again.

‘To save you from disaster,’ replied Krishna with a smile.

‘I don’t want your assistance now or ever. You are wasting your time,’ blustered Jarasandha.

‘I am not wasting your time or mine. I have come to give you advice.’

‘You! You give me advice!’ Jarasandha snorted contemptuously.

‘Yes.’ Krishna answered quietly, ‘My advice is: Give up the attempt to kidnap Draupadi.’

Jarasandha shook himself like a tiger getting ready to spring. His hands were clenched and he thundered, ‘What did you say? Kidnap Draupadi! You are impertinent. We have come here to win Draupadi in a swayamvara.’

‘Then promise that Magadhans will not attempt to kidnap her.’ Demanded Krishna.

‘How dare you? You demand a promise. You are nobody to demand a promise from me,’ shouted Jarasandha.

Krishna smiled indulgently. ‘I am not quite a nobody. You wanted to kill me at Gomantaka, but it was I who saved you from the mace of my Big Brother. But for that, you would not have been alive today.’

### **Jarasandha bits his lips.**

‘You wanted to make the Princess of Vidarbha (Rukmini) an

instrument of your ambitious politics, but I snatched her away from under your nose.’ Krishna coolly continued to enumerate the Emperor’s failures. ‘You wanted to destroy the Yadavas; they escaped your wrath to find prosperity and power in Dwarka. Don’t you agree that if I have come to warn you, it may be worthwhile to listen to me?’ He added in a persuasive voice.

Jarasandha gritted his teeth and sneered, ‘You are a very conceited young man.’

‘Yes,’ said Krishna unperturbed. ‘But I think that I am rendering you a service even though I am no friend of yours.’

‘I don’t want to be your friend and do not want you as my friend either. No, never,’ said Jarasandha.

‘I know that, of course. And I too will never accept you as my friend,’ replied Krishna.

‘I will never forgive you for the way you killed your maternal uncle and my son-in-law, Kamsa,’ said Jarasandha.

‘I have not come here to ask for your forgiveness. I want to give you a chance to save yourself. Give up the idea of kidnapping Draupadi,’ repeated Krishna.

‘Who told you that we wanted to kidnap her?’ Jarasandha’s anger was rising at the affront of the visitor. ‘And who are you to ask me to do or not to do anything? Don’t threaten me cow-herd,’ he said menacingly. ‘If you talk in this vein, I shall break your head.’

Krishna looked up defiantly and laughed. ‘If you want to break my head, do it now,’ he said. ‘But remember; if you do so, it will be the sacred duty of the score of kings assembled in Kampilya to take your life. The sacred canons governing the swayamvara enjoin that if a visitor is killed, he who kills him, forfeits his life.’

‘The canons of the swayamvara!’ Exclaimed Jarasandha.

‘Yes; the ancient canons upheld by Dharma. The swayamvara is a sacred ceremony.’

‘I am sick of your Arya canons,’ roared Jarasandha.

‘Then why do you attend an Arya swayamvara?’ asked Krishna.

‘Go away. Go away,’ shouted Jarasandha impatiently, as he felt the force of what Krishna was saying. ‘Don’t meddle in my affairs.’

‘I am going,’ Krishna moved as if to rise from his seat. ‘But I warn you again: If you try to kidnap Draupadi, wherever you are, your head will fall.’

‘I can cut off your head like this!’ said Jarasandha and snapped his fingers.

‘Try it if you dare,’ challenged Krishna with a laugh.

‘Don’t try to challenge me, young man. The Magadhan warriors know their business,’ Jarasandha boasted. But bursting with wild and murderous rage though he was, he realized the truth of what Krishna was saying. A shiver went through him; if he touched a hair of Krishna’s head now, it would have a terrible impact upon the assembled kings. The Yadavas, the Panchalas, the Viratas and even the Kurus would combine to wipe out the Magadhanas before sunset the next day. Whenever ‘you’ stepped into an Arya ceremonial occasion, you ceased to be your own master.

‘You know that you cannot kill me tonight and you cannot kidnap Draupadi tomorrow,’ said Krishna and then quietly added: The only time that you could kidnap her would be when,

surrounded by other princesses, she ceremoniously goes from the Yajna shala to the mandap. At that time, I will be waiting for you on the main road. If you so much as try to direct the course of your chariot from the straight road to the mandap - to go to Magadha, for instance -, my Sudarshana will sever your head from your body.'

'What is your object in telling me all this?' demanded Jarasandha impatiently. He could see that this young man had anticipated all his possible moves.

'Don't forget that the Arya dharma prescribes that a man who abducts a woman has to pay the penalty of death,' Krishna pointed out.

'You kidnapped Rukmini. Didn't you?' Jarasandha countered.

'But I was not guilty of *streesangrhana* - the abduction of a woman. She came to me of her own choice,' replied Krishna. 'I want to warn you, mighty son of Brihadratha! It would be very dangerous for you or the princes of Magadha to join in the uproar.'

'I will not be threatened,' shouted Jarasandha, almost choking with the self-restraint he had imposed upon himself so as not to lay hands on his visitor.

'I am uttering no threats,' replied Krishna quietly. 'I am only telling you what will happen if you try to kidnap Draupadi. I have only one other advice to give. Acharya Sandipani has prescribed a stiff - a very stiff - archery test. None of your princes can win it. Perhaps you might. At any rate, you may be tempted to try. But, would it look proper - consider carefully - if you, at your age and in your position, enter the test and win a young bride - you, with several sons and numerous grandsons? Think of it. And if you fail, you will be the laughing stock of the assembly and of the crowds, and your prestige as an Emperor will have gone. You may



call yourself Chakravarti thereafter if you like, but no king would care to keep your company.

Krishna smiled and continued, 'Perhaps you will see the wisdom of expressing your admiration for the test, bless the bride and withdraw. If you do not like my advice, enter the contest and risk the consequences. But don't say that I did not warn you.'

Jarasandha's head began to swim. But he saw that what Krishna was telling him was the plain truth. For a time there was silence between the two. Krishna got up from his seat, flung his scarf on his shoulder and said, 'Mighty son of Brihadratha, my mission is fulfilled. Do you want to know why I undertook it? I have pledged myself to see that the swayamvara succeeds. I shall not allow anyone to disrupt it. Think over what I have said.'

Without waiting for a reply, Krishna stepped out of the tent and left the camp with a hundred Magadhan warriors waiting in vain for an order to smash the Yadava's head. The guards made way for him, as taking Uddhava's hand, Krishna walked away.

## **Day of Swayamvara:**

It was the day of Draupadi's swayamvara. She took her morning bath and said her prayers. Then led by the priests and accompanied by fifty maidens singing auspicious songs, she proceeded along a path strewn with flowers on her way to the spacious arena - the mandap -, where the kings and princes from different parts of Aryavarta were seated. She recognized some of the royal guests. There were Shakuni, Karna, Aswatthama, and Duryodhana surrounded by his brothers. She could identify Virata, Shalya of Madra and Shishupala. And then there was the Emperor of Magadha, Jarasandha along with his son Sahadeva and grandson Meghasandhi. Draupadi's eyes searched and found her Govinda who was sitting in the enclosure occupied by the Yadavas. His eyes met her; they had a message for her: it is your (Draupadi) duty to go through with the swayamvara - keeping a

stout heart. Her eyes replied to the message: Yes, I will go through with it. I know you will never desert me, whatever happens.

Conchs and horns were blown, and then Draupadi's brother, Dhrishtdyumna stepped up to the pool in the mandap and announced: Venerable Brahmins, holy ascetics, noble kings, valorous princes! The swayamvara will now be held. My sister, Krishnaa (Draupadi), will wed the valiant bowman of pure birth and undefiled honor who, with one of the five arrows, hits the eye of the whirling fish, after taking aim at its reflection in the waters of the pool. This is the pledge of the noblest of kings, Yajnasena Drupada, the mighty lord of Panchala.

Kings and princes tried their hands on the bow, but none could pull the string of the bow. Then came the turn of Jarasandha. Slowly, with majestic tread, he walked towards the pool and came to king Drupada, joined hands in a formal salutation, and then turned to Guru Sandipani, the master of the contest. 'Gurudeva! You have prescribed a wonderful test, fit for heroes,' he said and continued: I would certainly enter the contest. But how can I wed Draupadi? She is young enough to be my grand-daughter. I must give a chance to younger men.' Turning to Draupadi, he said, 'Noble Princess, you may win a bright young bowman as your husband. This is my blessing. I came here only to bless. I wish my grandson had the privilege of having you as my daughter-in-law. Having blessed you, my child! I will now leave for Girivraja.' Having said so, Jarasandha approached his seat and threw a challenging glance at Krishna, as if to indicate that he had come out unscathed from the difficulties created for him. Krishna smiled back in seeming detachment.

'Sahadeva,' shouted Jarasandha, 'It is very late as it is. We must start for Girivraja.' So saying, he offered distant salutations to King Drupada and the assembled kings, and left the arena to the blare of conchs, accompanied by the Magadhan princes.

---

Adapted from 'Krishnavtara' by K.M. Munshi.

# **Krishna promises throne of Hastinapur for Duryodhana and he fulfills his promise.**

## **Krishna's promise:**

Duryodhana's wife Bhanumati was like a younger sister to Krishna. She was, in a way, a great devotee of her brother and now was on her way to be a mother. Krishna happened to be in Hastinapur. Bhanumati was dying to see her brother but Duryodhana had forbidden her to meet Krishna or even to send a message to him. With great courage, she called her younger sister, Jalandhara who carried her message to Krishna. Bhanumati had addressed to Krishna, 'Your little sister is thinking of you every moment of her life. She would have come to pay her respects herself but her lord has forbidden it. I beg of Govinda to forgive Aryaputra for not allowing me to meet you.' The message further read, 'Govinda. You have conferred favor after favor on your unfortunate sister. She hesitates to ask one more favor of you; this will be the last she will ask you: Let Aryaputra (Duryodhana) rule in Hastinapur and my son, when his time comes, sit on the throne of Kurus.'

While delivering the message, Jalandhara said to Krishna: I should leave it to you to decide. My sister at every instant awaits your promise. If you don't give her the promise, she will die of anxiety.

'That is well said,' replied Krishna. 'Then you can convey a promise to Bhanumati that Duryodhana shall rule in Hastinapur.'

## **Krishna and Bhanumati:**

Bhanumati had delivered a son and was lying semi-conscious with her eyes sunken. Duryodhana was overcome with grief. With trembling voice, she addressed him, 'Lord. I have done my duty by you and your ancestors. I have now given you a son. He will be the future Emperor of the Kurus.' Then she murmured drowsily: 'Govinda! Govinda! Why have you not come. I am ..... Yes....your Gopi.....Govinda. Where are you?'

The doors flung opened. Jalandhara entered and behind her came Krishna. Seeing Krishna coming into the room, Duryodhana was seized with rage but he restrained himself. Bhanumati opened her eyes and with worshipful devotion said, 'Forgive me.....brother, for not coming to meet you.....You have conferred a great boon on me by promising that my lord will rule in Hastinapur. Keep the promise. A last favor, brother. I will never ask you for another.' And she went off into a doze.

Krishna said in a reassuring tone, 'Don't be anxious, Bhanumati. Duryodhana will become king of Hastinapur. I will fulfill my promise.'

Duryodhana could not believe his ears. Krishna promising him the kingship of Hastinapur - that was the promise which Bhanumati had secured for him. While Krishna was reassuring her: Dear sister. I will fulfill your wishes, Bhanumati closed her eyes - never to open again.

## **Yudhishtira as the King of the Kurus:**

On the twentieth day after Bhanumati's death, grandfather Bhishma convened the meeting of Rajya Sabha. There were high-ranking Kurus and other Kshatriya leaders of Hastinapur; leaders of artisans, craftsmen and temple-builders; learned Brahmins and Vaishyas. Present also were Dronacharya, ministers, Vidura,

Sanjya, Shakuni, Karna, Duryodhana's brother Dussashana and other sons of Dhritrashtra; four of the five Pandava brothers (except Yudhishtira); kings of Nagas, Virat; Balarama, and others. After all were seated, according to their ranks, entered Yudhishtira & Duryodhana, and then came king Dhritrashtra. Next to enter the great Hall were Krishna Vassudeva along with sage Vyas.

Grandfather Bhishma raised his hand and announced: (i) Our beloved son Dhritrashtra and I have decided to instal the noble and virtuous Yudhishtira as the King of the Kurus; and (ii) We have further decided that our beloved son Duryodhana shall continue to be the Crown Prince of the Kurus.

Then, king Dhritrashtra spoke: Revered Master, Venerable Grandfather, noble kings, valorous Kshatriyas. I am in full accord with what the Venerable grandfather has said.

And Yudhishtira acknowledged saying: Best of Munis, Venerable Grandfather and my Uncle. Humbly and prayerfully, I accept the responsibility you have charged me with. I solemnly pledge myself that you, my respected Uncle, shall decide between my cousins and us how the royal power is to be distributed and what territories shall be governed by them and us. Thereafter, the grandfather Bhishma announced that the coronation ceremony will be on the fifth day from tomorrow.

Hearing the decision, whereas Duryodhana and his brothers were exulant, Bhima's face was aflame with anger. His other brothers were bewildered.

Five days after, when all were seated and Yudhishtira's coronation was going on, the blind king Dhritrashtra addressed the assembly saying, 'Noble Yudhishtira, you have placed a heavy burden on me by asking me to decide how the territories are to be allotted and what should be given to you and to Duryodhana and his brothers. Our empire extends upto the mighty river Yamuna.

Khandavaprastha, situated on its banks, was our old capital. There, our forefathers, Pururavas, Nahusha and Yayati ruled. It was the home of our ancestors. There, you shall go to rule.’

For a moment, the Grandfather received a shock. Yudhishtira went pale; he felt as if he would faint; he had betrayed his brothers; he will go to Khandavaprastha - the wilderness infested with Rakshasas and beasts of prey; it was worse than banishment. And Duryodhana was to rule in Hastinapura. With a faltering voice, Yudhishtira consented saying: Noblest of Kurus, I accept your decision.

### **How Krishna kept his promise:**

The silence in the assembly was broken by the calm and clear voice of Krishna who asked Grandfather’s permission to speak and was granted permission. Krishna spoke addressing to Dhritrashtra, ‘Best of Kurus. You have spoken well and wisely. You have been just, fair and generous. The righteous Yudhishtira and his brothers will share with your noble sons, Duryodhana and his brothers, all the grain, gold, cattle, horses, chariots, elephants and arms of the Kurus equally. Is that not so, Noblest of Kurus?’ asked Krishna and turned to Bhishma who nodded and said vigorously, ‘Yes. Certainly.’ Dhritrashtra also could not resist saying: Yes, that is so, noble Vaasudeva.

Krishna continued, ‘Venerable Grandfather. Now, that we are here; the Yadava atirathis would like to accompany the Five Brothers to Khandavaprastha. May we have your permission?’ Grandfather replied with a smile, ‘Certainly. You can accompany them, noble Vaasudeva. You do not need my permission to do so.’

Krishna resumed, ‘Noble Grandfather. Perhaps, some of the learned Brahmins, Kurus and other Kshatriyas, mahajans, craftsmen, mulls (wrestlers) and others, together with their families, would like to accompany the Five Brothers to Khandavaprastha.’ This came as a thunderbolt to Duryodhana and Shakuni pricked

up his ears: cunning cowherd. And, Grandfather spoke, 'I give you my word that everyone in Hastinapur who wants to go to Khandavaprastha with my son, Yudhishtira, will be free to do so. They can take all their wealth with them, and also their cows, horses, chariots and other belongings.'

Krishna rose from his seat and went over to his elder brother, Balarama. After a brief conversation with his elder brother, Krishna addressed Yudhishtira, 'Noblest of the Kurus, by the permission of my brother, the Yadavas of Dwarka will give you, the Five Brothers, a small present. The present will be: one-fifth of the gold, and also of the cows, horses and chariots which the Yadavas of Dwarka possess.'

Grandfather Bhishma and the venerable Master, sage Vyasa looked at Krishna and smiled. What was in fact the banishment of the Five Brothers into wilderness, was being transformed by Vaasudeva into their triumph, for they would go forth to establish a new empire. While some in the assembly were left open-mouthed, others recovered and broke out into delirious shouts of JAYA KRISHNA VAASUDEVA.

Krishna was continuing, 'My noble brother, the son of Rohini, and such other Yadava atirathis as wish to accompany you, and I myself, will go with you, noble Yudhishtira, to Khandavaprastha to help you build the city.'

While Yudhishtira looked at Krishna prayerfully, Bhima could not control his exuberance; he jumped up from his seat and, without any regard for decorum, embraced Krishna, and shouted: JAI KRISHNA VAASUDEVA; JAI YUUDHISHTIRA, BEST OF KURUS.

Krishna had fulfilled his promise.

---

Adapted from 'Krishnavtara IV: The Book of Bhima'  
by K.M.Munshi.

## **Killing of Jarasandha;**

For the success of Rajsuya Yajna, it was necessary that Jarasandha be killed.

### **Why Rajsuya Yajna?**

Kingdom of Hastinapur had been divided into two parts - i) Hastinapur and ii) Indraprastha. The latter was ruled by Yudhishtira and his brothers, and soon it became very prosperous.

One day, sage Vyas came to the court of king Yudhishtira and being questioned by the latter said to him, 'I have been to the halls of the gods. I have a message for you, O son of Kunti, from your father Pandu, for I have also visited the hall of Yama, Lord of Death, where I saw your father among countless other kings. He knew that I was coming hither, and he bowed to me and said: Tell my son Yudhishtira, O Holy One, that he can conquer the whole earth, since his brothers are all devoted and obedient to him. When he has done this, he should perform the grand Sacrifice of Coronation called the Rajsuya. He is my son and if he performs that Sacrifice, I may, like Raja Haris Chandra, dwell in the mansion of Indra for countless joyous years.' Therefore, O son of Pandu, fulfill your father's desire and you too, with your brothers will dwell in the realm of Indra. Saying this, the Sage went away, leaving in the minds of the Pandavas the thoughts of the great Sacrifice.

After the Sage had left, Yudhishtira consulted his brothers and councilors and they answered: We believe that you are worthy to rule the whole world and that the time has come for you to offer this Sacrifice. Nonetheless, to make sure, Yudhishtira sent for Sri Krishna, whom he believed to be the wisest of men. Sri Krishna came quickly from Dwarka and when Yudhishtira told all that troubled him, Krishna said, 'Your brothers and your councilors have spoken well, O son of Kunti. You are worthy to perform the



Sacrifice. But let me tell you that you will not be able to do it as long as the king of Magdha is alive. He is proud and mighty and already considers himself lord of the earth; many kings have submitted to him from fear and he holds them imprisoned in a mountain cave. If you kill this king and set those others free, you will be acclaimed by all as lord of earth.’ On further consultations, Sri Krishna said, ‘Give me Bhima and Arjuna, and we shall defeat Jarasandha and accomplish your purpose.’

### **Krishna, Bhima and Arjuna confront Jarasandha:**

Krishna, Bhima and Arjuna set out on foot to Magdha, dressed as Brahmins who are under a strict vow. Reaching Girivraja, the capital of Magdha, they took garlands from the flower vendors and went on to the king’s court and entered the hall of audience. The king Jarasandha rose and welcomed them and asked what they wished of him. Bhima and Arjuna kept silent, and Krishna spoke, ‘These two are keeping a strict vow of silence and therefore cannot speak. At midnight, their vow is finished and they will speak with you then, O king.’

The guests were taken to the apartment and given food and drinks. At midnight, the king came to them and said, ‘It is well-known that Brahmins who are under a vow do not deck themselves with flowers. Who are you, then, who come here with garlands around your necks; you have the look of *kshatrias*. Why do you come here in disguise?’

‘O, king of Magdha,’ answered Krishna, ‘We have come at the behest of a great king to set free the kings and warriors whom you are holding captive. Indeed, we are not Brahmins. I am Krishna of the Yadu folk and these two are sons of Pandu. We challenge you to fight. Either set free all your prisoners or go tonight to the realm of Yama, king of the Dead.’

‘All my captives have been defeated fairly by me in war,’ said Jarasandha, ‘and I mean to offer them as sacrifices to Shiva. Do you think that I shall free them now out of fear of you? I am ready to do battle, either with armies in the field, or here, alone, against

one or two, or against all three of you.’

On being asked by Krishna, the king turned to Bhima and said, ‘O Bhima! I will fight against you. It is best to fight against the strongest, whether one wins or loses.’ Then he took off his crown and led the two brothers and Krishna to the courtyard of the palace. There the king and Bhima, with bare arms, grasped and wrestled with one another, throwing one another this way and that. They fought for hours and the citizens hearing the noise crowded into the courtyard and stood there in amazement. At last, the king began to tire and Bhima feeling his opponent’s weakness, lifted and whirled him round his head, and flung him down on the ground. The king was dead.

Jarasandha having been defeated and lying dead, Krishna and the two Pandavas rode out to the mountain cave where the captives were held and ordered them set free. Kings and warriors bowed down before Krishna, offering their homage but he said to them, ‘The just king Yudhishtira of the Bharata race wishes to perform the Coronation Sacrifice. Acknowledge him as your Lord, for it was he who sent us here to free you. Thus you can help to carry out his wish.’ Thereafter, Krishna set Sahadeva, the son of Jarasandha, on the throne of Magdha.

Krishna, Bhima and Arjuna stayed in Girivraja as the guests of Sahadeva till the obsequial ceremonies for Jarasandha were over. Messages were sent to the adjoining kingdoms: Jarasandha was dead and Sahadeva had been crowned king of Magdha. During this period, residents of Girivraja as well as of the neighboring areas came to have a *darshan* of Krishna - the great hero who had killed the invincible tyrant. The *srotriyas*, most of whom were in hiding or had crossed over to neighboring Kashi or Mithila came to offer blessings to Krishna Vaasudeva who had worked the miracle of stopping the human sacrifice.

---

Adapted from ‘The Five sons of king Pandu’ by Elizabeth Seeger, and ‘Krishnavatara’ by K.M.Munshi.

# Yudhishtira's Rajsuya Yagya

Shishupal is killed.

## Rajsuya Yagya:

The crowds gathered on the outskirts of Indraprastha to give a tumultuous welcome to the heroes – Krishna, Bhima and Arjuna - after the elimination of Jarasandha. There were tears in Yudhishtira's eyes when Krishna fell at his feet. Sage Vyas was also present besides the other Pandava brothers and all the dignitaries. When Krishna prostrated himself before the Sage, the latter lifted Krishna in his arms as if putting a seal on the gift given to him by the Lord Surya (the Sun God). The Master had been in search of a *Sasvat-dharma-gupta*. The search had ended; he had come.

Three days later, the Five Brothers, Krishna, Uddhava, Satyaki, Dhrishtadyumna and also the Master met to take stock of the situation. It was decided that there would be the Digvijaya ceremony - a conquest of the world. The whole Digvijaya campaign will be managed by Bhima, with blessings from the king Yudhishtira, Krishna Vaasudeva and the Master (sage Vyas).

Yudhishtira's fears of a conflict with the kings had disappeared. At the Yagya had come the kings of Panchala, Kashi, Madra, Virat and the Yadavas of Dwarka like Balarama, Krishna, Anirudh, Kank, Pradyuman and others. There were also the kings like Dantavakra of Karush and Bhagadatta of Pragjyotish, Shishupal of Chedi. From Hastinapur had come the grandsire Bhishma, Dronacharya, Vidura, Kripacharya, Duryodhana with his brothers, Karan, Shakuni, and many others.

## ***Agarpuja to Sri Krishna:***

Every day, crowds came to listen to the different *Srotriyas* who recited the glorious deeds of heroic ancestors. Yudhishtira was mightily pleased that things were going on smoothly. When the planets were propitious, Yudhishtira was ceremoniously initiated as the *yajaman* (sacrificer). Then, Bhishma turned to Yudhishtira and said, ‘My son! The ancient canons prescribed that when the auspicious moment comes, the sacrificial sessions shall begin with your offering *agrapuja* to the Muni or Rajanya of the highest distinction.’

Yudhishtira paused for a moment and said that he is ready to offer greetings to whomsoever he (Bhishma) suggest; you are the most respectful of Rajanyas.....But, before he could complete the sentence, Bhishma intervened with a laugh: Yudhishtira. I am your grandfather, the head of the house of the Bharatas. Pointing, he continued, that Krishna alone deserved to be worshipped. Without his guidance, the Kurus would have been destroyed; the five brothers would have been no-where; without his assistance, they would not have been able to marry Draupadi, or forge the alliance with king Drupad; but for his eliminating Jarasandha, the Arya world would not have survived. Krishna Vaasudeva should be offered the *agrapuja*.

At that moment, there was some whispers in a section of the Hall of Sacrifice, though many Rajanyas enthusiastically shouted: Victory to Sri Krishna. When the enthusiastic shouts abated, the Master stepped forward to where Krishna was seated. Placing his hands on Krishna’s head, he said: MAY THE GOD HELP YOU TO BE THE SASVAT-DHARMA GUPTA - the savior of eternal *dharma*.

The silence was shattered by king Shishupal who shouted, ‘I will not be a party to this sinful affront.’

## Death of Sishupal:

Sishupal was consumed by a terrific rage. He addressed the Grandfather in a defiant tone, ‘Son of Shantanu and Ganga. In having the cowherd worshipped by *agrapuja*, you have been subservient to the Five Brothers. You have forsaken the righteous path for selfish ends. Krishna is not a king. If you wanted to find a suitable Yadava, you could have selected his father, Vasudeva. If you wanted to find a king, old in years, king Drupad was here. If you wanted a hero, Aswathama was here. If you wanted to honor a venerable sage, Muni Dvaipayana (Vyas) was here.’

He then turned to Krishna and said, ‘Son of Vasudeva. You are greedy, ambitious and deceitful. You are butcher of your maternal uncle, Kamsa. The Five Brothers, out of cowardice, have paid you an undeserved honor.’ So saying, Sishupal left his seat; his friends followed him.

Yudhishtira went up to Shishupal and tried to pacify him. So did the grandsire Bhishma. But Shishupal was so excited that words continued to come from his mouth in a torrent. With withering contempt, he continued: ‘You (Bhishma) claim that your celibacy (Brahmcharya) is inviolate. This claim is made only to screen your impotence.’

Unperturbed, Krishna who was standing by the side of Yudhishtira came forward and addressed Shishupal, ‘Noble king of Chedi, I know that you have no quarrel with the venerable Bhishma or the Five Brothers; it is with me. You are my cousin. I had promised your mother, the venerable Srutasrava that I would forgive you a hundred affronts, but no more. Today you have abused the hospitality of the Five Brothers. You have insulted the noble Bhishma, revered by all Aryas. You have converted the Hall of Sacrifice into a Hall of Wickedness. Shishupal! Once I had to rescue Rukmini, the noble princess of Vidarbha, from you. Today, I propose to rescue *dharma* from you.’

Shishupal forced a laugh. ‘Shameless cowherd. Are you not ashamed to gloat over your running away with the Princess solemnly pledged to me?’ So saying, he took a step forward with his sword. At the same time, Bhima too took the naked sword from Sahadeva.

Suddenly, there was a whizzing sound which arrested the attention of everyone. Every eye was directed towards a strange discus with a razor-sharp edge, flashing in the sunshine, whirling and flying through mid-air. It hovered over the head of Krishna who caught the formidable weapon by a sweeping gesture of his right hand. Before anyone could realize what was happening, Krishna sent it whirling at Shishupal who opened his eyes wide in fright; from his hand, his sword fell on the ground. The *chakra* came whirling, severed the head from Shishupal’s body and returned to Krishna’s hand. Shishupal’s head fell on the ground.

---

Adapted from ‘Krishnavatara’ by K.M.Munshi..

## **Killing of king Salva;**

With the death of king Salva, (Jarasandha & Shishupala having been already killed), the king Draupad of Panchala on his side and his cousins (Pandava brothers) fully established in Indraprastha after Rajsuya Yajna, Krishna was now the unquestioned and foremost defender of *dharma* in Aryavarta.

### **King Salva of Saubha:**

Shawalpur (Present-day Alwar in Rajasthan) was the capital city of Martikavrtta, and Salva, the *mlecha* king was the ruler there. He was the friend of Shishupala and had attended the *swayamvara* of Rukmini. When Krishna abducted Rukmini by defeating the kings and princes at swayamvara, Salva had taken a vow before all the other kings and princes that he would rid this world of the entire race of Yadavas. In order to accomplish this, he had done severe *tapasya* to Lord Shiva who had given him an aerial vehicle called the Saubha which was as big as a palace and could be made invisible; this could fly anywhere and return safely, after hitting hard the enemy.

Krishna and Balarama had gone to Indraprastha to attend the Rajsuya Yajna of Yudhishtira. There, the arrogant Shishupala was killed by Krishna. After the Yajna, Krishna and Balarama had stayed there at the insistence of Yudhishtira. When Salva heard of Shishupala's death at the hands of Krishna, he became furious and felt that this was the opportune time for him to attack Dwarka especially when both the brothers were away and only Pradyuman (Krishna's son) had been left to hold the fort at Dwarka.

The story of Salva begins with the *swayamvara* of three princesses of Kashi. Princess Amba of Kashi wanted to marry

Salva but she along with her two sisters, was abducted from her *swayamvara* by Bhishma for his brother Vichitravirya. Amba begged Bhishma to release her as she had mentally committed herself to marry Salva. So, she was set free and sent to Salva who, however, refused to accept her because he did not want anything from Bhishma whom he could not defeat in battle. Thus, not being accepted by either, Amba's life was ruined and for this she held Bhishma responsible.

Salva was a valiant prince. In due course of time, on becoming king, he, in alliance with Jarasandha (the emperor of Magadha) wanted to destroy the kings in Aryavarta. This grand alliance was organized to meet the danger of Arya supremacy. Kamsa, (the ruler of Mathura and the son-in-law of Jarasandha) also became a part of this alliance. Every time, the alliance attacked Mathura, it met with defeat at the hands of Krishna who was not merely a defender of Aryas, but the foremost defender of *dharma*. And, now the opportunity had knocked at Salva's door. Krishna and Balarama were away to Indraprastha and the time was ripe for Salva to destroy the Aryans and their bastion at Dwarka.

### **Salva attacks Dwarka:**

Salva attacked Dwarka from the aerial vehicle Saubha and destroyed the outer wood-lands and gardens. Then, he directed the attack against the various bastions of the city. Sons of Krishna ably defended the city for twenty-seven days. In fierce combat, Samba (Krishna's son) defeated the chief of Salva's army and killed many other warriors. Krishna's eldest son Pradyuman also gave a tough fight to the invader, but was injured by a blow on the chest by Dymna, Salva's minister, and fell unconscious. The charioteer quickly took him away from the battle-field. When Pradyuman came to senses, he got angry with the charioteer and said to him: he is not born in Krishna's family who runs away from the battle-field, or strikes on a fallen adversary, or on a child, woman and an aged one. He insisted on returning to the fray immediately.



In the grim battle with Pradyuman, king Salva fell down senseless when the former had discharged an arrow of great might. Regaining a little consciousness, Salva saw his followers running away. He lost heart, got into the aerial vehicle and disappeared in the clouds of dust.

### **Krishna fights Salva and kills him:**

When the news of Salva's attack reached Indraprastha, Sri Krishna immediately got ready to go to Dwarka. At that time, Yudhishtira requested Krishna to take Arjuna, Nakula or Sahadeva with him, but the former shook his head and said that this was a challenge to *dharma* and he himself would be able to meet it successfully.

Sri Krishna arrived at Dwarka and was aghast to see the destruction of the city by Salva. Immediately, he collected the force and attacked Shalwalpur (Alwar). There, he came to know that Salva had gone to the sea, taking Saubha along with him. So, Krishna proceeded towards the sea to find the fleeing king and found him. In the battle that ensued, when Salva found himself out-matched, he resorted to illusory tricks and made Vasudeva (Krishna's father)'s form appear before Krishna and then cutting off his (Vasudeva)'s head. For a moment, Krishna himself trembled to see the fate of his father, but in a split second, he realized that it was but an illusion.

Salva was giving a tough fight to Krishna. With a mighty arrow, he injured the left arm of Krishna and the Saranga Dhanush fell down from his hand. Face to face, Salva taunted Krishna saying: On fool! You abducted the wife of my friend and your cousin, Shishupal, and then you killed him when he was not ready to fight; run away, otherwise, I shall kill you with the shower of my arrows.

Krishna replied: O Salva! You are talking useless talks; death is hovering on your head. So saying, Lord threw the ace at Saubha which broke in pieces and fell down on the ground. Salva was

also injured and was now on the ground. In a swift move, Lord threw Sudershan Chakra cutting off his head. Dantavakra, a close warrior-friend of Salva now came forward and Krishna made a quick end of him also with his mace. Thereafter, the Lord returned to Dwarka celebrating his victory.

---

Adapted from 'Sri Krihna Lila' by Vanamali,  
Vanamali Gita Yogashram, Rishikesh, India;  
'Yogeshwar Krishna' by Pandit Chamupati, and others.

## **GAME OF DICE;**

Yudhishtira loses his kingdom, brothers and wife at the game of dice with Duryodhana. He wins freedom when he invokes the blessings of Sri Krishna.

### **Invitation for the Game:**

Kingdom of Hastinapur had been divided into two - Hastinapura and Indraprastha. Pandava brothers got Indraprastha and Kaurava brothers continued to rule Hastinapura. The kingdom of Indraprastha under the Pandavas progressed and prospered, and soon the king Yudhishtira performed Rajsuya yagya.

Duryodhana could not bear the prosperity of Indraprastha and was burning with jealousy. Immediately, after returning from Indraprastha, he persuaded his doting father to write an invitation to the Pandavas for a game of dice and to instruct his uncle, Vidura to take the message. When Vidura reached Indraprastha with the message, he urged Yudhishtira not to accept it, but the latter in disregard of his brothers' advice, accepted it. Though protested by his brothers and Vidura, Yudhishtira remained firm in his decision and they, accompanied by Draupadi, set forth to Hastinapur. Reaching the city, they went to pay their respects to all the elders. Next day, they were taken to Jayanta Sabha (Victory Hall) where the game of dice started, and it was announced that Shakuni will throw the dice on behalf of Duryodhana.

### **Yudhishtira loses everything:**

In the game, Yudhishtira lost everything - his jewelry, elephants, horses, chariots, army, palaces and finally the entire kingdom. He

was left with nothing, but Shakuni had not finished with him. He taunted him saying: you have your brothers and at least one of them may prove to have the luck which you seem to lack. On hearing this, Yudhishtira wagered all his beloved brothers, one by one, and lost them all. Shakuni was still not satisfied and he addressed Yudhishtira: You still have your Empress - Draupadi; if you stake her, perhaps, she will be able to turn your tide of fortune. Fearing that Yudhishtira might decline, Duryodhana quickly said, "If Draupadi is staked and Yudhishtira wins, I'm prepared to return all that he has lost so far." Yudhishtira grasped at this last straw, hoping for a miracle to retrieve his failing fortunes. He staked his beloved queen and lost her also in the game of dice.

Duryodhana's win was complete. He asked his uncle Vidura to fetch Draupadi to the Hall but he refused. On this, he sent an agent but still Draupadi would not come. Then, Duryodhana asked his brother Dussasana who lost no time in grabbing Draupadi by her hair and dragged her forcibly from the palace to the assembly Hall. Then Duryodhana commanded, "Now, undress this woman! Take off her clothes and show her to the court, the shameless creature that she is. Let her see how helpless her husbands are to aid her."

Dussasana jumped forward and started tugging at Draupadi's cloths. In utter helplessness, she cried aloud, "O Krishna! Thou darling of the Yadavas! Where are You? Why have you forsaken me in this predicament?" With this piteous cry, she stood with her hands uplifted in supplication and surrendered her body, mind and spirit mentally to the Lord. And, to the wonder of all, Draupadi remained clothed though Dussasana kept pulling the cloths off Draupadi who kept chanting and chanting the name of Lord. The entire floor was covered with heaps of cloth, but Draupadi was still clad as before. This is one of the most sacred incidents in the Mahabharata and is an example to all women that they are never as helpless as they think, so long as they have devotion to the Lord.

## **King Dhritrashtra restores kingdom to Pandavas:**

As a means to overcome his setback, caused by the miracle, Duryodhana crudely bared his thigh, exposed it to Draupadi and invited her to sit on his lap. This was the final insult. She could bear it no longer. A dreadful curse broke from her lips, “One day, O Duryodhana, those thighs of yours will be broken on the battlefield and you will die a dreadful death, with vultures and wolves howling around you.”

Bhima too could contain himself no longer. Glaring balefully at Duryodhana, he swore, “May I never reach heaven if I do not kill all the Kauravas. As for Duryodhana, I shall break his things first and then kill him. I swear this by Krishna, Durga and Shiva. I also swear that I shall drink the blood of the wicked Dussasana after killing him and tie Panchanli (Draupadi)’s hair with my blood-stained hands.” Arjuna now took a dreadful oath to kill Karna, Sahadeva to kill Shakuni, and Nakula to kill Uluka, the son of Shakuni. Finally, Draupadi took another oath, “My hair will remain untied until Bhima anoints it with the blood of Dussasana.”

Hearing all these terrible oaths, the blind king was alarmed and shaken out of his stupor. ‘Stop! Stop! He cried, “Release the Empress Draupadi.” Heedless of his father’s commands, Duryodhana ordered Draupadi to go inside and attend to his wife. With great dignity, Draupadi answered, “I shall go only after having bowed to the Elders. Due to the forcible way in which I was dragged here, I was unable to do so when I entered, but let it not be said that the Empress of Indraprastha was lacking in respect.” Saying so, slowly, she went forward and bent before Bhishma, Drona, Vidura and king Dhritrashtra. Terrified by the oaths of the Pandavas, the king said, “Ask for two boons, my daughter, and I shall grant them to you because it is because of your nobility that God Himself has saved you today.” Immediately, she asked for the release of her husbands together with their kingdom.

“So be it,” said the king.

## **Yudhishtira again plays dice but wins when he invokes Krishna:**

Before Duryodhana could remonstrate, Vidura hustled the Pandavas into their chariots and whipped up the horses. Duryodhana flew in rage at his father and swore to kill himself unless the Pandavas were brought back and restored what he had won. Dhritrashtra demurred but as usual gave in. Pandavas had hardly reached Indraprastha before they were recalled by another invitation of the blind king to play a single throw of dice. The losers were to go into exile for twelve years and then to spend the thirteenth year incognito; if they were discovered during this final period of one year, they were to repeat the entire process. On receiving the blind king's invitation, Yudhishtira, despite the pleas of his brothers and Draupadi, foolishly asked the horses to be turned back, for he insisted that he would not disobey his Elders.

The terms of the wager were explained and the game started again. The game was played and lost, and Yudhishtira agreed to go to exile. At that time, to the astonishment of everyone, Draupadi insisted that he should gamble just once more for their freedom, for she said that she wanted her husbands to go into exile as free men and not as slaves. Duryodhana and Shakuni insultingly asked what Yudhishtira had left to stake. The latter answered, "I shall stake all my punya (spiritual merit) which I have accumulated so far."

Duryodhana was elated and, being sure of the outcome, pledged all Yudhishtira had lost in addition to their freedom. Just before the dice was thrown, Draupadi reminded Yudhishtira to chant the twelve names of Lord Krishna and invoke his blessings before throwing the dice. For the first and last time, to the wonder of all, Yudhishtira won! With his usual high code of honor, he refused to take back the kingdom and accepted only their freedom. He said that he would claim his kingdom only after the successful completion of his exile.

Thus, the Pandavas, clad in deerskins and barks, proceeded to spend the next thirteen years in exile. Followed by a host of weeping citizens and Brahmins, they reached the outskirts of the city when Yudhishtira persuaded them to return.

---

Adapted from 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Vanamali,  
Vanamali Gita Yogashram, Rishikesh, India.

## **Krishna meets Pandavas in exile;**

He gives solace to Draupadi saying that the women of Kurus clan will weep as she is weeping now.

Having lost everything to Duryodhana at the game of dice, Yudhishtira and his brothers along with Draupadi proceeded to forests to spend the next 12+1 years in exile. Once in the forests, he got worried as how to feed the Brahmins following him. So, he approached his family priest Dhaumya and said: The Brahmins are with me. Afflicted with the many calamities, I am unable to support them; nor can I abandon them. Tell me, O holy One! What should be done by me in such a pass.

### **Yudhishtira gets Akshey Patra:**

Dhaumya advised him to make prayers to Sun-god. And, Yudhishtira became engaged in austerities, and began to sing the hymns of praise to the Sun-god. In his prayers, he said: O Lord of all food! It behoveth thee to grant food in abundance unto me who am desirous of food even for entertaining all my guests. I bow also to all those followers of thine that have taken refuge at thy feet.

Pleased with the hymns, the maker of day, self-luminous, and blazing like fire, (the Sun-god) showed himself to the son of Pandu and said, 'Thou shall obtain all that thou desired. I shall provide thee with food for five and seven years together. O king, accept this copper-vessel which I give unto thee. And, O thou of excellent vows, as long as Panchali will hold this vessel without partaking of its contents - fruits, roots, meat and vegetables, cooked in thy kitchen - these four kinds of food shall from this day be inexhaustible. And, on the fourteenth year from this, thou shall regain thy kingdom.' Having said this, the god vanished.



## **Sri Krishna meets Pandavas Brothers:**

When the game of dice was being played at Hastinapura, Sri Krishna was in Dwarka. It was only when Subhadra came to Dwarka with her three-year old son Abhimanyu, that Sri Krishna learnt for the first time of events at Hastinapur, the game of dice and the exile of the Pandavas. At once, he set out for the Kamyaka forest where the Pandavas lived; he was accompanied by all the heroes of the Vrishni clan, as well as by Draupadi's brother Drishtadyumna. They were pained to see the condition in which the emperor was living. Krishna tested Yudhishtira by offering to help him get his kingdom back immediately, but the latter refused, for he did not want to break his word.

Sri Krishna fired Yudhishtira for losing everything in the game of dice. He asked how Duryodhana could compel him to gamble unless he himself was interested. Even when one was called to fight, one could always withdraw and fight only when one felt strong; one should never put at stake his entire life and family at the game of dice; this was the most condemnable deed that he had done. Had he (Krishna) been there, he would have stopped the game of dice. Yudhishtira did not reply; he was only sweating and kept his head low.

## **Krishna's promise to Draupadi:**

Krishna was greatly moved when he saw Draupadi. She approached him in a voice drowned in tears and broken with sobs. She told her story thus, 'O Janardana! I am the favored queen of the five Pandavas who are the greatest heroes in the world. I am the daughter of the King of Panchala and the sister of heroic Drishtadyumna, yet see what they did to me. I was dragged by the hair and insulted in front of the Elders. What do I care if Yudhishtira is called the sole monarch of the earth, when I was dragged by my hair by Dussasana. Had it not been for Your grace, I would have been completely disrobed in full view of my heroic husbands.'

Saying this, she broke into uncontrollable sobs. Krishna cupped her face in his lotus palms and wiped away her tears with the hem of his upper robe.

‘O Panchali!’ Sri Krishna said. ‘Be patient for a while. At the end of thirteen years, the women of the Kuru clan will weep as you are weeping now. When Arjuna’s arrows quench their thirst in Karna’s blood, they will weep. When Bhima’s hands are red with Dussasana’s blood, they will weep. When Duryodhana lies on the battlefield with his thighs broken, they will weep. Nothing can stop this inexorable law of cause and effect - the law of karma. The heavens may fall, the snowy peaks of Himavan may tumble down, the seas may dry up, the earth may split into a million splinters, but My words will never fail. Therefore, dry your tears, my dear sister, and try to forgive your husbands who were powerless to help you.’ After this, he comforted Yudhishtira and the others, and returned to Dwarka, promising to come whenever they needed Him.

Dhristadyuman brought with him Draupadi’s five sons to Panchala. Dhristaketu took his sister Karenumati, the wife of Nakula, to Chedi.

### **Krishna again meets Pandavas after 11 years:**

More than eleven years had passed since the Pandava brothers, along with wife, Draupadi, were in exile. Having spent years in the mountains, they had again come back to Kamyaka forest and were spending their days in hunting, roving by the rivers and the woods, wielding their bows.

During the autumn season, Krishna and his beloved wife Satyabhama came to see them. They alighted from their chariots and saluted the Pandavas who were overjoyed to see their well-wishing friend and were joyfully welcomed. When Krishna saw at his dear friend Arjuna, after such a long absence, he clasped him

in his arms again and again, while his wife embraced the princess of Panchala.

Turning to Yudhishtira, Sri Krishna said, ‘O King. You have not swerved from your practices of charity, truthfulness, asceticism, religion, forgiveness and patience. In strict obedience to truth, you have performed your duties and you have thus conquered both this world and the next. There is no doubt that you will recover your kingdom in due course. When, your vow is fulfilled and the thirteen years have passed, we shall do everything in our power to chastise the Kauravas.’ Then Krishna spoke kindly to Draupadi and gave her news of her sons who were staying in Drupada’s kingdom.’

When Krishna fell silent, Yudhishtira said, ‘O Keshava. There is no doubt that you are our highest refuge. We are always under your protection. When the time comes, you will surely do everything to restore to us our kingdom. While Krishna was busy with the Pandava brothers, his wife Satyabhama was talking to Draupadi.

After staying for a couple of days, Krishna bid farewell to the Pandavas and was ready to depart for Dwarka. He and Satyabhama mounted the chariot. Seeing Draupadi standing before him so meekly, Krishna said, ‘Do not be in anxiety. Before long, you will be the wife of kings – after your husbands have crushed their enemies and won back the earth. The Kauravas will soon reap the results of their sins against you. When they have been destroyed, you will see their wives weeping just as you wept upon leaving Hastinapura.’ Krishna once again assured Draupadi that her five sons were flourishing and that she would soon see them grown up, powerful heroes. Then, saluting the Pandavas and bowing to the Brahmins, Krishna urged on his horses and set out for his own city, Dwarka.

---

Adapted from the English translation of Mahabharata; ‘History of Ancient India’ by J.P.Mittal, and other classics of Hindu literature.

# **Krishna on Peace Mission;**

When Duryodhana wanted to imprison Krishna.

## **Krishna on Peace Mission:**

Pandava brothers had completed the stipulated period of 12-years exile; they had also completed one year of incognito exile while in the kingdom of Virat (Jaipur and nearby areas). Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna had been married to Utra, the daughter of king Virat. After marriage, king Virat allotted a village to the Pandavas from where they could consult their friends and allies, and decide on their future plan of action.

Duryodhana (Suyodhana) was not willing to give any part of the kingdom to Yudhishtira who had sent his messenger to Hastinapur for the purpose. Disappointed and frustrated, Yudhishtira pleaded to Krishna: I do not see any other person, besides you, who can save us in this season of distress. Go there, O Krishna, for our good, and say to Suyodhana such words as are for our benefit.

Hearing this, Krishna told Yudhishtira that he would go and will strive to bring about that which would be beneficial to both the Pandavas and Kurus. He, however, warned Yudhishtira to be prepared for the war because Duryodhana will, by no means, give back to him the kingdom which he had taken at the game of dice.

## **Krishna's departure for Hastinapur**

It is mentioned in Mahabharata that “when Devaki's son of mighty arms set out for Hastinapura, ten mighty car-warriors, capable of slaying hostile heroes, fully armed, followed in his train. And a thousand foot-soldiers, and a thousand horsemen, and

attendants by hundreds, also formed his train, carrying provisions in abundance.” On the way, Krishna stayed for the night at VRIKASTHALA and continued the journey, next morning.

### **Duryodhana’s plan:**

At Hastinapur, at king Dhritrashtra’s orders, the entire city had been decorated to welcome Krishna and many bejeweled arches had been put up. He advised his son, Duryodhana that he and his friends say to Krishna what only is agreeable to him. In reply, Duryodhana said, ‘O Grandsire. I can, by no means, live by sharing this swelling prosperity of mine with the Pandavas. Please listen. This, indeed, is a great resolution which I have formed. I will imprison Janardana who is the refuge of the Pandavas. He will come here tomorrow morning and when he is confined, the Vrishnis and the Pandavas, aye, the whole earth, will submit to me. What may be the means for accomplishing it, so that Janardana may not guess our purpose and so that no danger also may overtake us, it behoveth thee to say.’

Hearing these fearful words of his son about imprisoning Krishna, Dhritrashtra spoke to Duryodhana, ‘O ruler of men! Never say this again. Hrishikesa cometh here as an ambassador. He is, besides, related to and is dear to us. He hath done us no wrong; how then doth he deserve imprisonment?’

Bhishma said, ‘This wicked son of thine, O Dhritrashtra, hath his hour come. He chooseth evil, not good.....This exceedingly wicked son of thine with all his counselors coming in contact with Krishna of unstained acts, will be destroyed in a moment. I dare not listen to the words of this sinful and wicked wretch that hath abandoned all virtue.’ Having said this, Bhishma inflamed with rage rose and left that place.

### **Krishna’s arrival and meeting the Kurus:**

As Krishna arrived and entered Hastinapur, the crowds surged around to see the living legend that he had become. Not a single

soul was left in the houses. Dhritrashtra, Bhishma and other Kurus' elders, except Duryodhana, had come to receive Krishna. With great humility, Krishna saluted the elders and politely refused the offer of the palace. He went to the dwelling of his humble devotee, Vidura, and spent the night there. Next day morning, Krishna with Vidura went to the Kurus' assembly hall.

Duryodhana was furious at having his hospitality spurned and he had given strict orders to the assembled people that no one should stand up to greet Krishna when he comes, and that he would set fire to the house of anyone who dared to disobey him. Nonetheless, when the Lord walked in with his usual charming smile, one by one, everyone rose up and prostrated as if moved by an irresistible impulse.

On being asked by Dhritrashtra, Krishna explained the purpose of his visit. He spoke, 'I have come hither so that peace may be established between the Kurus and the Pandavas. The Pandavas have successfully completed their thirteen years of exile. They have suffered greatly but they are still prepared to forget and forgive. The terrible danger that threatens to engulf the entire clan of Kurus, O King, has its origin in the conduct of your sons. Therefore, the establishment of peace depends entirely on you. Deprived of their father in infancy, the Pandavas look upon you as their father. Treat them, therefore, as your sons and behave towards them as a father. Remember, they are your brother's children and it is your duty to protect their interests. For the sake of virtue, profit and happiness, make peace with the Pandavas and restrain your sons from their head-strong conduct.' Other Kuru elders and sages also advocated what Krishna had said. Nonetheless, **Duryodhana declared in unequivocal terms, 'O Kesava of mighty arms! As long as I live, even that much of our land which may be covered by the point of a sharp needle shall not, O Madhava, be given by us unto the Pandavas.'**

## **Duryodhana leaves the court:**

Bhishma and Drona urged Duryodhan to follow the Lord's advice. Meanwhile, Dussasana instigated Duryodhana by saying, 'if you (Duryodhana) did not willingly make peace with the Pandavas, then Kauravas (Bhisham, Drona and others) will bind you (hand and foot) and make over you to your father (Dhritrashtra) who will make over all of us to the Pandavas.' Hearing these words of his brother, Duryodhana rose up from his seat, breathing heavily like a snake and went out of the court. Meanwhile, Krishna warned the king of the consequences of the war and asked him to keep peace with Pandavas, and let not the whole *kshatriya* race be slaughtered by his action.

On Dhritrashtra's command, Duryodhana was brought back, and Vidura brought Gandhari also to the hall. She advised her son, Duryodhana to obey the words of his well-wishers viz. his father, Bhishma, Drona and others saying: Krishna and Arjuna are invincible; give to Pandavas what is their due; persecution of the Pandavas for full thirteen years of exile has been enough; half the earth is sufficient to you. She forcefully advised Duryodhana to give up his avarice.

## **Duryodhan plans to arrest and imprison Krishna:**

Disregarding the words of his mother and in anger, wending his way from the court, Duryodhana again went outside, followed by his counsellors. Once outside, Duryodhana consulted Shakuni and Karna, and they decided to forcibly arrest Krishna; they thought that with Krishna being imprisoned, the Pandavas will lose their hearts and become incapable of action. At that time, Satyaki (Krishna's close friend) could read the intentions of Duryodhana, and he alerted Kritavarma (Commander of Krishna's forces). Thereafter, he entered the court and informed Krishna, and then to Dhritrashtra and Vidura.

Thus informed, Krishna casting his eyes on Dhritrashtra said, 'O king! If these men desire to chastise me by using violence,

permit them to chastise me. I will not, however, perpetuate any sinful and censurable act. If they desire to perpetuate such a deed, Yudhishtira's object will then be easily accomplished, for, seizing them, I can make them over to Pandavas. What is there that is difficult of attainment by me? Let it be, O king, as this Duryodhana desireth. I give permission, to all thy sons to do it.'

Hearing this, king Dhritrashtra asked Vidura to bring back Duryodhana quickly to the court, so that he could make one more effort to bring him to the right path. When Duryodhana came, the king asked him to listen to what the Lord had said. Vidura also told him that in seeking to use violence towards Krishna, he with all his followers will perish like insects falling into the fire. Lastly, it was for the Lord to advise Duryodhana and he said, 'O Suyodhana. thou regardest me to be alone and it is for this, O thou of little understanding, that Thou seekest to make me a captive after vanquishing me by violence. Here, however, are all the Pandavas and all the Vrishnis and Andhakas. Here are all the Adityas, the Rudras and the Vasus with all the great Rishis.' Saying this, the Lord burst out into a loud laughter and showed them His *viraat roop* (Cosmic form).

## **Mission fails**

Looking at the awful divine sight of the Lord, all those present closed their eyes with frightened hearts except Drona, Bhishma, Vidura, Sanjay and the Rishis to see the cosmic sight on the occasion. After showing His divine form for something, the Lord withdrew his cosmic and highly wonderful form, and along with Satyaki and Kritavarma went out where his charioteer (Daruka) was waiting with the chariot ready to depart. And this also was another wonderful incident that happened. Seeing the Lord leave the court, the Kauravas with all the kings followed him, like the gods following Indra.

As the chariot was about to depart with the Lord mounted on it, that king Dhritrashtra said, 'O Janardana! Thou has seen the power



I wield over my sons. Thou has, indeed, witnessed all with thy own eyes. Nothing now is unknown to thee. Seeing me endeavor to bring about peace between the Kurus and the Pandavas, in fact, knowing the state (in which I am), it behoveth thee not to entertain any suspicion regarding me. O Kesava, I have no sinful feelings towards the Pandavas. The Kauravas and all the kings of the earth, also know, O Madhava, that I have made every endeavor to bring about peace.’

The mighty-armed Janardana then addressed Dhritrashtra, Drona, grandsire Bhishma and others, ‘Ye have yourselves witnessed all that hath happened in the assembly of the Kurus, *viz.*, how wicked Duryodhana, like an uneducated wretch, left the court from anger, and how king Dhritrashtra also describeth himself to be powerless. With the permission of you all, I shall now go back to Yudhishtira.’ Saluting them, the Lord set out and those heroic bulls amongst the Bharatas, those mighty bowmen, *viz.*, Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Aswatthaman and that mighty car-warrior Yuyutsu, all began to follow him. And Kesava, on his large white car proceeded then, in the very sight of the Kurus, to the abode of his paternal aunt (Kunti).

---

Adapted from English translation of The Mahabharata by Kesari Mohan Ganguli (published between 1883 to 1896).

## Krishna's Virat Roop in Kurus's court.

### Virat Roop (Cosmic Form):

To establish peace between the Kauravas and Pandavas, Lord Krishna had come to Hastinapur. There, the crown prince (Duryodhana) had made a plan to arrest and imprison the Lord. In king Dhritrashtra's court, when Lord came to know of this, he said to Duryodhana:

“From delusion, O Suyodhana, thou regardest me to be alone and it is for this, O thou of little understanding, that thou seekest to make me a captive after vanquishing me by violence. Here, however, are all the Pandavas and all the Vrishnis and Andhakas. Here are all the Adityas, the Rudras and the Vasus, with all the great Rishis.” Saying this, Kesava, that slayer of hostile heroes, burst out into a loud laughter.

As the high-souled Sauri laughed, from his body, that resembled a blazing fire, issued myriads of gods, each of lightning effulgence, and not bigger than the thumb. And on his forehead appeared Brahman, and on his breast Rudra. And on his arms appeared the regents of the world, and from his mouth issued Agni, the *Adityas*, the *Sadhyas*, the *Vasus*, the *Aswins*, the *Marutas*, with Indra, and the *Viswedevas*. And myriads of *Yakshas*, and the *Gandharvas*, and *Rakshasas* also, of the same measure and form, issued thence. And from his two arms issued Sankarshana and Dhananjaya. And Arjuna stood on his right, bow in hand, and Rama stood on his left, armed with the plough. And behind him stood Bhima and

Yudhishthira, and the two sons of Madri, and before him were all the Andhakas and the Vrishnis with Pradyumna and other chiefs bearing mighty weapons upraised. And on his diverse arms were seen the conch, the discus, the mace, the bow called *Saranga*, the plough, the javelin, the *Nandaka*, and every other weapon, all shining with effulgence, and upraised for striking. And from his eyes and nose and ears and every part of his body, issued fierce sparks of fire mixed with smoke. And from the pores of his body issued sparks of fire like unto the rays of the sun.

Beholding that awful form of the high-souled Kesava, all the kings closed their eyes with affrighted hearts, except Drona, Bhishma and Vidura, endued with great intelligence, greatly blessed Sanjaya, and the *Rishis* possessed of wealth of asceticism, for the divine Janardana gave unto them this divine sight on the occasion. And beholding in the Kuru court that highly wonderful sight, celestial drums beat (in the sky) and a floral shower fell upon him. And the whole earth trembled at the time and the oceans were agitated. And, O bull of the Bharata's race, all the denizens of the earth were filled with great wonder. Then that tiger among men, that chastiser of foes, withdrew that divine and highly wonderful, and extremely varied and auspicious form.

And arm-in-arm with Satyaki on one side and Hridika's son (Kritavarman) on the other, and obtaining permission of the Rishis, the slayer of Madhu went out. During the uproar that then took place, the Rishis, Narada and others vanquished, for repairing to their respective places. And this also was another wonderful incident that happened. Seeing that tiger among men leave the court, the Kauravas with all the kings followed him, like the gods following Indra. Sauri, however, of immeasurable soul, without bestowing a single thought on those that followed him, issued from the court, like a blazing fire mixed with smoke. And he beheld at the gate his charioteer, Daruka waiting with his large white car, furnished with rows of tinkling bells, decked with golden ornaments .....

*(Extracted from English translation of The Mahabharata  
by Kesri Mohan Ganguli (published between 1883 to 1896).*

## **War became certainty**

Sri Krishna got into his chariot and sped towards Upaplavya. Any ray of hope of a peaceful settlement was extinguished. On reaching Upaplavya, Sri Krishna told the Pandavas what had happened in Hastinapur. He said, 'I urged them to do what was right and what was also good for them. But, it was all in vain. The foolish Duryodhana would not listen to the advice tendered to him by the elders in the assembly. There is now no way out except war. We must now prepare for war without delay. Kurukshetra is waiting for the holocaust.'

# Arjuna and Duryodhana

seek Krishna's help.

## Arrivat at Dwarka:

Thirteen years during which the Pandavas had to remain undiscovered had come to an end. In the last year, they were in the kingdom of Virat, where they saved the kingdom from adversaries' attack. To express his gratitude, the king of Virat offered the hand of his daughter Utra for Arjuna's son, Abhimanyu. The king also gave a village Upaplavya to Pandavas to settle and work out their strategy for future.

To celebrate Utra's marriage with Arjuna's son, from Dwarka came Balarama and Krishna with Arjuna's wife Subhadra and her son Abhimanya accompanied by many Yadava warriors. Loud and long was the blare of trumpet conchs as the Virat royal family and the Pandavas went out to receive Krishna and the Pandava guests. The king of Kashi had also arrived with his forces. Drupada, the king of Panchal Desh also came with his forces and had brought with him his sons, Dhrishtdyumna and Shikhandi, and Draupadi's sons. There were many other princes gathered at Upaplavya, well-attached to Pandavas.

The marriage of Abhimanyu with Utra was solemnized according to Vedic rites. After the wedding celebrations were over, they all met in the Assembly hall of king Virat. There were Krishna, Balaram, Yudhishitra with his brothers, Satyaki, king Drupada and others. In the deliberations, it was agreed that in a war neither party really wins. Only sufferings result. Thousands of women become widows. What the Pandavas lost by gambling, let them try to redeem through an ambassador of peace and goodwill. The messenger should be soft-spoken, patient and full of wisdom. The sage Ulka in Virat's court has all these qualities, so let him be sent as the ambassador of peace. In the meantime, let the preparations

be made, in case Duryodhana refuses Pandavas' overtures of friendship. Thereafter, Sri Krishna, Balarama and other Yadavas left for Dwarka.

### **Krishna's help:**

Having sent sage Ulka to Hastinapura on the peace mission, the Pandavas sent word, at the same time to the princes likely to favor their cause, and to hold their forces in readiness for war. Yudhishtira also dispatched Arjuna to Dwarka for the same purpose since it was necessary to make a formal request for the Yadavas' support and forces.

At Hastinapura, Shakuni was fully aware of Krishna's prowess and urged Duryodhana to go to Dwarka to solicit his support. Learning that Vaasudeva (Krishna) was back in his home city, Duryodhana sped towards Dwarka in his chariot, as fast as his swiftest horses could take him. It so happened that Arjuna and Duryodhana reached Dwarka on the same day. Duryodhana arrived a few seconds before Arjuna and found Krishna asleep; he therefore took the seat at the head of the couch. Soon, Arjuna also arrived and stood patiently at the feet of the Lord meditating on Him. When Krishna opened his eyes, he saw Arjuna first, 'Ah, Arjuna! What brings you here?' He asked.

At this, Duryodhana loudly announced his presence. So, Krishna turned to him and said, 'Are you also here? To what do I owe the honor of these visits?'

Duryodhana declared, 'I have come to ask for your help in the impending war. Both Arjuna and I are equally related to you, but since I am the first to arrive, you should pledge your support to me.'

Sri Krishna smilingly replied, 'I do not doubt your word, O king, that you were the first to arrive, but it so happened that I saw the son of Kunti first. But have no fear. I shall undoubtedly lend my support to both of you, since I am equally related to both of you. Satyaki is determined to support the Pandavas, and I do not know what my elder brother intends to do. For my own part, I can promise to give the Yadava army led by Kritvarma to one side,

while I myself go to the other.’

Duryodhana interrupted before Arjuna could open his mouth. ‘That is not fair. Everyone knows of your superhuman feats. The side you fight on will surely win, so you should promise not to take up arms during the battle.’

Krishna looked highly amused at this unfair suggestion and he laughingly turned to Arjuna and gave him first choice. ‘Choose, O mighty-armed one. Do you want me alone and unarmed, or do you want the crack regiment of the Yadava forces led by our general, Kritvarma? The first choice is yours, for I have seen you first. Moreover, you are the younger of the two.’

Arjuna unhesitatingly chose the Lord and Duryodhana, equally happy, accepted the army. Having accepted the choice for army, Duryodhana took a hasty farewell of both Krishna and Arjuna, and went to solicit the support of his guru, Balarama before Arjuna could approach him. Actually, he was quite certain that Balarama would side with him but he was doomed to disappointment for Balarama refused to fight on either side. ‘I cannot fight against Krishna who will be on the side of the Pandavas and I cannot fight against you. So, in the case of war being declared, I shall go on a pilgrimage. I hope that you will fight according to the *Kshatriya* code of conduct that I have taught you.’

After Duryodhana had left, Krishna asked Arjuna, ‘Why did you choose me when you knew that I was not going to fight?’

Arjuna replied, ‘My Lord. I only want you beside me, driving my chariot. Then I can face the entire world and even the celestials themselves.’

Krishna smiled and blessed him and thus it came to pass that though the Lord did not take up arms during the war, he took the reins of Arjuna’s chariot into his capable hands and led the Pandavas to victory in the great Mahabharata War that was to come.

---

Adapted from ‘Sri Krishna Lila’ by Vanamali,  
Vanamali Gita Yogashram, Rishikesh, India.

# Lord Krishna

and the

## War of Mahabharata.

The War of Mahabharata was fought on the battlefield of Kurukshetra which was situated eighty miles north of Indraprastha. The mythical river, Saraswati, was supposed to have gone underground there.

The Pandavas had seven \*akshaunis of army and they had great warriors like Drupad, Virat, Drishtdyumna, Shikhandin, Satyaki, Bhima and others. On the advice of Sri Krishna, Drishtdyumna (son of king Drupad of Panchal) was made the Commander-in-chief of Pandavas' forces.

The Kauravas had eleven \*akshaunis of army. On their side, the great warriors were: Bhishma, Dronacharya, Karna, Shalya, Ashvatthama, Kripacharya and others. For the first ten days, Bhishma was the Commander-in-chief; for the next five days, it was Dronacharya; for the next two days, it was Karna; and for the last day, it was king Shalya.

\*Akshauni is a Division of the army; it could be small or a big Division. It appears that a small Division consisted of 10 chariots, 105 elephants, 1050 horses and 10,500 soldiers. In a big Division, these numbers would be large.

Before the start of War, the Commanders-in-chief of the two armies – Bhishma and Drishtdyumna – met and decided on the rules of the battle. It was to be a *dharma yudh* or a war of righteousness.



The battle was to take place only from sunrise to sunset; no one was to attack an enemy from the rear; anyone who surrendered or fled or played the coward should be spared; battle should take place only between equals, for instance, those in chariots should fight with those who are in chariots; a single person should not be attacked by many. These and many other such rules were decided upon by the Commanders, but needless to say, during the course of the war, most of these were thrown overboard.

The mighty epic of Mahabharata reached its climax during the eighteen days of war. Brief description of the War on these days, with particular reference to the role of Lord Krishna, is detailed below.

Scholars calculate the start of War as on Friday, November 22, 3067 BC. The great message of Lord Krishna to his friend Arjuna, known as the Shrimad Bhagvad Gita, was given on the morning of the first day of the War.

## **Morning of Day 1: Lord's message - Shrimad Bhagvad Gita:**

Both armies were assembled on the plain of Kurukshetra by the side of river Haranavathi. The Pandavas were on the western side and the Kauravas were on the eastern side of the river.

Suddenly, Arjuna urged Krishna to take the chariot to the centre of the field to get an overall picture of the situation, before the battle commenced. Krishna did so. Arjuna surveyed the opposing army and saw, not his enemies, but his cousins, friends, relations, teachers, nephews, and grandsire. A tremendous psychological revulsion welled up in him and his whole body trembled with the shock, his mind reeled, his mighty bow, the Gandiva, fell from his nervous grasp. Bringing forth many ethical and moral arguments for avoiding such a conflict, this mighty bowman told the Lord that he would not fight.

Hearing the unwillingness of his friend, the Lord imparted to him the most marvelous and highest spiritual instructions, that can be given to the humanity, known as the Shrimad Bhagvad Gita or The Song of God. It is after listening and understanding the Lord's teachings that Arjuna's mind was clear. With his nerves and muscles made as firm as steel, he fearlessly replied, 'By Your grace, O Lord, my delusion has gone and I have gained my senses. I am now fixed in my resolve and will do as You command.'

Saying this, Arjuna sprang to his feet and gave a blast on his conch, and Krishna blew his Panchjanya, sending a thrill of joy through the Pandavas ranks, and a shock of fear through the Kauravas. And the great War of Mahabharata started.

**Day 1:-** Abhimanyu managed to wound, not only Bhishma but also Shalya and Kritvarma. But the day ended on a disastrous note for the Pandavas because king Virata's both the sons - Uttara and Sveta - were killed.

**Day 2:-** In the fierce fighting, the horses of Bhishma's chariot sped uncontrolled, carrying him away from the field. Seeing Bhishma going out of the field, Pandavas army was wild with enthusiasm.

**Day 3:-** Bhishma's bow was shooting continuous lines of arrows in all directions. Beholding the Pandavas' army thus routed, **Sri Krishna said unto Arjuna**, 'The hour has come now, O Partha, which you desired all along. Strike Bhishma.' Thus urged, Arjuna took up his celestial bow, and caused Bhishma's bow to drop. In the twinkling of an eye, Bhishma took up another bow and struck both Krishna and Arjuna with keen shafts.

Then the mighty Krishna beholding the prowess of Bhishma and the mildness with which Arjuna fought, abandoned the reins of the steeds, jumped down from the chariot, and whirling *chakra* in his right hand, ran towards Bhishma like a lion. Seeing this, Arjuna jumped from the chariot, ran on foot after Krishna and

seized his hands. Bowing to him, he said, ‘Control this wrath of yours, O Lord. You are the refuge of the Pandavas. I swear to you by my sons and brothers that I will not withdraw the action to which I have pledged myself. At your command, I will certainly annihilate the Kururs.’

Hearing this, Krishna was gratified and he mounted his chariot. Arjuna drew his Gandiva, invoked proper *mantras* and the mighty weapon produced a great shower of arrows and thus he was able to check the entire Kaurava army.

**Day 4:-** Seeing the heavy losses suffered by the Kaurava forces, Duryodhana went to Bhishma and asked him, how is that the Pandavas are defeating us repeatedly. Please explain this to me.

Bhishma replied: Listen, O King. I have often told you to make peace with Pandavas. Be reminded that Arjuna and Krishna are Nara and Narayana; they are invincible. It is for this, O King of kings, that I say, let peace be made with the Pandavas. If you disregard the divine Nara and Narayana, you will certainly be destroyed.

Having said these words, Bhishma became silent, and Duryodhana came back to his own tent, and went to bed.

**Day 5:-** There was fierce fighting between the rivals. Satyaki was wounded and Bhima quickly took him to safety in his chariot.

**Day 6:-** At one time during the fighting, Bhima hit Duryodhana who fell unconscious and Kripacharya extricated the latter with great skill and took him away in his own chariot. At the end of the day, Bhima had killed thirteen Kaurava brothers.

**Day 7:-** Pandavas’ greatest loss of the day was slaying of Arjuna’s son \*Iravan by *rakshasa* Alambusha who in turn was killed by Gatotkacha, the son of Bhima. At the end of day, Bhima had slain

twenty-six brothers of Duryodhana. On learning this, Duryodhana, for the first time, wept before Bhishma who told him, 'It is too late to grieve now. Warriors should go to battle, expecting to die.'

**Day 8:-** Seeing his losses, Duryodhana went to Bhishma in the night of seventh day and taunted him saying, 'O slayer of foes, you promised and therefore we entered with confidence into this terrible conflict. Make your words true. Or, else, if you are sparing our enemies because you love them or because you hate me, withdraw from the battle and allow Karna to fight, for he can vanquish the Pandavas and their friends and kinsmen.'

Deeply hurt by Duryodhana's taunts, Bhishma said, 'Why do you pierce me with such sharp words? It is you who have provoked the Pandavas to battle. Let us see how you act like a man. As for me, I shall do as I promised.' He refused to retire from the battlefield so long as he was alive and promised to do better the next day.

Throughout the eighth day, there was fierce battle between the two armies. Sixteen more of the Kaurava brothers fell under Bhima's mace, making the tally to forty-two.

**Day 9:-** Bhishma appeared to be the incarnation of the god of death himself. His fiery *astras* (weapons) burned up the Pandavas army and they realized that so long as he was alive, they would have no hope of victory. The Lord knew that Arjuna's faint-hearted attempts at fight with the grandsire were going to prolong the war unnecessarily. He jumped out of the chariot, holding aloft a broken chariot wheel like a discus in his hand in mock anger as if to kill Bhishma. Bhishma was overjoyed and with folded palms, he welcomed Him and said, 'Hail to You, O Lotus-eyed One! Bless am I to meet death at your hands.'

Immediately, Arjuna jumped out of the chariot, caught Krishna's upraised arm and promised to do better. Thus, the Lord's show of

anger had two effects. He was able to fulfill Bhishma's desire to see him take up arms, and he was also able to ship the desired wrath in Arjuna. While Bhishma was destroying the Pandavas army, the sun reached the western hills and the tired troops withdrew to rest.

In the darkness of night, the Pandavas slipped into the tent of their grandsire and tenderly asked him how they could kill him because he could not die without his volition. Hearing this strange question, Bhishma smiled and said to Yudhishtira, 'Your hope of victory is in vain while I am alive. But mark you. I will not fight against those who are afraid or those who are weak from wounds or illness, or those who have surrendered to me. Nor will I take up arms against a woman or one who has been a woman before. If you attack me tomorrow from behind such a person, you will accomplish your purpose.'

Then Krishna reminded the Pandavas that Shikandin, the brother of Draupadi, was such a warrior who had been born a woman and had changed her sex. Thereafter, the brothers departed as silently as they had come, leaving Bhishma with a vast sense of relief that at last, the long and weary journey was coming to an end.

**Day 10:-** In the chariot, Shikandin was standing in the front and Arjuna shot arrow after arrow at his beloved grandsire. Bhishma would laughingly aim an arrow at Arjuna whenever a sudden turn of the wheels gave him a chance. At last, the time for the mortal wound had come - the end of the day and the end of his life. Bhishma received the fatal arrow straight into his heart, and he fell, but he did not touch the ground for he was entirely covered with arrows and he lay, as it was on a couch of arrows.

With the fall of Bhishma, a truce was called and warriors from both the camps crowded around him. Then, at the asking of Bhishma, Duryodhana dug a deep trench around him so that the

wild animals could not approach.

**Day 11:-** Duryodhana decided that Dronacharya should take over the command. In the battle-field, the Trigarta brothers (warriors of Jallundar under the kingship of Susharma) lured Arjuna away from Yudhishtira. But soon, he returned after defeating Trigartas.

**Day 12:-** Duryodhana planned the arrest of Yudhishtira because he felt that the victory can never be his if Yudhishtira is alive, for Arjuna will never rest till he had slain the Kauravas. At this, king of Trigartas (Susharma) spoke, 'I shall challenge him (Arjuna) and take him away from the field; there we shall surround and slay him.' He took a solemn vow with his brothers and the leaders of his troops that all of them would die rather than return from the battle without slaying Arjuna. But he was unable to fulfill his promise because of Krishna's skilful manoeuvring of Arjuna's chariot. He was ultimately defeated in the battle.

**Day 13:-** Dronacharya arranged the army in lotus formation and Yudhishtira did not know how to break the formation. The Trigartas had sworn to fight to the last and kept Arjuna away from the main battle. Soon, it became clear that unless the formation was broken, the whole of Pandava army would be exterminated. Only Abhimanyu knew how to break open the formation (*chakra vyuha*.) After consultation with his brothers, Yudhishtira allowed Abhimanyu to speed towards the formation and break it.

Abhimanyu broke open and the entered the formation. The path that he had cut through the army was quickly blocked by the Kaurava forces, and the son of Arjuna was left alone within the circle. Inside the formation, Kaurava warriors like Drona, Shalya, Karna, Jayadratha etc. were defeated one after the other by Abhimanyu. Duryodhan's son Lakshmana was killed by Abhimanyu. Throwing fair play to the winds, the six great heroes of the Kaurava army attacked the son of Arjuna in unison and at Duryodhana's instigation, Jayadratha, the king of Sind, crept from

behind and smashed the bleeding boy's skull with his mace, and Dusassana's son hacked him to death.

**Day 14:-** In the evening of thirteenth day when Arjuna returned after defeating Trigartas, he came to know about the death of his son; he resolved and swore that he will slay Jayadratha by tomorrow evening.

Next day, Duryodhana fearing for the life of Jayadratha, the king of Sind, entrusted him to the protection of Drona who tried to block the Arjuna from reaching Jayadratha, but was frustrated by Drishtdhyumna. It was going to be sunset that Arjuna, being urged by Sri Krishna and using arrows, neatly severed Jayadratha's head from his body.

Duryodhana was filled with despair and he ordered his army to continue fighting with torches - though it was dark. At this time, Ghatotkacha, the son of Bhima, came to the field and he resorted to the use of magic tricks; he caused havoc in the Kaurava army and annihilated a vast portion of the Kaurava army. Seeing this, Duryodhana begged Karna to kill Ghatotkacha at any cost. Karna was in a dilemma, for only two of his weapons, the Shakti and the Nagastra, were capable of killing Ghatotkacha and he had been reserving the both for Arjuna, since he was allowed to use them only once. Reluctantly, at Duryodhana's repeated pleas, Karna discharged Indra's weapon, the Shakti, at Ghatotkacha. It pierced through the veil of illusion woven by the rakshasa hero Ghatotkacha and brought him down. The Pandavas were plunged in grief, but Krishna consoled them by saying that Arjuna's life had been partly saved, since the Shakti could no longer be used against him.

**Day 15:-** Early in the day, three sons of king Drupada were killed by Drona. He also discharged a couple of well-tempered and broad-based shafts which dispatched the kings, Drupada and Virata, to the abode of Yama. Seeing the Pandavas thus afflicted by

the shafts of Drona, Sri Krishna said to Arjuna that this car-warrior (Drona) cannot be vanquished in battle; you must put aside fair means and adopt some plan for gaining victory and I think that he will cease to fight if his son Asvatthama is felled. Bhima agreed with Sri Krishna. Yudhishtira also gave in.

Then, according to the agreed plan, Bhima killed a huge elephant named Asvatthama and approached Drona with a roaring voice: I have killed Asvatthama. Hearing this and afflicted with grief, Drona went to Yudhishtira and asked, ‘O Yudhishtira! Is it true that my son has been killed?’ With great reluctance, Yudhishtira mumbled, ‘Yes. Bhima has killed Asvatthama, the elephant.’ However, the sound of the Lord’s conch drowned the last two words, so that Drona had to infer that his son was dead. He was already disgusted with life and he started to behold celestial beings in the sky beckoning him to leave his mortal body.

At this time, Bhima in a great rage approached Drona’s chariot and deliberately said these words to him: Wretched are the Brahmins who not content with the avocation of their own order, have well-versed themselves in arms and taken to fighting. But for them, the *Kshatriya* order would not have been exterminated. Drona! You are supposed to be the best of Brahmins. And yet you fight while your son lies dead on the field of battle, behind your back, unknown to you.

These taunts of Bhima caused great pain to Drona who had already lost the will to live and fight. He threw his weapons away and sat down in yoga on the floor of his chariot and was soon in a trance. At this moment, Drishtdyumna with drawn sword, came, climbed into the chariot and heedless of cries of horror and depreciation from all around, fulfilled his destiny as the slayer of Drona by sweeping off the old warrior’s head with his sword.

**Day 16:-** Dronacharya was dead. Today, Duryodhana announced Karna as the Commander of the Kaurva forces. Day’s fighting



was marked by many duels, notably was the gruesome fighting between Bhima and Dussassana. As Arjuna led the attack on Karna, Bhima's anger within him blazed up uncontrollably. He jumped from his chariot and leapt upon Dussassana like a tiger. Fighting fiercely, Dussassana achieved many difficult feats in the duel; he cut off Bhima's bow, pierced his chariot's driver and pierced Bhima himself with many shafts. In the end, Dussassana could not brave Bhima and began to tremble. Bhima forcibly dislodged his adversary from his car and smashed his car with his mace.

Looking hatefully and roaring, Bhima tore Dussassana's arm and threw the bleeding limb on the battle-field. Then he pierced apart Dussassana's chest, thrust down his hand in the bleeding chest and lifted it out dancing with mad passion. 'O wretch among men! Here I drink your lifeblood. The oath, I swore against this sinner, has been redeemed, today.'

The scene made everyone shudder. Even Karna was shaken as he saw Bhima in this ecstasy of wrath. Duryodhana stood quivering in despair.

On the other side of the field, Drishtdyumna and the Pandavas rushed towards Karna and attacked him. Karna tried to grapple with Arjuna but he had to turn away defeated. He then went to Duryodhana and told him that he could kill Arjuna only if he had a charioteer of Krishna's caliber. Now, Shalya - the king of Madra - was the only man who could equal Krishna in the knowledge of horses and skill in driving.

When Duryodhana approached Shalya, the latter was not happy to be the charioteer of Karna. But the former persuaded Shalya with sweet words. Shalya was flattered by these words and said, 'I am pleased with you, O son of Gandhari. Since you say that I am greater than Krishna, I will hold the reins of Karna while he fights against Arjuna. But let it be understood that I may say in his presence anything that I please.' 'Let it be so.' Duryodhana

replied and then he warned Karna to exercise great control over his temper and not to retaliate, whatever Shalya might say.

**Day 17:-** Shalya had agreed to be the charioteer of Karna. In the battle-field, he started humiliating Karna with bad words. Seeing Arjuna's chariot, he shouted, 'Behold, O Karna! There comes the son of Indra, slaughtering his foes along the way; there flies his banner while yours is trembling on its staff.' Fiercely, the heroes, Karna and Arjuna challenged each other and blew their conchs. They fought like two full-grown elephants fighting for a mate, like two storm-clouds or two mountains meeting each other. Both warriors possessed divine weapons.

Karna fixed *Nagastra* (the snake missile) on his bow, took careful aim at Arjuna's throat and loosed it at him. When Krishna saw it coming, he pressed the chariot down with his feet into the mud. The horses bent their knees to lay down on the ground and *Nagastra* missed Arjuna's head. Arjuna was saved. Krishna dismounted and lifted the chariot out of the earth and the white horses rose to their feet again.

Finally, Karna decided to use Brahmastra. To his dismay, he found that he could not remember a single word of the *mantra*. To make matters worse, his own chariot sunk into the mud and would not move. Shalya refused to get down to help and Karna was forced to jump out of his chariot, calling to Arjuna to stop the fight for a while, saying, 'O Arjuna! Wait until I lift my wheel. You are both brave and virtuous and know the rules of battle; a warrior on chariot may not fight with one who is on foot and in distress.' The latter was willing but Krishna thundered, 'O Karana, where was your talk of fair play when you and the Kauravas surrounded the boy Abhimanyu and slaughtered him?' Lord asked Arjuna to shoot the fatal arrow on his adversary. Arjuna was reluctant to shoot at a fallen enemy, but he took it as a command of the Lord and discharged the *Ancharika* missile. Thus fell the mighty hero, Karna. And Surya, the sun-god, when he beheld his son, touched

him with his rays and then sank into the western sea. Meanwhile, Krishna and Arjuna blew their conchs together, piercing the hearts of the retreating foes and gladdening the ears of Yudhishtira. Hearing the news, Duryodhana, nearly senseless with grief, wept for his friend, crying, ‘O Karna! O Karna!’

**Day 18:-** Shalya who was appointed as the new Commander-in-chief of Kaurva forces by Duryodhana, was killed by the well-aimed javelin thrown by Yudhishtira. On the other side, Nakula killed Uluka, the son of Shakuni and Sahdev made good of his oath to kill Shakuni - the arch villain of Mahabharata. Forlorn and defeated, Duryodhana wept and ran towards the forests and hid himself in the nearby Dvaipayana lake. Some hunters who happened to see this, reported the matter to Pandavas who had been searching for him. Pandavas discovered Duryodhana and taunted him, telling him to come out and face his end like a hero.

In the combat that followed between Bhima and Duryodhana, the former brought the mace down with tremendous force on his adversary’s thighs and broke them so that the villain fell, mortally wounded. In anger, Bhima stamped his foot on the adversary’s head. Seeing this, Yudhishtira and Krishna stopped him saying that that was not the right thing.

At that moment, Balarama appeared on the scene and rushed at Bhima with upraised plough to punish him for his unrighteousness act. Krishna stopped Balarama and asked him gently why he had not thought of restraining Duryodhana when he had committed so many atrocities against the Pandavas. Balarama was pacified.

Duryodhana had been mortally wounded and was in great pain; he was burning with thoughts of revenge. At that time, Asvatthama, Kripacharya and Kritvarma came to see and console him. They offered to make a last attempt to annihilate the Pandavas. Duryodhana was delighted, made Asvatthama their leader, and sent them off to do their best. In the darkness of night,

the Trio headed toward the Pandavas' camp. They set fire to the camp and killed everyone who attempted to escape. Asvatthama took the five heads of what he thought to be the Pandavas and presented them to the dying Duryodhana so that he could die in peace. The latter lovingly took them into his hands, gloated over them and crushed one by one with his dying hands. Suddenly, he realized that Bhima's hard head could never be crushed so easily. He asked for a torch to be brought and in the flickering light, he realized bitterly that fate had snatched victory from beneath his nose, once again. His gratitude now gave way to anger and he berated Asvatthama with a stream of invectives. The latter was already half-demented and at this barrage of abuse, he left in fury, not knowing where he would go.

At last, shaking with pain, rage and frustration, Duryodhana whose villainy has no parallel, gave up his life, unattended, unmourned and alone, except for the vultures that were circling him in the sky night.

---

Adapted from 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Vanamali, 'Mahabharata' by C Rajagopalachari, and other classics.

## **Krishna is Lord Narayana;**

Krishna saves the Pandavas army from annihilation.

**(Narayana:-** Brahma is the creator; Vishnu is the protector and Siva is the annihilator. Being self-born himself, the Lord desirous of creating various subjects, created only the waters first. He then instilled virility into them. The waters are called Nara (belonging to Nara). The waters are the progenies of Nara. Since the waters had been his abode, he is called **Narayana.**)

### **Asvatthama is furious:**

Asvatthama, the son of great Dronacharya is furious. His father had been beheaded in the battle-field of Kurukshetra in a deceitful manner when Bhima roared loudly that he had killed Asvatthama, the elephant. His body was ablaze. With anger and breathing hot sighs, he went to Duryodhana and said to him, ‘I have heard how my sire was deceived and killed; I do not grieve because he died in battle; he met a hero’s death. I grieve because his white locks were seized in the sight of the whole army by that wretched Dhrishtdyumna. This tears the very core of my heart. Shame on my might. Shame on my skill in arms. Today, the earth shall certainly drink the blood of that false-speeched king Yudhishtira who caused the death of my sire. I swear by the truth and by my religious acts that I shall slay “Dhrishtdyumna, the Panchal Prince who beheaded my sire and shall wipe out all the Pandavas. I shall today use my celestial weapons. Having said these words, Asvatthama touched water and invoked the celestial weapon called the Narayana astra.

(Once, Lord Narayana, assuming the form of a Brahmin, came to Dronacharya who presented his offering unto him in due form. Taking them, the Lord offered to give him a boon and Drona solicited for that supreme weapon called Narayana astra. The Lord giving the boon addressed Drona thus, ‘No man shall ever become thy equal in battle. This weapon, however, should never be used in haste. It never comes back without effecting the destruction of the foe. It would slay even the unslayable. But, this weapon should never be hurled upon persons that abandon their cars or weapons in battle, or upon those that seek for quarter, or those that yield themselves up.’)

While Drona was receiving the weapon, the Lord said to Asvatthama who was nearby that ‘with the aid of this weapon, thou too shall pour diverse showers of celestial weapons in battle and blaze with energy in consequence of it.’ Having said these words, Lord ascended to heaven.)

### **Krishna saves the frightened Pandavas:**

As soon as Asvatthama invoked the holy *mantra* then thousands of arrows with blazing mouths appeared in the sky, resembling snakes of fiery mouths and covered all the troops. Innumerable iron balls also appeared, besides maces and discs with edges sharp as razors and resplendent like the sun. Beholding that they were on every side, king Yudhishtira was frightened and he said to Dhrishtadyumna: Fly away with your Panchala troops. He also asked Satyaki to go away with his troops. As for Vaasudeva, the king said that he will himself seek the means of his own safety; he is competent to offer advice to the whole world; what need is there of telling him what he should do. The king continued to say: we should not fight any longer. I say so unto all the troops. Let the wishes of Duryodhana be crowned with success today.

Hearing Yudhishtira speaking this, Krishna quickly asked the troops not to fly away; instead, they should lay down their weapons

and come down on the earth; all of them from their elephants, steeds and cars. If they lay weaponless on the earth, this will not slay; all those who contend against this weapon of lord Narayana will be slain. Listening to Krishna, the warriors of Yadavas army threw their weapons and alighted from their elephants, steeds and cars to lie down.

Bhima, however, did not heed Krishna's advice. He shouted: None should lay down his weapons. I shall, with my shafts, oppose the weapon of Drona's son; there is no man here that is equal to me in prowess; I am the one person here that possess the might of the thousands elephants. Saying this and roaring, Bhima rushed against Asvatthama with a shower of weapons. In retaliation, Asvatthama was smiling and addressing Bhima (in proper words) covered him with arrows of great energy and heat, inspired with *mantras*.

Seeing Bhima covered in the terrible energy of weapons, Arjuna fired his Varuna weapon but to no effect. The fiery shafts of Asvatthama proceeded towards Bhima's car and the heat began to enter the body of Bhima; the latter seemed to be in the midst of a conflagration (a disastrous fire). Anticipating a catastrophe, Arjuna and Krishna quickly alighted from their chariot, ran towards Bhima and forcibly dragged him (Bhima) and all his weapons. Then, Krishna addressed Bhima thus, 'How is it, O son of Pandu, that forbidden by us, you did not abstain from battle. Behold! All the warriors have alighted from their cars. For this reason, thou also come down from thy car.' Having said these words, Krishna brought Bhima down from the car and made him to lay aside his weapons. The Narayana *astra* blew over and became pacified.

Asvatthama was furious with everything and everyone, including his father, who he thought had cheated him. Just then the sage Vyasa came and told him, 'O Asvatthama! Your father did not cheat you. **You have been foolish enough to use it against those who are being protected by Krishna who is none other**

**than Lord Narayana.'**

Asvatthama realized his mistake. He and Kripacharya now begged Duryodhana to stop the senseless slaughter but the latter was now sure of a miraculous victory, for Karna was to be installed next as the General of the Kaurava forces.

This was the end of fifteenth day of the battle.

---

Adapted from 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Vanamali, and other classics.



## **Krishna saves Yudhishtira;**

Arjuna with his sword drawn, advances toward  
Yudhishtira, but Krishna saves the situation.

It was the sixteenth day of the war of Mahabharata. Arjuna was slaying the foes on one side, while at the other side, Karna dashed through the Pandavas forces and attacked Yudhishtira. Warriors on each side surrounded their leaders to protect them. With his mighty shaft, Yudhishtira wounded Karna who, filled with rage, cut Yudhishtira's armour and wounded him deeply. Yudhishtira retreated from the fight while Bhima and the twins hurried themselves against Karna shouting angry and taunting words.

Meanwhile, Arjuna had slain the last of the warriors who had challenged him. Returning to the field and not seeing Yudhishtira, he asked Bhima, 'Where is the king?'

'He has left the battlefield, sorely wounded by Karna,' answered Bhima. Arjuna alarmed, asked Krishna to turn the chariot swiftly towards the camp. There, they found the king in his tent, lying alone on his bed. They were filled with joy at finding him alive and touched his feet. Yudhishtira, thinking that Karna must have been slain by Arjuna, welcomed him and Krishna - hailing their victory and praising them.

'I have not yet met Suta's son,' Arjuna told him, 'for I wished to see that all is well with you. Now bless me, O lion of kings, for today I shall slay Karna.'

Now, Yudhishtira was shamed by his defeat at Karna's hands and had suffered sorely from his wounds. He became very angry

and spoke harsh words to his brother (Arjuna) saying, ‘You have deserted Bhima and have come here out of fear of Karna. Long ago, you promised me that you will slay him; why then have you left the battle? For thirteen years, we have relied on you; will you betray us? If you are unable to resist the fierce son of Radha today in battle, then give your Gandiva to some other king that may be superior to you in the use and knowledge of weapons. Fie on the Gandiva, fie on the might of thy arms, fie on the car given thee by the god of fire. It would have been better for thee if thou hadn’t been born in the womb of Kunti.’

### **Arjuna accuses Yudhishtira:**

When Arjuna heard these bitter words, his anger blazed. He started accusing Yudhishtira saying -

It is for thee that we lost our kingdom. Our calamity arose from thee, O king! O Bharata, thou are cruel. I have never obtained any happiness from thee. I do not practice gambling. Having thyself committed a wicked act to which thee alone are addicted, thou desirest now to vanquish thy foes through our aid. Thou hadst heard of the numerous faults and the great sinfulness of dice that Sahadeva spoke about. Yet dice, thou could not abandon. It was for this that all of us have fallen into hell. We have never derived any happiness from thee. Having thyself caused all this calamity, thou art, again, addressing these harsh words to me.

Having addressed these harsh and exceedingly bitter words, Arjuna became filled with remorse and breathing heavily, he drew his sword and advanced towards his elder brother. He was breathing hard like an angry snake - fixing his eyes on his brother.

Seeing this, Krishna stepped forward and asked him, ‘What is this? Who is here whom you must threaten, O son of Kunti! You came to find out how the king fares. Behold. He is well; now let us go to battle.’

Thus addressed by Krishna, Arjuna said, 'I would cut off the head of any man who says to me: Give Gandiva to someone else; those words have been spoken by the king and I dare not forgive him; for this reason, I have drawn my sword, O Krishna!' Arjuna became greatly cheerless on hearing Krishna and then said, 'I shall slay my ownself by whom this wicked act hath been done.'

Krishna again counseled, 'Arjuna. By destroying thy ownself, thou wouldst sink into a more terrible hell than if thou hadst slain thy brother.'

'The king is tired,' Krishna continued, 'and suffers from pain and grief, for Karna drove him from the field and wounded him. Therefore, he spoke harshly to you and also because he wished to provoke you to fight with Karna.'

Arjuna thrust his sword back into its sheath and handing his head in shame, took his brother's feet in his two hands and said weeping, 'Forgive me, O King! The task shall be delayed no longer. Karna seeks to fight me today, and today I shall slay him. I live only for your good, O King! This is the truth. Let the King become cheerful now.'

Yudhishtira raised his brother and embraced him saying, 'I was put to shame this day in the sight of all my troops by Karna. Forgive my harsh words, O mighty-armed One! Go forth and slay Suta's son; my blessings go with you.' Then, turning towards Krishna, he said, 'I am saved by thee, O Madhava! by thee, O Achyuta. We have today been rescued from a great calamity. Both of us (viz. myself and Arjuna) stupified by folly have been rescued from an ocean of distress, having obtained thee as our Lord. Indeed, having obtained the raft of thy intelligence today, we have with our relatives and allies, passed over an ocean of sorrow and grief. Having obtained thee, O Achyuta, we are not masterless.'

The brothers wept together until hearts were free of grief. Then, Krishna turned the white horses and drove Arjuna towards the battle field.

---

Adapted from Mahabharata and other classics.

## **Punishing Asvatthama;**

Bhima wanted instant death as a punishment to Asvatthama but Krishna pronounced punishment which was worse than death.

### **Asvatthama's devilish Plan:**

Duryodhana was mortally wounded and was lying almost dead in the battle-field when Asvatthama, Kripacharya and Kritvarma went to him, and in order to ease his pain a little, offered to make last attempt to annihilate the Pandavas. Duryodhana was delighted, made Asvatthama their leader and sent them off to do their worst.

The shades of night had fallen by now, and as they rested under a tree, Asvatthama noticed an owl silently coming and killing the baby crows while the birds were sleeping. A diabolical plan for revenge began to take shape in his maddened mind. He mused: The enemy's forces should be attacked even if they are fatigued, or wounded, or eating, or retreating, or resting within their camp; they should be treated in the same way when sleeping at the dead of night, or when bereft of commanders, or when routed, or when laboring under an error. Thus resolving, he woke up the other two and detailed the plan to them. They refused to have anything to do with it. Kripacharya was deeply grieved to hear Asvatthama and spoke thus, 'You have attained a great name among men. Your spotless character will be blemished, like a milk-white cloth bespattered with blood. Never could it be right to kill the sleeping men. Desist from this.'

'Sir. What are you talking? These Pandavas butchered my father when he had thrown away all the weapons and had sat down in prayer. These men have breached the embankment of dharma and released the flood, and not a drop of dharma is left now. Karna

who was on the ground putting right the wheel of his chariot was killed by these lawless rascals. Bhima has killed Duryodhana with a blow below the naval. What dharma has been left for us to follow? The Pandaas have, once for all, destroyed the barrage of dharma. Why should we make research into law and chivalry dealing with these ruffians who have attained successes by destroying both? If by killing the sleeping Pandavas who butchered my great father, I may be doomed to re-birth in the body of a foul bird or of a wriggling worm, I do not care. I seek such a birth.’ Saying this and, without waiting for an answer, Asvatthama proceeded to harness his horses ready and get his chariot ready to start. When he was about to leave, Kripacharya and Kritvarma cried, ‘Stop. What are you resolved upon doing, Asvatthama. We cannot approve of it, but neither can we desert you in your desperate enterprise. The path you are bent upon treading, we shall also follow. Let us share also the sin, you have resolved upon.’ So they went along with him.

### **Execution of the Plan:**

In the small hours of the night, the devilish trio silently slipped into the Pandavas’ camp. Leaving Kripacharya and Kritvarma to guard the exit gate and asking them to kill anyone who tried to escape, Asvatthama proceeded very softly towards Drishtdyumna’s tent; he saw the prince of Panchalas sleeping on his bed. Asvatthama awoke him with a kick, and as he was rising from his bed, caught him by the hair, pressed him down on the earth with both hands, and beheaded him.

Asvatthama moved about in the camp like the god of death; at last he saw the five warriors sleeping who were the sons of Draupadi, but he thought them to be the five Pandava brothers. Remembering the death of his father, Asvatthama became furious with rage. First, he struck Prativindhya (Yudhishtira’s son) in the abdomen and felled him lifeless on the earth. At that time, the brave Srutasoma (Bhima’s son) rushed at Asvatthama but the latter

cut him off with his sword. Thereafter, brave Satanika (Nakula's son) was cut off by the attacker. Seizing a spiked bludgeon, Srutakarma (Sahadeva's son) attacked Asvatthama, and struck him violently on his forehead, but the latter struck him back with the sword, felling him senseless and dead on the ground. Awakened by noise, the heroic Srutakirti (Arjuna's son) came and discharged a shower of arrows on Asvatthama. Defending himself with his shield, Asvatthama severed his enemy's beautiful head quickly.

All the five sons of Draupadi were thus beheaded. The same process was relentlessly repeated until all the Panchals soldiers were killed. At that time, Sikhandi came up and struck Asvatthama with an arrow between his two eyebrows. Worked up with anger at this, the powerful Asvatthama closed in on Sikhandi and killed him with his sword. Meanwhile, Kripacharya and Kritvarma set fire to the camp in three places, so that whole encampment was in flames. When the fire spread, the sleeping soldiers were awakened and fled hither and thither in confusion, and were mercilessly slaughtered by the trio. Thus, before the night was over, Asvatthama had sent the large army of the Pandavas to their death.

'We have done our duty,' said Dronacharya's son. 'Let us give the glad news to Duryodhana, if we can reach him before he expires. Let him die pleased.' And the three of them hurried to Duryodhana.

Thus, the three Kuru heroes came to Duryodhana. With the blood oozing from his hands, Asvatthama presented the five heads to the dying Duryodhana and said, 'O Duryodhana, if you are still alive, listen to these agreeable tidings. All the Pandavas have been killed, as well as the Panchalas.' Thus said Asvatthama to the dying Duryodhana who, on hearing this, slowly opened his eyes, and lovingly took the five heads into his hands, gloated over them and crushed them one by one with his dying hands. Suddenly, he realized that Bhima's hard head could never be crushed so easily,

and in the flickering light, he realized that fate had snatched victory from beneath his nose once again. His gratitude now gave way to anger and he berated Asvatthama with a stream of invectives. The latter was already demented and at this barrage, he left in a fury, not knowing what he should do.

At last, shaking with pain, rage and frustration, Duryodhana whose villainy has no parallel, gave up life, unattended, unmourned and alone.

### **Asvatthama is caught:**

News of midnight massacre was taken by Drishtdyumna's charioteer to the Pandavas who rushed to the horrific site. Seeing the mangled bodies of their children, they fainted. Draupadi was the first to recover and she pleaded to Bhima, Arjuna and others to wreck vengeance on the villain Asvatthama.

Brave Bhima immediately left the camp and proceeded quickly along the track of Asvatthama's car. Then Krishna got into his car accompanied by Arjuna. Proceeding very quickly, they soon reached the hermitage of the illustrious Vyasa who was sitting surrounded by many sages. There too sat Asvatthama, covered with dust, clad in a piece of cloth. When he saw Bhima and his brother coming towards him, he became alarmed and thought his end was near; the last shreds of his sanity seemed to have left him. Not content with the massacre of innocent men and children for the sake of a man who had no gratitude to him, he now condemned himself to a dreadful hell; he took up a blade of grass, chanted the hymns of Brahmastra and hurled it at Bhima and Arjuna with the words, "May the world be rid of the line of Pandavas!" Thereupon, a glaring light spread in all directions and it threatened to engulf the whole world; it was so fierce that Bhima and Arjuna thought their own lives in danger; and they fell at the feet of Krishna who was in a chariot, for protection.

Krishna instructed Arjuna to counter it with his own Brahmastra. Arjuna bowed to all the gods and discharged his weapon, having in mind the well-being of all the worlds and saying, "Let this weapon neutralize Asvatthama's weapon." Seeing those two weapons consuming the three worlds, two sages, Narda and Vyasa, came and took up their position between those two blazing weapons. Desirous of ensuring the well-being of all creatures, they tried to pacify the two heroes - Asvatthama and Arjuna. In response, Arjuna quickly withdrew his celestial arrow, but Asvatthama could not withdraw his weapon for he was unable to withdraw, having once discharged it; he begged the sages to save him. They did so, out of consideration for his father and because they knew that it was too easy a death for him. Bhima and Arjuna now bound the felon's hands and took him to Draupadi and king Yudhishtira.

### **Punishment by Krishna:**

Bhima said that the punishment for such a devilish act by Asvatthama deserves instant death. Krishna looked at Draupadi; he wanted to test her and said, 'You may now pronounce the death sentence. How would you like him killed?' When the Lord chose to test his devotees, he generally gives them strength to excel in the test. Draupadi, to her great glory replied, 'He is the cold-blooded murderer of my five sons and beloved brothers, and so he deserves the worst of deaths. But when I remember that he is the son of my husband's guru and that his mother Kripa is alive, I do not feel like making another woman experience the pain which I am experiencing now. Moreover, his death will not bring to life, my own sons. I do not want him killed.'

King Yudhishtira fully supported the statements of the queen Draupadi which were in accordance with the principles of religion and were justified - glorious, full of mercy, equity and without duplicity. Nakula, Sahadeva, Satyaki, Arjuna and Sri Krishna unanimously agreed with the king.



The Lord, Sri Krishna, was eminently pleased with Draupadi's answer and said, 'A son of a Brahmin is not to be killed, but if he is an aggressor, he must be killed. Instead of cutting off his head, we can take off his tuft of hair as well as the celestial jewel adorning his head. This is tantamount to death for a hero.'

Draupadi agreed and Bhima cut off Asvatthama's hair in five places and removed from his head the celestial jewel with which he was born and had guarded him against all weapons, diseases and hunger. He gave the jewel to Draupadi who in turn gave it to Yudhishtira, the king.

Taking advantage of an opportunity, devoid of mercy and completely drugged, Asvatthama took up another blade of grass and discharged it with the potent *mantra* of the Brahmastra against the babies in the womb of the Pandavas wives, so that the line would become extinct. Uttara, the wife of Abhimanyu, was the only widow who was carrying a child in her womb and the missile came rushing at her. Her mother-in-law, Subhadra, Lord Krishna's sister, took her to the Lord and begged him to protect her. The Lord instantly dispatched his discus to counter the attack and saved her. He then went after the terrified Asvatthama who was fleeing for his life. Catching up with him, Krishna proceeded to punish him. The latter pleaded for death but death at the hands of the Lord was too good for such a wretch. In dire tones, the Lord pronounced these fateful words, 'May you live for thousands of years, condemned to wander over the world like a leper, shunned by all, afflicted with all sorts of diseases; your name itself will be a bane to all.'

Hearing this dreadful pronouncement, Asvatthama fled from the scene, to wander over the world forever.

---

Adapted from 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Vanamali, 'The Mahabharata' by C.V.Narasimhan, and 'Mahabharata' by C. Rajagopalachari.

## **At the End of War;**

- i) Krishna's immortal words to Arjuna;
- ii) Krishna saves Pandavas from death.

### **Krishna's immortal words to Arjuna:**

In the duel between Duryodhana and Bhima, the latter had felled the former. Duryodhana was mortally wounded and was bursting with rage. He burst out in a spurt of venom against Krishna who replied, 'O Duryodhana. Think of the evil and suffering you have caused, the number of lives that have been lost only because of your refusal to see reason and listen to me, when I came for peace. All creatures get their just deserts. The wheel of Time runs slowly, but in the end, it encompasses the destruction of all beings.'

Seeing that the sun had set, Krishna advised that they return to the Camp. Thus, the Pandavas slowly departed, leaving Duryodhana where he lay, brooding over his wrongs. With both thighs shattered, he would not live much longer. Awaiting death, the Kuru prince lay, moaning in pain.

After leaving the battlefield, the Pandavas went to Duryodhana's camp, as was the custom, and took over the possession, as the victors of the War. Headed by Yudhishtira, they got down from their chariots. As Arjuna was about to climb down from his chariot, Krishna said, 'Take the Gandiva and your two quivers, O Partha. I will get down after you.'

Arjuna obeyed as was asked. After Arjuna was down, Krishna jumped out of the chariot. At that moment, Hanuman left the banner and vanished. As he did so, the chariot suddenly caught fire without any apparent cause. In moments, it was a pile of ashes.

The Pandavas gazed in amazement at the charred and smoldering remains. Arjuna looked at Krishna and asked, ‘My Lord. What is this I see? My chariot, which was given to me by Agni when he burned the Khandava forest, has been burnt before my very eyes. What is the reason for this?’ The Lord replied:

This chariot has withstood the powerful *astras* sent by Drona, Karna and Asvatthama only because I was sitting in it. It should have been burned up long ago. I have abandoned it, now that you have achieved what you set out to achieve. So it is, with everything in this world. Each thing is created for a purpose. The moment the purpose is achieved, it will perish. This is so even with men. Each man sets out on this strange journey, called life, with a definite purpose and once that is served, the earth has no more need of him and he has to quit. This is the case even with Me. I have created Myself on this earth for a special purpose. It is not yet over. But the moment, it is fulfilled, I will also die and so will you and your dear brothers. But come. Do not grieve. Let us be on our next task.

So saying, Krishna turned to Yudhishtira and congratulated him on his victory in formal terms.

## **Krishna saves Pandavas from death:**

Pandavas took over the possession of Duryodhana’s camp. At that time, Yuyutsu, the son of Dhritrashtra was there. On seeing the Pandavas, he stood and offered them respects. Yudhishtira embraced and spoke gentle words to him. He then told him to return to Hastinapur and inform his parents of the outcome of the War. Yuyutsu bowed and left as was directed.

Having taken the possession of the camp and the articles there, the Pandavas rested for a while on the many silk-covered couches there. Then Sri Krishna said to Yudhishtira, ‘O King! In accord with sacred tradition, you and your brothers should remain here

for the first night of victory. The rest of the army may return to your camp.’

Agreeing, Yudhishtira told his men to return to camp and take rest, while he and his brothers would remain here. After the warriors had left, Yudhishtira spoke again with Krishna and desired him to be the first among his party to meet Gandhari in Hastinapur. He expressed anxiety saying, ‘when the pious queen hears about the death of Duryodhana by Bhima, she will surely release the fire of her anger. She could destroy the three worlds with her accumulated ascetic powers. O Keshava, I think only you will be capable of pacifying her. With reasonable arguments, O Madhava, you should remove her anger.’

Thus requested by the King, Sri Krishna asked his charioteer Daruka to prepare for the journey and left for the city of Hastinapura. Reaching Hastinapura, he pacified the blind king and the queen. Finally, the queen said, ‘What you have said is true, O Keshava. My mind is unhinged by grief, but on hearing your words, I am pacified. O Janardhana. This old monarch has no more sons. You and the sons of Pandu are now his only refuge.’

Gandhari buried her face in a cloth and wept aloud. Krishna again consoled her and her husband. After spending sometime with them, he rose and said, ‘I will come to see you again. Pray, grant me leave now to return to the Pandavas.’ Both Dhritrashtra and Gandhari offered their respects to Sri Krishna and gave him permission to leave. Krishna then left the chamber and ordered his charioteer to carry him back to the Pandavas’ camp in Kurukshetra.

On the advice of Sri Krishna, Pandava brothers had spent the night in the Duryodhana’s tent. Had they gone and slept in their own tent, they would also have been killed/burnt along with other inmates of their tent by Asvatthama, that night.

---

Adapted from ‘Sri Krishna Lila’ by Vanamali, and Mahabharata.

## **Gandhari curses Krishna.**

### **Gandhari's curse:**

Mahabharata War was over. Duryodhana, his brothers along with great warriors like Karna, Dronacharya and others were dead. So were the sons of Draupadi. Battle field of Kurukshetra was scattered with dead bodies; it was a sight of complete destruction.

Dhritrashtra, Gandhari, Vidur, Kunti and also the Pandavas were sobbing and wailing. Lord Krishna was standing aside with a sad heart. Gandhari spoke to Draupadi, 'Look at me daughter! Comfort yourself. Vidur prophesied that long ago and Krishna gave due warning when he came as an ambassador. My dear child, I have lost all my sons, as you have. Who is to comfort whom? The destruction of the entire race is due to me.'

Then wailing and sobbing, Gandhari looked at Krishna and spoke as if to seek an answer from him. 'O Lotus eyed One! What was that destiny, O Krishna, that pursued my sons from the time, they were born? Where came this curse on the house of Kurus? Why does my heart not break into a thousand fragments at these dread happenings? What sin have I, and these weeping daughters of mine, committed that such a disaster should have befallen us?'

Hearing the sobs of Kunti and Draupadi, it suddenly flashed upon Gandhari that the whole battle was like a play in which the armies had destroyed each other. She realized that the sole director and producer of the drama was standing before her. Turning, she saw Krishna. From the depths of her sorrows, came to her the

courage to curse the Lord Himself. She addressed Him in prophetic tone, thus –

“Two armies, O Janardhan, have perished in this field. Where were You while they put an end to each other. Were You blind or had You blindfolded Yourself? Why You allowed this calamity to befall the house of Kurus? I know well that You could have prevented this, if You had so wished. Why did You hold Your hand, O slayer of Kamsa? I pronounce this curse upon You and your race. You shall become the slayer of your own kinsmen - thirty-six years from now. After having brought about destruction of Your sons and kinsmen, You yourself shall perish alone in the wilderness, as my son Duryodhana did, lying alone and helpless, even though he was the king of Kurus. The women of your race, deprived of their own sons, husbands and friends shall weep and wail in their bereavement, as do the wives of Kurus today.”

As her voice died away in sobs, the Lord looked tenderly at her and said,

‘Blessed are you, O Mother! For you have aided me in the completion of my task. My people, the Yadavas are incapable of defeat and therefore they have to die by My own hands. Behold, O Mother! With folded hands, I accept your curse.’

---

Adapted from ‘Sri Krishna Lila’ by vanamali,  
Vanamali Gita Yogashram, Rishikesh, India.

# Death of the Deathless:

Last days of Lord Krishna.

Lord Krishna's death:  
Feb. 18, 3102 B.C.

Abandoning all duties, take refuge in Me.  
Do not worry, for I shall deliver you from  
all evils and give you total liberation.

.....Srimad Bhagvad Gita.

Many years had fled since the War of Mahabharata. After seeing the dead bodies of her sons and the complete destruction of other warriors and the army, Gandhari had cursed Lord Krishna that he shall become the slayer of his own kinsmen thirty-six years from now, and he himself shall perish alone in the wilderness, as her son Duryodhana did - lying alone and helpless - even though he was the king of Kurus.

The end of the era was fast approaching. Many years had fled since the battle of Mahabharata. Men had almost forgotten about it. In fact, thirty-six years had gone by - the period stipulated by Gandhari before the fulfillment of her curse.

Under the noble leadership of their hero and god Krishna, the Yadavas had come to enjoy a prosperity and status unheard of. Their cities were fantastic, their mode of living splendid. The men were healthy and strong; the women beautiful, charming and graceful. They were blessed in all ways. But slowly, like a canker growing within a perfect rose, affluence was taking its inevitable toll. The high principles of physical and spiritual brilliance which characterized the previous generations were giving way to moral

laxity and physical weakness. Krishna's sons were not exception to this.

### **Start of the curse:**

In order to fulfill the conditions of the curse, the Lord invited certain sages to visit Dwarka. Krishna's son, Samba along with some friends of Yadava families, approached the sages in mock humility and requested them about an imaginary problem. They had dressed Samba as a pregnant woman and mockingly asked the sages, "O sages! Here is a young and beautiful woman who is expecting to be a mother soon. She is anxious to know the sex of the child to be born to her. She is keen to have a boy. With your great powers, perhaps you could grant her wish."

The holy sages turned a scornful eye on them and pronounced a dire curse. "O fools! It will neither be a girl nor a boy, but an iron pestle which will be the instrumental cause of destruction of your entire race."

Samba and his friends burst into loud laughter at this improbable pronouncement, but their mirth was short-lived. Hardly had the sages gone that Samba began writhing in some mortal agony and very soon, an iron pestle came out of his stomach, as foretold by the sages. Everyone was terrified and ran to the king Ugrasen with the pestle and made a clean breast of the whole story. The king was in panic when he heard the story. He called a blacksmith who powdered the pestle into fine dust. But one small bit was left that defied all efforts to be powdered. All this was thrown into the sea that lapped the shores of Dwarka. With the strong winds, these iron fillings were all washed by the sea to the father shore, to the mainland of Prabhasa where, in due course, they grew into a kind of grass called errata, strong and sharp like the swords. The small piece of iron was swallowed by a fish which was caught by a fisherman. He took out the iron piece from the stomach of the fish and gave it to a hunter called Jara who made it into an arrow-head.



Nobody told the Lord about these details. He knew everything. Though, he was capable of counteracting the evils effects of the curse, he did not care to do so and waited calmly for the curtain to rise on the final act of drama of His Life Divine.

### **Towards fulfillment of the curse:**

Dwarka seemed to be in the throes of some mortal cancer that was gnawing at its vitals and depleting its strength slowly but surely. The citizens had trembled with fear ever since the sages had been insulted and a nameless dread held them in thrall. The once joyous and prosperous Dwarka seemed to have sunk into gloom.

Day after day, the strong winds blew from the ocean and many were the evil portents that were seen. The streets swarmed with rats, pots showed cracks, cranes were heard to hoot like owls and goats howled like wolves. Asses were born out of cows and donkeys out of the elephants. The sun, as it rose and set over the doomed city, seemed to be encircled with the headless bodies of the men. Then the Yadavas, in their dread of destiny that seemed to be approaching them, went to Lord Krishna who was waiting for them and knew that the time had come for the words of Gandhari, uttered when she was burning with grief at the death of her hundred sons, to be fulfilled. He did not attempt to turn aside the course of destiny, but rather set himself calmly and cheerfully to make the path of events easy. He sent heralds through the city to command the people to make a pilgrimage to the opposite sea-coast to the holy spot of Prabhasa where the river Sarasvati is supposed to flow west. "Taking a purifying bath at Prabhasa and observing a fast there, we shall adore the gods and sages, and perhaps avert the danger," he said. All of them agreed to this proposal. They crossed the ocean in their boats and travelled to Prabhasa in their chariots. They had taken all their provisions with them, including the large stores of wines and spirits. Little did they realize - as they set out - that they would never return. Only the Lord knew

the character of the hour and watched unmoved. Having reached the coast, they went to the place of encampment and pitched their tents. As destiny had ordained, the site chosen was close to the vast clump of errata grass which flourished like swords on the shore. For some weeks, they followed the advice of the Lord and engaged themselves in many holy rites and in worship of the gods and sages. But soon, impelled by fate, as it were, they stopped their worships and fasting, and started the feasting and carousing. Surreptitiously, at first and later with abandon, wine started to make its appearance at the feasts and soon flowed like water at all the banquets. The reason for their pilgrimage was forgotten in the exuberance of the hour and the shore echoed and re-echoed with the strain of revelry, music and laughter. Plays, tournaments and feasts took the place of worship, devotion and prayers.

### **End of the Yadavas:**

Soon, a fierce quarrel arose among the Yadavas, under the influence of the powerful drink. It began with a word said in a drunken jest; some indiscreet reminiscence of the war that had been fought long hence. Satyaki and Kritvarma had been on the opposite sides; the main Yadava army had been given to Duryodhana while a few of Krishna's close friends like Satyaki had chosen to fight with the Pandavas. Deluded by the liquor, Satyaki taunted Kritvarma, "Will any *kshatriya* attack and kill the sleeping soldiers?" This was a reference to Kritvarma's blind following of Asvatthama's insane orders to destroy the remaining Pandava army. "How dare you taunt me, O Satyaki, when you slaughtered the great Bhurisravas who was seated in yoga?" shouted the enraged Kritvarma.

Soon, the other Yadavas joined the fray, taking sides with one or the other and it was but a matter of time before they proceeded from blows to swords. In a few moments, the scene of revelry had turned into a field of slaughter. Kith and kin stood against each other. Son killed sire, and sire killed son. The Yadavas, having reached the day of their doom, rushed upon death, like moths to

the flame. When their weapons and arrows were exhausted, their bows broken and maces shattered, they plucked the errata reeds with hands and charged at each other's throats, armed with the swords of destiny. Soon Satyaki, Kritvarma and Pradyumna - the son of Krishna - were dead.

The Lord stood calmly in the midst of the fray and watched in silence, as his deluded kinsmen destroyed one another. Cursed by the holy man and deluded by the Lord's *maya*, the flames of their anger, ignited by a spark said in jest, were enough to burn the entire race. The strong and beautiful Yadavas clan had come to an end.

Dejected, Balarama sat on the shore and went into a trance. A stream of light issued from his forehead like a silver serpent and coiled his way up to the sky.

The Lord, knowing that the time for his own exit had come, returned to the city and called upon his father to assume the affairs and hold the women of the Vrishnis under his protection. Krishna prostrated at his father's feet and turned to leave. A loud wail of sorrow broke out from the women of his household. Hearing, the merciful Lord retraced his steps and, smiling on them for the last time, said gently, "Arjuna will come and take you to Hastinapur. All your needs will be met by him." Saying this, he departed from the palace and made his way to the forest. Reaching the hidden depths of that wild place, he sat silently beneath a tree and established himself on a super-conscious stage. Restraining all his senses, he drew in his perceptions and steadied his mind on Supreme Brahman - His Oneself. He sat in yogic trance, resting his lotus-pink foot on his right thigh, waiting for the last part of the prophecy to be fulfilled.

### **Curse fulfilled:**

A hunter called Jara had got the remaining piece of the iron

pestle from the fisherman and had made it into a arrow-head. In the gloom of the forest, he mistook the holy foot of the Lord for the face of a deer and shot the fateful arrow. Running up to retrieve his prey, Jara beheld the glowing visage and knew him to be divine. Filled with remorse, he threw himself on the Lord's feet and burst into sobs. The Lord opened his lotus-petal eyes for the last time, smiled upon his slayer, blessed and comforted him. The blessed Lord said, "O Jara! Do not entertain any fear. Arise and be blessed, for it is due to my own resolve that you have acted thus, and you shall precede me to my divine abode - Vaikuntha. You shall go to that world where men go who have done great and good deeds."

Commanded by the Lord, Jara ascended the divine vehicle that had come to fetch Him, and he too attained the celestial abode.

And, never again was his form as Krishna seen in the world He had left behind after performing His leela (play) for one hundred and twenty-five years.

---

Adapted from 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Vanamali,  
Vanamali Gita Yogashram, Rishikesh, India.

# About the Writer: Dalip Thukral

The writer (Dalip Thukral) was born in 1931 and was married to Janak - daughter of a businessman - in 1955. Having acquired academic qualifications of M.A., L.L.B., from the University of Delhi, I worked in different positions in the Employees Provident Fund Organization under the Ministry of Labor, Government of India and retired as Regional Provident Fund Commissioner, Gujarat (India) in 1989. After about 5 years working in a private establishment in Delhi, I came to USA in the end of 1994 and settled here with my children. Ample time was now available to indulge in the luxury of writing.

I have been the devotee of Lord Krishna since childhood, and had been reading and listening to the teachings of Bhagvad Gita, and the stories about His life, off & on. Sometime back, I happened to read the classic: 'Sri Krishna Lila' by Devi Vanamali. It was the first time that I read a book where the story of Sri Krishna's life, from birth to death, and his exploits during the intervening period was narrated systematically. It was so fascinating that I read this book a number of times. And when I spoke to some of my friends about the exploits of the Lord, as narrated in the book, they simply showed their ignorance. That gave me an idea: why not write about the Lord's exploits in the form of small books - each book containing a few stories - and distribute them amongst His devotees; big books are hardly read by the people, in general, considering their voluminous pages and/or their price. In the meantime, I read 'Krishnavatara' (VII Parts) by K.M.Munshi which contained a lot of material on the life of Sri Krishna, and some other classics.

With the above in mind, I wrote and published the first book titled: **Life of Sri Krishna** in November 2005. Then followed other books over the years and these are listed hereunder.

At the time of War of Mahabharata, Sri Krishna was 89 years old and lived another 36 years thereafter. He ascended to his heavenly abode, after playing his leela (play) for 125 years. From birth to the War of Mahabharata and thereafter, his life is

*Continue Next Page*

*From Prepage*

full of events/adventures which are innumerable. Some of his adventures are simply of breathless amazement and are deep buried in the pages of scriptures and classics of Hindu literature. I hope that the reader will find these stories quite rewarding and urge them to read more about Him in the classics.

These books should reach a large segment of the community. With that in mind, these have been distributed FREE amongst the community members at the Hindu temples and religious gatherings, as could be feasible.



**Dalip Thukral  
with his wife Janak**

## **Dalip Thukral**

### **Books written and published by Dalip Thukral:**

1. **Life of Sri Krishna, (Nov. 2005).**
2. **Life of Sri Rama, (July 2006).**
3. **Life of Sri Krishna: Radha-Krishna, (Nov. 2006).**
4. **Life of Sri Krishna: Krishna abducts Rukmini, (July 2007).**
5. (i) **After the War of Mahabharata, (March 2008);**  
(ii) **Reprint; Enlarged Edition (Feb. 2013).**
6. **18 days of the War of Mahabharata, (March 2009).**
7. **Lord Krishna: The Saviour, (January 2011).**
8. **Maryada Purshottam: Sri Ram, (Sept. 2011).**
9. **All About us: THE HINDUS, (Feb. 2012).**
10. (i) **Yogi Raj: Sri Krishna, (Aug. 2012);**  
(ii) **Reprint Edition, (December 2012).**
11. (i) **Tales of Ancient India, (June 2013);**  
(ii) **Reprint Edition, (May 2014).**
12. (i) **Profile of Lord Krishna, (November 2013);**  
**From birth to His departure to Mathura.**  
(ii) **Reprint Edition, (September 2014).**
13. **Life story of Lord Krishna, (February 2015).**  
**From birth to His ascendancy to Vaikunth.**