

॥ Parijnanabodhamrita ॥

॥ परिज्ञानबोधामृत ॥



Parijnanabodhamrita

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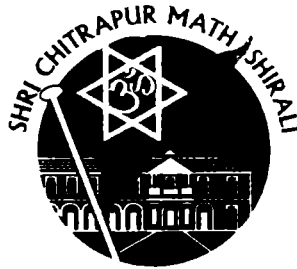
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A collection of
30 Discourses given by
Param Poojya Shrimad
Parijnanashram Swamiji
at Shri Anandashram, Khar, Mumbai
during the Chaturmasya period
July 4, 1997 to August 29, 1997

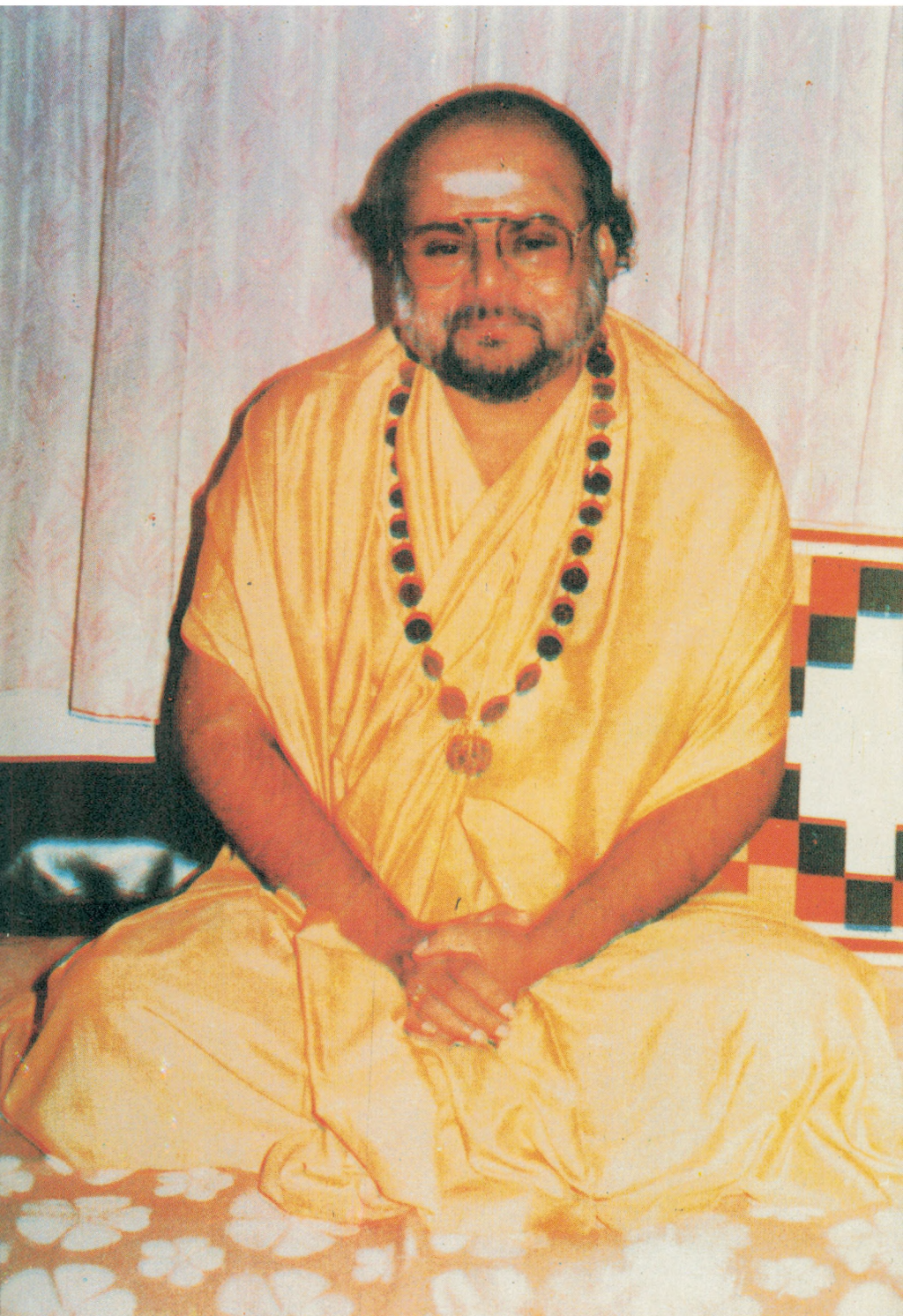


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on August 19, 2000
on the occasion of Punyatithi of Param Poojya
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SWAMI Sadyojat Shankarashram



॥ श्री गुरुदेवो नमः ॥

॥ श्रीगुरुभ्यो नमः ॥

SHRI CHITRAPUR MATH
SHIRALI (U. K. DIST.)
581 354, KARNATAKA
INDIA
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Camp. Shri Chitrapur Math,
Pune.

If the Vedas can be likened to the celestial wish-fulfilling tree, then the Shrimad Bhāgavat is truly its deliciously ripe fruit - निगमकल्पतरोर्गलितं फलम् ।

To be able to preserve the Bhāgavat's bhakti rasa while indicating its advaitic orientation and highlighting the guidance it has to give to sadhakas, is the work of a Master. The devotees of Mumbai were blessed to have H. H. Parijnānāshram Swamiji doing this for them during the chaturmāsya of 1977. Ill-health prevented H.H. from continuing with the Āshirvachams, but the 30 Āshirvachams which were delivered were subsequently translated into English and published in serial form in Shri Chitrapur Sun Beam.

It is with great joy and a sense of blessedness that we now release in book-form this precious collection of Āshirvachams on the auspicious occasion of His 9th Pūnya Tīthi.

Shri V. Rajgopal Bhat has, with his characteristic care and deep sense of commitment, collated and edited this work. Shri N.S. Rao with his devotion to our Math and its Guru Paramparā has contributed towards the publication and printing. May Lord Bhavanishanker be pleased with their devotion and seva.

May we all learn to cherish and benefit from this tangible मसाद of our गुरुवच.

with love and blessings,
सतीजा लक्ष्मीराजमः

आ. क्र. ४ एक १९७७
१९th August २०००



About this Book



After '**Anandabodhamrita**', it is now our turn to come out with '**Parijnanabodhamrita**.' While the former was a compilation of Swami Anandashram's contributions to the *Sunbeam* from time to time, the latter is a compilation of 30 discourses on Shrimad Bhagavata by Param Poojya Shrimath Parijnanashram Swamiji at Shri Anandashram, Khar in 1977 during His *Chaturmasya*. These discourses were given between 4th July, 1977 to 29th August, 1977. The series could not continue due to His ill-health and this is a grievous loss to us.

But, whatever discourses we do have provide a rich and variegated fare indeed. Making Bhagavata a solemn pretext, Revered Swamiji has given us His very best in terms of *Upadesh*. Here there is no highly abstruse metaphysics, which goes over the heads of many. The narration is very simple and is strewn liberally with hints, suggestions and sagacious advice which every Sadhaka should cherish. The delightful English rendering by the then Editor of *Sunbeam*, Shri S.C. Trikannad, has preserved for us the literary flavour of the original *Konkani*.

Here in this book is the cream of Swamiji's *Upadesh*. There is not a dull moment throughout. The questions and answers at the end of each discourse have not been included in this compilation, not because they are not useful, but because the questions were not specific to Bhagavata. These questions and answers can form part of another publication.

Here's then, a companion volume to **Ananda-Bodhamrita**. It is **Parijnanabodhamrita** - the nectarine teachings of Param Poojya Swami Parijnanashram (III). Today is His *Punyatithi* and this book is our humble tribute to His most revered memory.

19 August, 2000

V. Rajgopal Bhat
*Member, Publications
Sub-Committee*

Discourses on Shrimad Bhagavata



1



THIS is the first time We are giving a *Pravachan* of this kind. Usually, Mathadipatis, who are known as *Vedashastra Praveen* or *Dharmashastra Praveena*, keep *Puranas* aside. Because, according to their way of thinking, *Puranas* are to be considered only as stories which are meant to entertain. Therefore, any big *Mathadhipati* who has studied the *Vedas*, *Shastras*, *Bhashya* etc., does not read out from the *Puranas*. Even if they happen to quote from *Puranas*, such reference is only in passing. They give no importance to *Puranas*. But, today, we want to deal entirely with the *Puranas* and, in doing so, we want to speak on *Jagat*, *Brahma*, '*Jagat Mithya Brahma Sathya*', etc. Instead of giving a *Pravachan* which people cannot understand, we want to explain in a manner which people of our age can easily understand. During these two months, therefore, for a short while every day, we want to talk to you about *Paramatman*. In a simple manner, we will read out from the *Bhagavata*, its Sanskrit as well as Hindi versions and make our listener as well as ourselves get used to the same and derive satisfaction from the

Summary of the first discourse on *Srimad Bhagavata* delivered by His Holiness Swami Parijananashram at Shri Anandashram, Khar, on July 4, 1977 at the commencement of *Chaturmasa*.

same. You may have heard many learned Vedic discourses. We want to tell you at the outset that we will read in a story form, explaining spiritual truths in easy terms, even though we may not discuss religious matters in great detail. We will read out the Sanskrit text, then the Hindi version and finally what we want to speak to you about.

Why have We taken up the *Bhagavata*? One thing must be told. In today's world, as you all know, nobody is free from sorrow of every kind, everyone has to undergo adversity, no matter how rich or well-placed he be, be he a king or a Sanyasi. Once he has plunged into *Sansar*, once he acquires this body of five elements, he cannot escape undergoing all the derivative joys and sorrow. This is because the very Creation itself is based on a two-fold concept, namely, cause and effect. There may be one cause and many effects or many causes and many effects. As We have often explained in course of our *Ashirvachans* during our official tour, man has to experience many difficulties, many ups and downs just as day follows night and *vice versa*. Be ye *Yogis* or Communists or ordinary *Grahasthas*, all seek the cause of this unhappiness. *Mathadhipatis*, even Adi Shankara, teachers, preachers, *Yogis* and others who try to impart peace through meditation, *Pranayama* etc., themselves have not been free from these passing spells of difficulties. Why should we suffer? We know, as Shankara has said, he who surrenders himself to God gets happiness. Nevertheless, living in this world of illusion, whatever philosophy we adhere to, we have to experience illusory joys and sorrows. This brings us to the reason why the *Bhagavata* itself was composed.

King Parikshit is told that he would die within seven days and he gets determined to attain Self-Realisation within that period. So, Shuka comes to him to tell him the secret of this existence, how the world came into being. Shuka tells Parikshit that if he concentrates on

the Power behind all this Creation, he need not fear death; in fact, he can go forward and greet it. This may be summed up in one sentence, namely—having been born in this world, we are engrossed in external matters but none of us knows when our end will come. We think we will live for another 25 years or so and expect to concentrate on God when that time comes. Meanwhile, we pursue worldly objects. In the *Bhagavata*, when Parikshit knows his time is over and his end is near, he suffers because he has to leave behind all that he has called his own and, when he is in such a state of mind, Shuka tells him the story of Lord Krishna's birth, His *Lilas* and His glories, so that he may derive happiness thereby. Just as Parikshit knew his end was coming near, every *Sadhaka* should think that his end was approaching and should mould his life accordingly, concentrating his all in attaining Self-realisation before the end comes. Today, we are not scared of death. Imagine, however, if you are told that your end is only five minutes away, what an amount of mental turmoil you will pass through. In that you will have to give up all that you have called your own. In that condition, in our last moments, we can hear but we cannot speak. If, in those last moments, man has to get happiness, he should realise well in advance that he has to give up this world of *Maya* one day or the other and get used to this idea. Once he is so determined, he can leave this world behind in peace. None of us can escape death any more than King Parikshit could, because of a snake-bite, even though he lived with all precautions to avoid death of every kind. Death brings an end to all life. Till death comes to us, how should we conduct our life, how should we learn to distinguish between the real and the unreal? That is the purpose and object of the *Bhagavata*.

In life, each one takes some prop or support. The child takes the mother's hand, wife takes her husband's

hands. But, on the spiritual path, when a *Sadhaka* knows that he has no support, when he knows that all is unreal, he becomes desperate. Whose support can he then take? In such a situation our sages tell us, there is a Power or God on whom we can rely, Who comes to our aid at the right moment. This is what our sages have repeatedly assured the nectar-loving children of *Bharat Varsha*. These ancient *Aryas* wrote the *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and *Puranas* but they all seemed to be mainly intended for people of our age for, they all speak of *Kali Yuga*, when man will eat man. In such an age, what should we do? Fortunately, the stage hasn't come when man has begun to eat man. It may be our misfortune to have been born in the *Kali Yuga*, but these *Puranas* of rishis and munis are there to guide us and lead us and this itself is our supreme blessedness. The *Bhagavata* tells us what can happen in *Kali Yuga*. Elsewhere in this book, there is a simile given of a beautiful young woman sitting lost in her thought and two old men are rolling at her feet, while a few other beautiful women are fanning her. Narada comes that way and is wonderstruck at the sight of the two old men rolling at her feet and asks her what is the matter. She replies to him : "O God, you have come to save me. With my devotion to Krishna, I have lived all these years, keeping my youth intact. These two old men are *Jnana* and *Vairagya* who are rolling at my feet. These damsels fanning me are my devotees who have also attained their youth by their good deeds. I am *Bhakti*, and *Jnana* and *Vairagya* roll at my feet." This means that in this *Kali Yuga*, only *Bhakti* remains ever young while *Jnana* and *Vairagya* have grown old.

The *Bhagavata*, if everyone can read it daily, can help us to realise how we can shape our lives in this world. Instead of distracting our minds with alarming news or idle gossip, let us dwell our mind on this *Purana*.

This is a fit subject for us in this age. The goal of all *Puranas*, *Vedas* and *Upanishads* is there in the *Bhagavata* for everyone to attain. Today, to start with, We want to tell you one or two things only. The main thing to remember is : Vyasa composed many *Puranas* for the people, he laid down many norms for *Sannyasis*, for *Jnanis* and for others to follow. He wrote 18 *Puranas*, he wrote the *Brahma Sutra* and so many other learned books, yet he did not get fullest inner satisfaction and his mind was restless. Then Narada came there and gave him this advice: "You may have heard of Krishna. You have written on His truths but you have not written as to why He took birth and what did He do after He was born. You should write the Story of Krishna in such a way that it will be a blend of *Vedanta*, *Upasana* and *Karma* and yet be based on Krishna's *Lila*. If you write such an epic, you will get the satisfaction that you are seeking." Saying this, Narada left them and so began Vyasa writing the *Bhagavata*.

When doing any *Upasana*, if you do not get peace of mind, if you dwell on the image of Krishna, keep Krishna in your mind, then you get peace of mind. Krishna is our Inner Being. Krishna is the Cosmic I. Today, in every act of ours the predominant factor is this 'I'. When we look at another, we may doubt his identity but there never is any question of our doubting our own identity. Even in deep sleep, we always know who we are. That very fact of self-identification, of knowing who we are, is itself *paramatma-tatva*. This has three aspects, namely, '*Aham-vritti*', '*Hriday-granthi*' and Mind and these form the foundation of all that *Bhagavata* teaches us. When mind and *Aham-vritti* (or Self) go together, man is restless, he goes where his mind tells him to go, he does what mind directs him to do. Yet, even though he becomes a tool of his mind, that *Ahankar* or ego makes him feel that he is doing everything. When *Aham-vritti* and *Hriday-granthi* or

body consciousness go together, mind ceases to be and the body takes over predominance even if he is in a state of total forgetfulness. At that time, only *Aham-vritti* keeps the functions of the body going, as when he is in sleep and the organs of the body continue to function. This *Aham-vritti* is described as being so important in *Sadhana* that if it is aligned to the Lord, it immediately sheds both the mind and *Hriday-granthi* and becomes the Cosmic self and you get lost in *Samadhi* which is actually Eternal Wakefulness and you derive eternal happiness. Then, only *Aham-vritti* remains, all else disappears. And, that is what the *Upanishads* describe as '*Aham-Brahmasmi*' or "I am Brahman."

The *Bhagavata* is based on this philosophy and when you have heard the entire *Purana*, only *Aham-vritti* remains. To begin on the *Bhagavata* itself today, this whole world is no doubt created by Krishna for his *Lila* or divine sport through the triple functions of creation, preservation and destruction. He is as limitless as the sky itself. In this vast creation of His, like a thread running through a garland of flowers, His divinity is ever present in all creatures, from the smallest germ to the greatest creature. He is ever present in all and that knowledge itself is known as *Brahma-tatva*, but we cannot easily understand what this truth is. The *Bhagavata* describes creation as a mirage in which we are caught. The play of sunbeams on the sands create the illusion of a mirage to our sight and we think there is water where there is not. This same illusion also throws up other and different kind of images. The *Bhagavata* tells us that not only the mirage is He but even the sun's rays that create this optical illusion are also He. Even the senses which we are endowed with to see this illusion and imagine it to be real are also He. It is He who has directed our senses outward so that we may seek pleasure from

external objects and by His power alone we get lost completely in this pursuit of sense objects. Yet, *Bhagavata* tells us, this is real ignorance, this is all illusion. Why is it illusion and what is Truth then? To explain this, Veda-Vyasa compiled this *Purana* to inform and enlighten Parikshit within the short period left to him. We have today spoken only on the first Shloka of the *Bhagavata*. At this rate, we may continue speaking on the *Bhagavata* for many *Chaturmasas*.

Now, please repeat after Us —

वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम् ।
देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥

(I salute Krishna, the Guru of the Universe, God, the son of Vasudeva, the Destroyer of Kamsa and Chanura, the Supreme bliss of Devaki.)



TO summarise what We said yesterday, firstly, what is the relationship between *Vedanta* and *Purana*? All spiritual literature speaks of only one God, one Creation, but mankind is divided into three categories of mental development and evolution. The *Vedas* and *Upanishads* are meant for the highest evolved persons, those who are called as intellectuals, who are capable of thinking for themselves. For the next or middle category, *Karma Kaand* has been prescribed. They are told what spiritual practices to follow without necessarily knowing why. For the third category, who are incapable of thinking for themselves, who are superstitious, Vyasa has written the *Puranas* so that even they may attain Divinity. That is why we want to explain again what We said yesterday about *Aham-vritti* and *Hriday-granthi* which might have proved too high for some people. *Aham-vritti* or self-consciousness is always there in every mind. *Hriday-granthi* means body-consciousness. All the functions of our body are intended for our own welfare. The ears hear, the eyes see, the intestines and other internal organs function for the well-being of the body. *Aham-vritti* is so lost in *Hriday-granthi* that man thinks that he is the body. That is why he says "I am miserable", "I am crying" and so on. When doing so, he is not referring to *Aham-vritti* but to his body. If he can liberate himself from the body idea, then he becomes a *Jeevan-mukta* or liberated soul. Then, the functions of the body go on but he is all the time aware that he is not the body.

Summary of the discourse given on July 5, 1977.

The mind is another factor altogether. Mind is not the same thing as *Hriday-granthi* though it might seem so. Mind can go anywhere, it can dart to Rishikesh or Shirali even while you are seated here. But, the body cannot follow the mind. When the mind is engrossed in the body consciousness, it is lost in external things, it sees, it hears. Only when both mind and the body idea disappears, you attain *Samadhi* and only 'I' remains and that is the Universal Cosmic 'I'.

Now, about Krishna. Why was this *Bhagavata* written by Vyasa? It was written primarily for the people's welfare and spiritual progress. When Krishna was about to leave this world, at the end of His *Avatar*, Uddhav asked Him 'How can we remember You, O Krishna, after You are gone?' And, Krishna replied that all His full power, effulgence and spiritual strength would be left behind by Him in the *Bhagavata* and only his body would depart from this world. Parikshit, when he was about to leave this world, needed a prop to support him as he left this world. We usually leave everything to the last moment, to the end that we like to call as the 'long sleep'. If only we take pains to understand *Aham-vritti*, we will merge in *Brahman*. If we do not, then this I-ness will remain rooted in the five elements of the body and will find no liberation. Just as we cannot control our dreams, once we drop our bodies, the soul goes up or down according to whatever *Samskaras* man has gathered during his life time on the earth. So Shuka had narrated this *Bhagavata* composed of Krishna's teachings, thoughts and glories in those seven days so that Parikshit would understand what was *Aham-vritti*, *Mind* and *Hriday-granthi*. Shuka had all of them steeped in the thought of Krishna so that when Parikshit gave up the body, he would merge with Krishna. This teaching was intended for all, for *Bhaktas*, for *Yogis*, for everyone. *Bhagavata* can inspire *Bhakti* in everyone. There is no *Purana* that can do so

much for us as *Bhagavata*. As We said earlier, Vyasa wrote the *Brahma Sutras* for the intellectuals by instituting the path of inquiry, raising questions, creating doubts, and thereby getting to know Him ultimately. The underlying idea was that you should not forget Him. But *Bhagavata Purana* can bring us to Him as easily. The very first *shloka* of *Bhagavata* tells us this. *Vedanta* speaks of terms like *Akash* (sky) to signify non-existent objects. We have to take it as an object. We have to take it as an object of our dimension and understand it. This *Purana* can therefore be for *Vedantists* and the middle category as well. In fact, this *Purana* is for all the three categories.

The Lord is both the cause and effect. He is knowledge personified. Even the greatest *Jnanis* cannot understand His full dimensions. He is both *Karya Rupa* and *Karan Rupa* (Cause personified and Effect personified). Thus, He is both in mirage which makes the desert appear like water as well as in ocean. Such a One who looks like a pearl in the waterdrop on the lotus leaf, such a One who pervades the entire universe, to such a Narayana, Vishnu, I prostrate. He is the sun as well as the sunbeams. He is gold as well as gold ornaments, He is mirage and ocean, He is in every object that we can see as well as every object that we cannot discern. He alone can destroy our ignorance. He plays with the mortal man to test him and see how he will reach Him. That is why, Vyasa says at the outset, in his very first invocatory hymn, 'I with my disciples prostrate before Thee!'. Then, Vyasa tells us why the *Bhagavata* is written. This is free from any wrong motivation, this is not for doing ill to anybody, this is only to serve as a link between God and mankind, to help man to understand the reason for his human birth. It is not written for the sake of poetry, rhyme and metre, it is not for personal glory. It has been written selflessly, for the greater

welfare of humanity', Vyasa says, 'I have written this for devotees'.

Dharma has many connotations. Even the thief may be said to have his own *Dharma*. The main *Dharma* of man is to understand who he is, why he is here and where he has to go. To realise that, he has to perform *Aradhana* on *Atma* (Self), *Ishta-Devata*, Krishna. The *Sadhana* that is prescribed for achieving Krishna is called *Dharma*. Shuka is called *Mahamuni*. He is in fact regarded as greater than Vyasa who even is not called Vyasa Mahamuni. Yet, Shuka is called *Mahamuni* in spite of his tender years—he was a boy of only eight or nine years—because he alone had understood the real secret of creation and realised his divine Self. There is a story about Shuka and Vyasa, his father. Once, Shuka was going through a forest where there was a lake and some Apsaras were bathing therein, having removed their clothes. At that time, Vyasa came running after Shuka shouting, 'Shuka my son!, My son! The Apsaras who had gone on bathing while Shuka passed them suddenly go into hiding behind trees as Vyasa passes them. Vyasa gets angry with them and asks them why they should behave in this manner when he has grown old, his hair has turned grey etc. The Apsaras reply to Vyasa : 'You do not yet know what your state is. Your son is wrapt completely in his Eternal Self while you are still lost in this world. See, you have been running after your son shouting 'My son! My son!' 'If you had truly attained Self, you should not have felt this yearning for your son, for you would have known that you and he are one. From this episode, we came to know that Shuka is a *Mahamuni*, that you haven't yet attained full Realisation.'

Such a *Bhagavata*, dealing with the life of Krishna, narrated by such a Mahamuni like Shuka, hearing it or merely reading it itself can vouchsafe us Krishna's

Darshan. Even as you hear such a *Bhagavata*, it is said, Krishna comes and takes possession of the hearts of His *Bhaktas* and occupies them. O devout listeners! This is a *Kalpa-vriksha* this is steeped in *Vedas*, this came nectar-like from the lips of Shuka, keep listening to it even if somebody comes and tells you that he will give you *Moksha*. There is the story of Shaunak and others who once went to Brahma and told Him to give them the right place where they could sit and perform austerities. Brahma then shot this *Sudarshan-chakra*. He too had a *Sudarshan-chakra*, you know—and told the *Munis* to go and sit where the *chakra* fell and to perform their austerities there for a thousand years. These venerable *Munis*, having performed their austerities in Naimisharanya for a thousand years, go and meet Suta who lives in their forest and ask him to narrate to them the *Bhagavata* which is filled with *Dharma*, *Vedanta* and *Bhakti*.

वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम् ।
देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥



TILL yesterday, We had explained why *Bhagavata* was written and what it contained. From today, the *Katha* portion comes in. Coming as it does from Shuka, this is like a ripe fruit falling from the *Kalpavriksha* for people in this world and it says "O People! if you want to understand in poetry form, all those of you who want to hear and understand, go on listening to this nectarine *Bhagavata* till you attain *Mukti*.' As We said yesterday, Shaunak and other *Munis* who had started to perform austerity for a thousand years go and tell Suta who lives in the same forest: You are faultless, you are pure, you have narrated many *Puranas*, *Upanishads*, you are well-versed in *Dharma-shastras* and have learnt *Itihas* from the Lord Himself, help us attain our goal in this world by telling us something that will give us lasting happiness. We have performed so much *Karma Kand*, so much of *Sadhana*, yet we do not derive full mental satisfaction. You should tell us at least what you have learnt from Veda-Vyasa."

In *Kali Yuga*, judging each man and disciple from his spiritual evolution, the Guru imparts to him appropriate guidance and, once the Guru takes a disciple as his own he guides him at every stage, checks him from going astray and ensures his progress and sees to it that he attains the goal. So, these *Munis* tell Suta 'You are Veda-Vyasa's favourite disciple. You have learnt from your beloved Guru what is meditation, and what is *Tapasya*. You have taught many people

Vedas and *Shastras* yourself. You know *Itihas* very well. O Ever-young One (these Munis are considered to be eternal, *Chiranjiv*, who manifest themselves from time to time for the sake of the people and so are also known as *Ayushyaman*). You have worked for the spiritual progress of the ignorant and have brought enlightenment to them, tell us also what you have learnt from Veda-Vyasa.'

We should remember one thing. The *Bhagavata* also shows the importance of Kali Yuga. When Vyasa wrote this *Purana* 3,000 or 4,000 years ago, the Kali Yuga had already begun. He knew in advance what would happen during this age, what would be man's bent of mind, what would be his ideas and so on. So, he wrote the *Bhavishya Purana*, describing at length what would happen to men. He could tell past, present and the future. He was supreme in all the three and thus he wrote about the future also. These *Rishis* were also *Jnanis*. Yet, they go and tell Suta : 'You are Vyasa disciple, tell us not only for our sake but for the sake of all the diseased and ailing people of this age of *Kali* making us only the immediate cause, tell us what you have heard from Veda-Vyasa, so that all may benefit from listening to it.' These Munis describe *Kali Yuga* then as the age where each man would look to only his own material welfare instead of pursuing a goal in life, how he would go after idle pursuits and external objects of momentary pleasure. Vidyaranya gives a beautiful example. He says that even though a man might work for 24 hours for his own welfare, for his family etc., he is still a slothful being. Why? Because, he is wasting his precious human birth. We acquire this birth out of our good fortune. Instead of understanding *Aham-vritti*, man wastes his life which he gets by sheer chance and because of the merit of past lives. He has to go through so many species in evolution before attaining human birth. But, having

been born a man, he should realise how precious this birth is, what his goal in life should be. He has been endowed by the Grace of the Lord, with the power of discrimination so that he should seek out and realise his true goal in life. Yet, man does not strive for the goal and is lost in external objects. Because man forgets his real goal and goes after idle pursuits, Vidyaranya calls him slothful.

As it is, man's life is full of disease. Ninety-nine per cent of the diseases are said to be of the mind and only one per cent of the body. Due to that 99 per cent, man lives in constant dread, he becomes desperate and remains in perpetual disease. These are all diseases of the mind which come to man because he has become slothful and idle, because he concentrates only on the external objects of pleasure. So, he has reduced his life-span from 100 years to a mere 50 years or so. Here, sloth and idleness means not being active on the spiritual path in spite of man being 24 hours active in worldly pursuits, according to Vidyaranya. That is what he describes as '*Alpa-Ayur*'.

Then, another description of man in *Kali Yuga* is that he has '*manda buddhi*' or is dull-witted. When we have attained this human birth and acquired this body of five elements, we will be no better than plants or animals of the lower order if we do not have a goal in life or no interest in the spiritual path. Just as a betel leaf and lime, if mixed together, produces red colour, due to a chemical reaction, so also this body constituted as it is of the five elements, returns to those elements, once it drops, leaving no trace what so ever behind. So, we are asked to make the best use of our life, of this body given to us by God. Today, if we look at the lives of many, we see that they are concerned only with their own pleasures of the moment and are not in the least bothered about the hereafter. They do not know that this might be the last time they will have

this human birth. If you see the ways of the people of today, you will see that they have no spiritual interest or goal. Such people have been called in this *Purana* as dull-witted. Man thinks today mainly of pleasures of the body, like good food etc., which are of passing value. Because they are transitory, they are not real. Real happiness is within us, nobody can take it away from us. Every happiness is within us, in fact. You eat good fruits, the joy you feel for the moment is within you. In winter, you keep a heater in the room, the pleasure that comes from heater comes from inside you. In summer, you keep an air-conditioner on and that pleasure also is felt within. Even the pleasure that you get as you wake up from deep slumber is within you. Yet, there is an important difference between these passing pleasures and the real happiness. What gave you pleasure today need not give you the same pleasure tomorrow. They are all transitory. We have become slaves of our minds and we have become slaves of the vagaries of our mind because of this *Kali Yuga*. Therefore, our minds are all the time restless and we cannot have a resolute mind. That is why, people of this age are regarded as 'dull-witted.'

Thus, man is known as having *Alpa-Ayu, mand-buddhi*. Now, when we are ridden with disease, we go to the doctors for relief or treat ourselves but this does not give us permanent relief. In order that man may not suffer from disease (the *Munis* say to Suta) 'Give us a great remedy that would give us ever-lasting satisfaction in life.'

The Rishis tell Suta : "Because of *Kali Yuga*, we have come to such a pass that the life-span is reduced, the mind has become slothful and dull-witted. So, please help us, show us a path by which we can attain our goal.' There is much to think about in these words. Usually, when you have acquired learning, you try to impart it to others, to share with others what

knowledge you have gained. This is human nature. Here, Shaunak who had performed austerities for one thousand years goes to Suta for guidance. Veda-Vyasa is *Upadeshta*, the great teacher, Suta is the medium through whom *Shastras*, *Upadesh* are imparted to the people. The *Rishis* go to such a medium like Suta, in spite of their own great learning, sacrifice and austerities, and bow before him and tell him in all humility and prayer that just as Guru shares with his disciples his all, so also Suta should tell them all that he has heard from Vyasa. As We said before, in this world, preachers are many but listeners are few. Here, these venerable rishis go to Suta and pray to him. The words they use in prayer are remarkable.

The *Rishis* tell Suta : 'You who have learnt all the *Shastras*, *Vedas* and *Dharma* and imbibed them fully, please tell us what you have learnt, ignorant that we are, so that our innermost being might be filled with joy and contentment.' (They do not want only high philosophy from him, so they tell him). They, therefore, request Suta to tell them of the essence of *Vedas*, *Dharma*, *Shastras*, that they are ready to listen to this 'but do not stick to that only. Tell us of Krishna, the *Ishtadevata* who was born to Vasudeva, tell us of His life, His Lila. Tell us not from the Vedantist's point of view. Tell us of Krishna, Devaki-nandan, of His *Lila*. If you tell us that, our wishes will be fulfilled.' From here, Krishna's description begins. The *Rishis* say : 'We want to hear the story of such a Krishna who was born to Devaki and Vasudeva, who took *Avatar* in this human form, who is the Lord Himself by knowing whom one's birth becomes fruitful and one attains salvation. Tell us of such a Krishna and His ways.' There are three aspects to be noted here. These are Mahamunis who have attained the Self, who have performed the *Yagna*, yet they go and ask a medium like Suta how they can fulfil their desire to hear of

Krishna. This only means that the *Bhagavata* is such that it can bring lasting satisfaction not only to the idle, the dull-witted and others who cannot understand *Vedanta* and the essence of the scriptures because of *Kali Yuga* but also to these Mahamunis who, in spite of their high spiritual realization, still want to hear of Krishna, and get lost in His description and His *Lila*. Like these *Munis*, We want you also to get lost in the *Bhagavata*.

वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम् ।
देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥



TILL now, we had heard about the essence of the *Bhagavata Purana*, for whom it was written, of the three groups of people, the lower, middle and highest categories, that is to say, the *Bhagavata* was intended for all types of people. Shaunak had gone and asked Suta to tell him something that would bless him for life and make his life worth while and grant his salvation. He told Suta 'We want you to tell us the Lord's story, Krishna's *Lila*, we want to hear the *Bhagavata* by hearing which the listeners are saved. So, pray, tell us about it.' Thus he prayed to Suta.

The Rishi tells Suta : "You know, you are the disciple of Vyasa. Since you are such a disciple, you should definitely know what kind of *Jnana* can give the fullest satisfaction to the listener. You, who have known all that is to know of *Dharma* and *Shastra*, should tell us. We have steeped ourselves in *Vedanta*, we have done *Sadhana* of '*Aham Brahmasmi*', we have done *Yagna*, prescribed in *Karmakand*, but we are not contented. Give us that which will grant us perfect peace of mind and happiness." Thus, the *Munis* of Naimisharanya prayed to Suta. Why did the Lord take this incarnation? Tell us of such a Krishna who gave *Upadesha* for the sake of liberating the people.

The Rishi tells Suta : "The main reason for our asking you this is to show us a path by which the people can attain *Moksha*. We feel sorry for them. Krishna had taken birth for the sake of the humanity. He had placed before them His ideas and teachings, precepts and

practices, for their salvation. Tell us, O Suta, for their sake, what Krishna said. Such a Lord comes into this world only for the benefit of the people and not for His own Self. Tell us of such a Lord. 'Having come into this world, while being in *Sansar*, we have to perform our duties. Having fallen into this cycle of Karma, man loses his freedom. To begin with, whatever task we take in hand, we do so only for our own well being. But having started, man gets so entangled in it that he can neither free himself from this cycle nor find contentment in it. Referring to such men, the *Munis* tell Suta 'For the sake of the men who dread at the thought of being caught in such a materialistic world, tell us of Krishna.'

Sri Vidyanarya says that the name of the Lord can scare away fear itself. So, when we hear God's sweet Name, all our fears wither away. Thus, the *Munis* of Naimisharanya pray to Suta. These *Munis* were *Jnanis* and also *Karmakandis*, they were *Vedantists*. Yet, even they had an element of fear in their mind. This was because of *Kali Yuga*. No matter how learned a man might be, however much of a *Karma-kandi* he might be, in *Kali Yuga* only Lord's Name can remove all fear from his mind. Nothing else can avail us in this age of Kali. So, the *Rishis* tell Suta: 'Tell us the method of making ourselves pure. Ganga also makes man pure but Ganga can cleanse man only if the water of Ganga touches his body.' Here, with the Name of the Lord, there is no question of touch. When anyone speaks about *Jnana*, it only falls on the receptive ears and there is no question of 'touch' as such. Only those who are receptive can feel the impact. Hearing, therefore, does not mean 'touching' in the sense that water can touch, cleanse and purify an individual. The Vedas hold that hearing is greater than the sense of touch because the sense of touch, which makes you feel the cold and the warmth, is related to the five elements of

the body, whereas this *Kathamrit* is such without even touching it, by merely hearing it, we can purify ourselves. 'So, tell us, O Suta, of this *Bhagavata*,' say the *Munis*.

Who will not hear this *Purana*? All who want to attain *Mukti*, all who want to hear of the Lord's *Lila* and His glories, who want to raise themselves love to hear this *Purana*. The Lord first created this world and this universe and surcharged the Creation with His own being. Then, having done so, He stood apart. He entered into every creature and object that He created, He filled every activity in this world, He was the doer, the act of doing and the effect of doing. He is all in all. He is *Brahman*. He is creation. Yet, having entered into every object and activity, He also stands apart from all this activity. He is the Cause and He is the Effect. He is the sufferer. He is the enjoyer. Now, if you see man's nature, you will see that no matter what face he puts before the world, when he stands before the mirror in his own house, he smiles, he makes faces, puts on a grave face and even preens for himself. There is nothing to feel ashamed about it. This is human nature. Even *Brahman* in the unmanifest state could not enjoy Himself. So, He brought forth all this creation for His own happiness. So, even though He was All-pervading, Self-content, He created suffering and sorrow merely because He wanted to enjoy getting relief from such suffering. To give an example, when we have toothache, the pain comes of its own accord. Yet, we can also induce pain in ourselves by pulling at our tooth this way and that. And, the moment we stop doing so, we get relief from the pain. This sense of relief and joy was always there in us, we only prevented ourselves from feeling it. All the pleasures that we enjoy in this world are all similarly transitory. Because we look on them from the finite point of view, we view them as joys and sorrows and label them as

such. In His Being, only happiness prevails and that happiness is eternal.

The *Rishis* tell Suta: "We do not enjoy peace of mind because of this *Kali Yuga*. So, please, tell us the story of Krishna so that we can always be happy and content." God created this world of His in order to test us and to see whether we go to Him and how we go to Him and who among us runs away from Him. The *Rishis* want to hear in detail of such a Lord and His *Lila*. They might have been *Jnanis*, yet they were not happy. As We said before, this *Purana* is such that even *Vedantists* and *Karmakandis* get submerged in *Bhakti*. As the *Munis* tell Shuta : "We are *Tyagis*, we are *Munis*, yet You who are steeped in the story of Narayan, in Krishna, pray tell us, O Suta, of that Krishna, His eternal glories of which Narada sings." Here, Krishna is referred to as '*Kapatamanush*'. From time immemorial the Supreme Power, call It Brahma, *Shakti* or by any other name, that Supreme Power has maintained a balance of different kinds of beings on this earth, according to their spiritual evolution. In other words, there are so many *Jnanis*, so many *Vairyagis*, so many *Grahasthas* and so on, with a certain number in each stage of evolution of man. Krishna is known as '*Kapatamanush*' because, after each *Yuga*, to maintain the balance of evolution on earth, He takes birth, He performs all His numerous *Lilas* and deeds and having restored the 'balance of spiritual power', as one might call it, He leaves this world. This you can see for yourself if you look at the *Dashavatara* (with *Kurma Avatar*, *Matsya Avatar* etc). If you see Krishna *Avatar*, you will find that Krishna is so relevant to the present *Yuga*, to the present times, that whatever He did, the *Jnanis* and *Munis* held as appropriate and fitting. He was known, for instance, to have had 16,000 wives, yet He is also called the Eternal *Brahmcharin*. He taught the greatest truths to Arjuna, yet He gave up

His body like an ordinary mortal at the end of his *Avatar*. Krishna acted as the occasion demanded. He played so many diverse roles in a single *Avatar* of His that He raised many questions and provided the answers. The situations that confront the ordinary man in this *Kali Yuga* and, when such situations come, we should remember we are Krishna, we are God, and act not for our own well being or selfish interest but act as Krishna did, for humanity as a whole. That is why Krishna donned so many roles in His *Avatar*, to be an Ideal to us in every situation that might face us in this *Kali Yuga*.

That is why, even though we might take Krishna as our *Ishta-Devata*, He has performed so many *Karmas* that He appears like one of us, not as a God. Arjuna took Him as a friend. So, also, if we too take Krishna as our friend, we will also be saved and will realise His true Self as Arjuna did. Krishna stands for *Ahamvritti* and Arjuna is *Hridgranthi*, the body consciousness. Arjuna does not know what to do and becomes despondent. He says he has become weak, feels diffident and helpless, confused and knows not what to do. Such a situation that faced Arjuna, because of his body consciousness, comes to every one of us in our life on this earth. Krishna taught Arjuna to rise above this despondency, to remember who he was truly.

Sometimes, we look on ourselves as great men and assume that we have become highly evolved beings who can do anything. But, how we finally conduct ourselves depends also on how the world at large behaves towards us. That is why we cannot always act as we would have liked to. We come upon obstacles and feel frustrated. When this happens, we should ask of our *Aham-vritti*, as Arjuna asked of Krishna, what to do. As Arjuna laid down his bow, we too shed our duties and responsibilities then because of

depression and we are scared. Then, Krishna reminds us, even as He reminded Arjuna, 'I am in you, why are you worried? Do as I tell you. Don't worry what happens in the future. I am seated in you and direct all your actions.' We should take this as a guideline for us to follow. Arjuna faced his problems for only 18 days. In this *Kali Yuga*, we have to face such situations and problems, predicaments and perplexities day and night all our life. We should then take *Aham-vritti* as Bliss personified, as Krishna, *Brahman*. Our *Hrid-granthi* or body consciousness is Arjuna and is as close to *Aham-vritti* as Arjuna was to Krishna. The *Panch Pandavas* are regarded as our five senses and Arjuna's fraternal relations and affairs are the acts that we perform with our five senses. The main thing is, as We said before, this mind of ours is our arena of action. When, having conquered the mind, Man goes into seclusion, *Aham-vritti* and *Hrid-granthi* become one. He who listens to the story of such a Krishna gets greatly blessed and on hearing this *Bhagavata*, is saved. Nobody should forget, as we go on with this *Bhagavata* and will discover again and again, *Aham-vritti* is Krishna and *Hrid-granthi* is Arjuna and the restless mind represents the different experiences that befall us in this *Kali Yuga*. Such experiences occur to us only because mind is there. In *Bhagavata*, Krishna is *Aham-vritti*, the teacher, the guide, the *Ishta-Devata*. That is why, Shaunak told Suta: 'We have *mand-buddhi*, we are dull-witted, we do not know what to do to be eternally happy. We do not know what is real happiness. So, tell us this easy, simple story of Krishna in poetry form.' Then, to these *Munis* who gave up their *Karma-kand*, their *Yagna* and want to go only on the Path of *Bhakti*, Suta tells them the story of Krishna.

Now, in *Puranas*, we read of people living or doing austerities for 1,000 years, 5,000 years and so on. Looking at our history, our Aryas, our *Vaidiks* who

first propagated the Hindu *Dharma*, we should remember that they first lived in the Northern Arctic regions. There, there is six months of night. From these heights, our ancients, by stages, came down to Bharat Varsha, to Hindustan. No matter where they went, these descendants of the Aryas continued to measure time by sunrise and sunset. So, even after coming here, they continued to measure day and night as having six months each. Thus, the 12 hours from sunrise to sunset remained six months for them and the next 12 hours from sunset to sunrise again were also six months for them. So, when we hear or read them saying that they performed *Yag* for a thousand years, we should look at it this way. Our present year consists of 360 days. According to the measure of time evolved by these Aryas, by which one day of 24 hours was equal to one year, a year of ours was equal to 360 years in their time. So, when they mentioned that they had done *Yag* for 1,000 years, we may take it that their *Yag* lasted 1000 days. Such a *Yag* is usually done by the head of the village or community or country. We feel that the Shaunak and other *Munis* had started doing such a *Yag* for the welfare of all, when they came to Suta and asked him to tell them the story of Krishna. They tell him to tell them of Krishna's story.

वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम् ।
देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥



TILL yesterday, we had heard of how in *Naimish-aranya*, Shaunak who had started on a thousand years of *Yag* had prayed to Suta to tell him and other *Munis* of the *Bhagavata Purana* and Krishna Lila and grant them peace of mind. They were *Maha Munis*, who had mastered the *Vedas* and *Karmakand*. They knew *Paramarth-Tatva*. Yet, they found it difficult to carry on in *Kali Yuga*, because of which they had become restless and always wanted to be doing something or the other. Even after performing all the obligations as prescribed by the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, they were still filled with an unfathomable dread and could not remain in this world. So, they prayed to Suta to tell them the *Lila* of Krishna who took birth for the sake of His devotees, so that by His *Lila*, *Acharan*, *Upadesh*, their own births will become fruitful and they will be enabled to attain their goal in life. The *Munis* prayed to Suta to tell them the story of Krishna not for their sake alone but for the sake of all suffering humanity.

The *Munis* pray to Suta to tell them of that *Adi Paramatman*, *Jagat Narayan*, of such a One, even singing of Whose Name scares away fear itself. They pray that they be described in detail the glories of such a Krishna. As We said yesterday, the Ganga can cleanse and satisfy man by touch whereas *Narayana Charitra*, the Story of Narayana, can purify man by the mere act of hearing it. In fact, the *Jnana* or knowledge you acquire by hearing is said to be superior to that you

Summary of the discourse given on July 8, 1977.

acquire by touch while the *Jnana* that you acquire by sight is even superior to that by hearing. There is a still higher state, a higher knowledge that transcends all the five senses including touch, sight, hearing etc. where only *Aham-vritti* is retained. This *Bhagavata* is such that it assures you Knowledge by listening to its narration. *Bhagavata Shravan* or *Jnana* by hearing is considered as the first step towards attaining that highest *Jnana* of which *Bhagavata* speaks. The *Munis* pray to Suta to impart to them such a divine Knowledge which can be conveyed by mere hearing and where no touch (*Sparsh*) is necessary. They crave to hear of the deeds of Keshava, performed along with His brother Balarama, of the Lord's coming into this world, of the birth of such a One for whom no birth was really necessary. He was born for our sake so that His devotees may progress. The Lord was born like us, He went through the different stages of life on this earth like an ordinary mortal like childhood, youth, middle age and old age and, finally, He gave up His body as an ordinary mortal. Yet, unlike man who forgets his true Self and gets lost in the world of externals, Bhagavan Krishna who took birth of His own sweet will, was aware all the time of who He was and, therefore, every deed that He performed on this earth had a definite aim and purpose and a definite import and intent. The lives and deeds of such divine persons are worthy of hearing and, having heard them they should be borne in mind and, having been borne in mind, should be followed. So, it is said, Krishna, with His brother Balarama, who was born like you all, did more than any ordinary mortal. In His previous *Avatars*, He had performed many deeds. But, what did He do as Krishna *Avatar*? He lived and did everything for the entire humanity's benefit, though He did it for His *Lila*.

Krishna is called by the *Mahamunis* as "*Kapata*

Manush", that is, one Who does "*Kapat*". *Kapata Manush* means one who does things different to what we would want to do. 'We' here stands for many people. In this hall, there are many people. 'We' stands for each and every one here. Each one, forgetting *Ahamvritti*, wants to pursue his own course in life. To give a simile, one who does not care for our interest or well being may be regarded by us as a *Kapata Manush*. But, to another, who has known him fully, he does not appear as a *Kapata Manush*, He does not necessarily become one, it depends on our own outlook. Yet, the Rishis call Lord Krishna *Kapata Manush*. To use today's idiom, *Kapata* stands for coterie. Here, why is Krishna called *Kapata Manush*? It is said so because Krishna misleads us so much, detours us in every conceivable manner from our *Sadhana* path. Even His *Sadhakas* are not spared by His performing so many deeds, so that they might take time to reach Him and attain Him. He does everything to make it difficult for us to go to Him or to understand Him and, in result, we keep Him aside in our day to day affairs and forget His *Acharans*, teachings etc. Lord Krishna is a true *Avatar-purush*. Though He had 16,000 wives, He was the Eternal *Brahmacharin*. Though He was a King, He acted as a charioteer to Arjuna. Looking at all His doings, this title of "*Kapata Manush*" given to him by the *Munis* seems to be quite befitting.

But, one who has truly understood Him realises what is *Kapata* and what is *Manush*. *Kapata* relates here to the finite, to the transitory world manifested before us. If we realise this fact, then only *Manusha* or the Eternal Being remains. The Rishis, therefore, tell Suta that nobody can easily understand Krishna because He is so secretive while we all are of *manda-buddhi* or dull-witted in this *Kali Yuga*. So, they want to hear of Krishna who is known as *Kapata Manush*. Shuta was not one of those *Munis* who usually recited stories to

make people happy by hearing them. These *Munis* tell Suta to tell them of Krishna's Lila, of His lifting the Govardhan mountain, The *Rishis* tell him that they are *Karma Yogis*. When they pray for Govardhan Darshan story, he might wonder how can they, who were steeped in *Karma-kand*, be interested in listening to Krishna's Lila. If Suta posed such a query, their reply (say the *Munis*) would be : because they had both the desire and time to listen to Krishna's Lila. The *Rishis* tell Suta not to worry that they might not have time to hear the whole Story of Krishna. They had launched on a 1,000-year *Yag* and so they had "enough of time." These *Munis* were so much learned and well-versed in the ways of the world and its true state and had understood *Brahman*, yet they prayed to Suta to tell them of the Ever-beloved Krishna's story, so that by listening to it, "Krishna will pervade our entire beings, that He might reveal Himself to us within and without."

The *Munis* describe Suta as the boatman. Just as one needs a boatman to ferry one across a river, so also for these *Munis*, who want to cross the ocean of *Kali Yuga*, a boatman like Suta is needed. So, they appeal to Suta, who is the disciple of Veda-Vyasa, to be their boatman and take them across the ocean of *Kali Yuga*. They say that it is only because of their good fortune that they have got a 'boatman' like Suta. These *Munis* want to know everything about Krishna. For instance, when Krishna gave up His body, where did *Dharma* go? Krishna was *Dharma* Personified, He was the Upholder of *Dharma*. Yet, when He, who was *Dharma* Himself, gave up His body, where did that *Dharma* take refuge? When we are born in this world we come with five elements that make up our bodies and we retain our bodies only so long as the five elements are alive and active in us. When Krishna shed His body, and the five elements of His body

disappeared where did *Dharma* go, in whose body did *Dharma* take refuge? In His lifetime, Krishna had taught many truths. What *Dharma* did Krishna preach? Is there a *Dharma* or not? Can we in this *Kali Yuga* attain that *Dharma* or not? By then, *Kali Yuga* had already started. The *Munis* want to know of such a Lord's *Lila*.

To speak in a spiritual sense, as we go on hearing this *Bhagavata*, we might think that it is a mere story, that there are kinds of stories which appear odd to one's ears, like that of the two old men rolling at the feet of a young woman. We should all the time remember that the *Bhagavata* is narrated by *Mahamunis* who have given special importance to *Param-hamsya*. When you have heard the entire *Purana*, it will make you forget your mind and only *Aham-vritti*, the eternal consciousness, remains. In our *Upanishads*, the act of inhaling and exhaling is described as *Hum* and *Saha*. When we take in our breath, *Hum* is born. When we let our breath out, *Saha* is created. Altogether, in a single day, we perform these twin acts of *Hum* and *Saha* 20,000 times, *Hum* stands here for *Aham-vritti*. So, when we breathe in, we remind ourselves that we are *Aham-vritti*. When we let out our breath, however, we are not so much aware of it. Try and see for yourselves. Take some deep breath and you will find that while you are aware of breathing in, you are not aware of breathing out. *Saha* means the Universal Power, the Supreme Being, of Whom we are, likewise, not aware and even forget just as we forget that every time we inhale, we exhale as well. We are aware only of intake of breath, that is *Aham-vritti*, but we forget letting out of breath that is our universal Self. That is our greatest mistake, we keep only *Hum* and forget all about *Saha*. Together these two words are connoted to stand as "*Parama Aham Saha*" or *Paramhamsya*. It is explained by the *Rishis* here that they do not even know why this body of five elements does the "*Aham*" and "*Saha*", but

they should know what it stands for. In fact, all even the so called dull-witted, should know what is *Aham-vritti*, what is *Soham*. This is the refrain of the *Bhagavata*, of every chapter of this book. It should be remembered by everyone, every listener and devotee. *Param* means repeatedly. So, *Paramahamsya* means repeatedly doing 'Hum' and 'Saha' and being aware of what they stand for.

Suta was delighted to hear of the prayer of these *Munis*. Replying to them, Suta remembers Shuka reverentially. He recalls Shuka who, at the age of eight, attained Renunciation, whose father and Guru was so well-versed in the *Vedas*, Shuka who was lost in his Eternal Being and left his home in such a state, while his father ran after him, crying in fond filial terms "O child, O my son! Do not give me up!" When this was happening, the flora and fauna of the forest, for the sake of Shuka, reply to Vyasa on his behalf "I am here", "I am here". This *Shloka* only means that Shuka, by giving up everything and attaining his universal Being, cannot and does not reply to his father, Veda-Vyasa, who runs after him calling him. He does not say "I am here, I am here" because he has already become the Universal Self, and all creation has become he. Therefore, all the creatures, animals, trees and plants in the forest whose forms Shukha has become, reply to Vyasa on his behalf 'Don't worry about your son.' Every tree, every leaf, every waterdrop, every flower, every animal, every stone and pebble speak out Shuka "I am here, I am here." It means that at that tender age, Shuka had been so steeped in *Brahman* that the whole universe became his own Self. Having prostrated himself mentally before such a Shuka, Suta says to Shaunaka, "I will start telling you now the story of Krishna."

Some might wonder why, once you have merged in the Universal Self, should a tree, pebble, leaf answer

for that individual entity when the entity itself is not there, when the ego consciousness has disappeared. In the *Bhagavata*, we often come across terms like *Akashvani*, of trees speaking etc. Here the trees act as instruments for the Universal Being. Now, many people have put different meaning to Our having a wireless and on Our speaking on the wireless. That does not worry us as the Government itself has given Us a licence and is helping us more than anybody else. Now, in a wireless set, you have what is known as RF or Radio Frequency, IF Audio and Modulator. Our mind is like the radio frequency. Just as so many stations can be heard on a particular radio frequency, so also our mind can cover such a wide range and brim with so many ideas, that it is never without any idea. Just as we do not, sometimes, know what station to tune to on our radio, so also we do not know how to direct our mind. Now, IF stands for the frequency of our choice. Our mind is like RF or radio frequency, it has many places to go but does not know what to choose, where to tune in. We do not know how to concentrate our mind on God. We cannot control our mind and direct it on to the right frequency and so it will dart in any direction it wants. But, if we can direct our mind on the divine path, it will go directly to God. Here, trees, leaves, flowers reply to the name of Shuka who has given his voice to the whole universe. We will elaborate this statement a little more, because this is the most important *Shloka* of the *Bhagavata*. Because Shuka was walking on without replying to his father who was running after him, all creation replied on his behalf. It only means that even in those days, such frequencies were possible. Even in those days, by mere thought, by telepathy, you could emit radio waves from your mind and transmit your message far and wide. Rishis in those days had evolved themselves to such a perfection that they could use any of the elements to

broadcast their thoughts and ideas. This is the real meaning of this *Shloka*. There is nothing wrong in man having a mind. In fact, we must make our mind listen to us and we must learn to control its thoughts. When *Aham-vritti* controls mind, instead of vice versa, there is no limit to the power that becomes yours.

You may have heard of the Astronaut Mitchel who went to the moon. From the moon, it is said, he sent out his thought waves to ten people on earth. Standing on the moon, he had so much power at his command, that within two seconds, his thought-waves reached this planet earth and the people who were studying his progress. This only proves the immense power of mind. Mind is usually described as restless. It is not mind that is restless. It is *Aham-vritti*, our ego-sense, that is responsible for the wavering mind, that has its impact on mind. We have said all this only to emphasise that though our mind is regarded as restless, yet even those who do not necessarily recognise God are able to control their mind and are self-confident enough to tell their mind to do this and to do that. If they can do it, why not a *Sadhaka* also do it?

When we do *Gayatri Upasana, Namsankirtan, Puja* etc., we do it only to control our mind. We should realise that we do not belong to the mind but mind belongs to us, that we are not slaves of the mind, that mind should be controlled by us and do as we tell it. Then, we can direct it to God and attain our Universal Being just as *Shuka* did.

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AS We said yesterday, we have so far completed only 15 *Shlokas* in the last four of five days, perhaps we have spoken a little too much in detail.

A *Shloka* says that to escape from this ocean of worldly life, *Bhavasagar*, to liberate oneself, for all such people the *Bhagavata* is *Veda* itself. Suta prostrates himself before one who narrated this *Veda*. Before taking up in hand any work, we usually remember our Guru and our undertaking is assured of success. This is what our elders have told us. That is why, while starting any new activity, we usually venerate and prostrate before those who originated that activity. So, Suta remembers Shuka reverentially. Suta has also enlightened many people. Here, moving ahead with his narration Suta offers obeisance to Lord Krishna, Narayana, our *Ishta-Devata* and *Nara* who is Arjuna. We will relate to you the relationship of the *Panch* Pandavas later. Arjuna is important not only because he is Krishna's greatest disciple but he is also the Lord's friend. If you want to understand *Aham-vritti* and *Hrid-granthi*, you have also to worship Saraswati. So having prostrated before Krishna, Arjuna, and Saraswati, Suta continues his narration.

Suta tells the *Rishis* : "O *Rishis*! you have asked such a beautiful question. You have not asked about whether the world is real or not, you have not asked about your 1,000-year *Yag*, what materials you should use for fulfilling this *Yagna*. You have asked for the story of Krishna, not for your sake alone but even more for

the sake of the people. I will be only too happy to tell you. So, listen, O *Rishis!*"

While speaking about *Dharma* we had said a couple of days back that everyone has a *Dharma*. This *Dharma* forms the prop in our life. We had asked you to adopt *Aham-Tatva*, use Him as your prop in life and go after Him. That itself is man's greatest *Dharma*. In this world, when we love, when we do something or when we go after something, it is always with an ulterior motive, to achieve something. Selfless devotion to the Lord is said to be the greatest of all acts we may do. In it, there is no motive except to love Him. From the worldly point of view, it has no apparent excuse or reason. The Lord is Bliss Personified and when the *Sadhaka* prays to such a Lord for happiness, he assumes he is separate from God who is indeed seated in the hearts of all. We pray to Krishna to let us be immersed in *Aham-vritti* which is Bliss Personified, which is true happiness. Everyone wants to be happy, but this is not something you have to attain as such. It is already there within you. Now, you wear a gold chain round your neck but, because of your mental preoccupations, you miss it and forget that it is on your neck. You look for it here and there, hanker after it, become desperate for it. Then, when you see yourself in a mirror, you see the chain on your own neck and realise that you had never lost it. Likewise, *Aham-vritti* is always with you, it cannot be separated from you. Here, the role of the mirror is played by the Divine within you, in which you realise that you have never lost your Bliss. So, to those *Munis* who wanted to know all about Bliss Personified Krishna, Suta says : "We are pleased with your question. We will answer you. Please listen." Our duty is to understand Krishna who is in the innermost part of our being. That is our only *Dharma*. Now, having understood what is *Dharma*, *Karma*, *Aham-vritti* etc. we go for forward.

Suta tells Shaunaka : Many may be the *Dharmas* that are in this world. But, if you have not acquired a desire for Lord Krishna, if you have no devotion for Krishna Bhagwan, then it is no use what *Dharma* we follow. Even if you perform a thousand-year *Yag*, you will find its benefit only for the duration of the *Yagna*. Once it is over, you are once again on your old plane, God again departs from you and you find yourselves where you were. For the *Dharmas* you perform while doing any *Yagna* are related to the body and are as transitory as the body itself. Suta says—the Rishis had started all the *Yag*, *Karma Kand*, etc. for achieving *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama*. For them, *Dharma* was doing the *Yagna*, from that came *Artha* and from *Artha* came *Kama* and from *Kama* *Moksha*. If whatever you do is intended to achieve an earthly object, then that does not constitute real *Dharma*. By doing such a *Dharma* you do not get its intended fruits. When you have performed *Dharma*, you need not necessarily attain *Artha*, and, likewise, even if you achieve *Artha*, you need not necessarily attain *Kama*. The fruits of *Kama* are achieved through the *Panch-Indriyas*, the five senses. Every man, for instance, feels thirsty, hungry and has other physical cravings. In Kali Yuga, life's object is not merely to fulfil these physical cravings. We should give greater importance to *Bhakti*, not *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama*. Our desire should only be to merge in Lord Krishna's Divine Self. *Kama* is desire for worldly activity. We should perform only such activity that we are capable of, that our senses are capable of performing and we should not over-step our limits. If everyone shapes his life in this manner, harnessing *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kama* within his limits, he can use his life to the pursuit of his real goal which is attaining Self. This *Tatva* is called *Brahma Tatva*. There are *Tatva Jnanis* in the forests. Such a *Tatva* can only be attained and experienced. It cannot be explained by one to another. When you have attained

it, there is no duality, everyone and everything becomes one.

There is a story of Akbar and Birbal that may be relevant here. Birbal once ate mangoes and praised them to Akbar. Akbar got curious and asked Birbal to describe the mango. Birbal in reply merely said they were very tasty and delicious. The king then got wild and threatened Birbal to be more explicit or face dire consequences. Birbal, the story goes, then smeared his beard with jaggery and asked him to taste it, telling him that the taste of mango lay in the eating and not in describing it. So, also, only those who have experienced *Brahma-Tatva* can know what He is. We cannot describe Him adequately to another. Suta tells the *Munis* that he will tell them of such a *Tatva* which we attain when we throw our all on Him and trust Him wholeheartedly. Such an *Aham-Tatva* is our sole prop in life. These ancient *Munis* who have mastered the *Upanishads*, who have attained knowledge, desire to know more about Krishna because of *Bhakti* in themselves. Suta says that Lord Krishna is in such a *Tatva*. The ancient Rishis gave a great deal of importance to *Varnas*. We do not observe the *Varnas* these days in the manner they were intended to be observed. In those days, *Varnas* were created by Krishna to represent the four stages of evolution of man. He never intended that they should become a caste system dividing society in this manner. *Varnashram* was created by the ancient Rishis with the idea of only pleasing the Lord and attaining Him. Not that only *Vaidiks*, the highest *Varna*, could meditate on God, offer worship to Him and pray to Him. Anyone could do it. He is everyone's God. Anyone and everyone can offer devotion to Him and that is true *Bhagavata Bhakti*. Instead of performing many elaborate ceremonials or rites, think only of Krishna Paramatman, hear only of Krishna Paramatman. Do the *Japa* given to you by

your Guru, talk only of Him, hear only of Him. This also is an *Upasana* to attain Him.

Really speaking, nobody in this world has any objective. Yet, our elders have told us, fix your mind on an objective and leave this world thinking of it. Let such an objective be Krishna Himself and none other. Then, you will have attained salvation. So (says Suta) have a goal in life and make that goal attainment of Lord Krishna. Krishna, now, had many activities and many roles to play, so much so that one might have all sorts of doubts and misgivings. He had 16,000 wives, yet He is a *Brahmacharin*. He said He would use no weapon in war, yet He used his *Chakra*. He taught His disciples so many tricks and tactics, that people might wonder if Krishna was really God after all? The *Bhagavata* assures us that Krishna is really the Supreme Lord. He did all these things because they were appropriate to the *Avatar* assumed by Him, they were relevant to the times. Krishna lived the life of one of us. Right at the beginning, we need not take Krishna as the Lord Himself. Let us begin taking Him as one of us and let us dwell on the numerous great services rendered by Him to mankind. We are all, no doubt, forms of the Supreme Being. Yet, we call Krishna as "*Pujya*", we worship Him because, in spite of all his numerous activities which were not worshipful in the sense of the term. We call Him *Pujya* or worshipful from time immemorial because whatever He did in His incarnation always produced its results, its fruits. Krishna did everything with a definite purpose. Suta says that we should worship such a Krishna who is ever-sweet, who is full of Bliss, and make Him our goal in life. Meditate on such a divine form of Krishna. If you meditate on Krishna all the time, all the ego-sense (*Ahankar*) that is evident in every act of ours on earth will go away. Suta says that the sword of Krishna's meditation (*khadga*) can cut off our *Ahankar*,

can remove all our pride and ego, and asks : "Who will not meditate on such a Krishna?" Speaking about such a Lord, Suta tells the Rishis that he is very happy to narrate to them His story, to impart to them whatever he knows of Krishna, who is called *Brahman* by the *Upanishads* and *Bhagwan* by His devotees. Such a Krishna's story I will narrate fittingly, says Suta.

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EVERY man, every *Sadhaka*, should try to understand what *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha* mean and try to bring them all into his daily activities in this world. Suta tells the *Munis* : 'In this *Kali Yuga*, whatever we do for the sake of *Dharma*, when we get steeped in *Dharma*, rather than achieving the fruits of *Dharma*, we get *Artha* or we become richer, wealthier. If a man goes on doing *Dharma*, he gets *Artha* meaning more acquisitions and, when he gets these, he carries on his activities from the point of view of *Kama*. Having thus experienced all the three, that is, *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kama*, only then he feels like getting free from all the three. When our ancients evolved this four-fold path, they wanted us to go forward step by step—first *Dharma*, then *Artha*, then *Kama*, and then *Moksha*. Everyone, when leading this life of his, should carry on his activity according to these four stages. Our worldly life is not intended only for enjoying any kind of pleasures. We should limit our activities to the need of the five elements of our body. We have all come into this world not simply to enjoy joys and sorrows, we should have some goal in life. Our *Karmas*, therefore, should not be directed merely for the upkeep of our body. We should have a spiritual objective, a spiritual goal in life.

Suta says that he is now about to speak of the glorious life of Lord Krishna: Knowing Krishna, even three *Gunas* (*Rajas*, *Tamas* and *Satva*) get subdued. By hearing the story of such a Krishna, everyone becomes

happy, no matter how busy and engrossed he may be in worldly activity. He gets established in *Satva* and becomes happy. Man's mind is such that no one can say at what moment what *Guna* prevails in it. Our *Aham-vritti*, when it blends with mind, goes out of our control and we ourselves cannot say whether we will go into *Satva Guna*, *Rajo Guna* or *Tamo Guna*. Whenever any thoughts of others' hostility and ill-feeling towards us come into our mind or we feel hostility towards others, that is *Tamo Guna*. There is nothing wrong or to worry about if you get such feelings. The *Jnanis* tell us that once we have this body composed of the five elements, it is but natural that such thoughts of others' ill-will to you or your ill-will to others should crowd your mind. When you ruminate over the wrongs done to you, even if you do not do anything in return or plan any wrong action in return, if you think to yourself how nicely you had behaved to another or that you had been friendly to another and he did not respond to you, that becomes *Rajoguna*. To achieve *Satva Guna*, one need not be a *Sannyasi*. Even if you see a small lovable child's face, *Satva Guna* takes hold of your mind. When we see a toddler, we want to fondle it, we admire it and we get feeling of love towards it and we are in *Satva*. Therefore, our mind is subject, from moment to moment, to all the three *Gunas*, depending on what we are thinking at the moment. Our *Rishis* and *Munis* tell us : "Give up *Rajo Guna* and *Tamo Guna* and fix your mind on *Satva Guna*. You feel loving sentiment towards children, trees, plants, flowers etc."

It is said that even plants and trees thrive and flourish on love and they return love for love. Just as an experiment, keep two pots full of earth and plant one plant in each of them. Talk to one plant in these terms: "You are mine, I am yours, you are my beloved. You will blossom soon and you will get nice flowers and fruits". The plant is so understanding that it will

flower in no time when spoken to in such loving terms. On the other hand, tell the second plant : "You are no good, you are full of thorns, you are bad" and so on and, in no time, it will wither away and die. This only shows the power of one's thoughts and feelings towards others, whether they are human beings or plants and trees.

Suta says : O *Brahmins*, O *Munis*! "Once devotion to Lord Krishna takes root in man, the individual does not give much attention to worldly pursuits. Everyone is subject to the three *Gunas*—you, me and everyone. Our mind cannot be stabilised in *Satva* as long as *Rajo* and *Tamo* are playing in the body. If man wants to be always in *Satva*, he should hear such scriptures, he should meditate on the Lord all the time, he should think only of Krishna." So Shuka says, concentrate on the image of Lord Krishna and all the cravings of your mind will be stilled, and you will be stabilised in *Satva Guna*. It is difficult to tell the present day people to lessen *Rajo Guna* and *Tamo Guna* as they do not understand either, and they are full of worldly pursuits. Now, when you wake up in the morning, you might remember all that has happened on the previous day, but you wake up with a fresh mind and you are then said to be in *Satva Guna* which is then predominant in you. That state of mind that is in you at the time of waking up in the morning you should try to preserve throughout the day. It is, no doubt, difficult these days. At the most, one might rise from *Tamas* to *Rajas* but unless you have a tranquilliser, you cannot have both *Tamas* and *Rajas*. Our ancients knew of such a tranquilliser by which the effects of both *Rajas* and *Tamas* could be lessened and then nullified, and man could be stabilised himself in *Satva*.

If man can understand and realise what is *Rajas* and *Tamas*, it becomes easier for him to go into *Satva*. That is why, our *Rishis* and *Munis* lay so much emphasis on

this. Every man, because his body is made up of the five elements, has to go through the three *Gunas*; he has no escape from the play of the *Gunas*. But, he can conquer them by surrendering himself to Lord Krishna. This will give him liberation from *Rajas* and *Tamas*, and, from that moment he enjoys *Satva Guna* and makes rapid spiritual progress. Why we are telling you all this is that Suta tells even these Mahamunis that they too are subject to *Rajo Guna* and *Tamo Guna* and tells them how to stabilise themselves in *Satva Guna*. Keep the Lord, who lifts you above all the three *Gunas*, seated in your heart and He will liberate you from all the ill-effects of the play of *Gunas*. You will acquire a childlike nature and remain ever-blissful. So, worship and meditate on Lord Krishna. We do all our actions on this earth only in search of peace of mind and once we have established ourselves in *Satva Guna*, our search ends. We go on and on in this cycle of desire and search for peace of mind and ceaseless activity only so long as *Rajas* and *Tamas* are active in us. It is *Rajas* and *Tamas* that makes us take birth on earth again and again and impels us to carry on one activity after another. Therefore, Suta tells the *Munis*: "O *Mahamunis*! You know all this already, but I will tell it to you all over again." Every parent wants his child to be bright and intelligent and become famous, no matter how dull-witted he might be. So, also, in this world, Brahma, having created all these creatures and objects, animate and inanimate, wants to see how these offsprings of His will remember Him and reach back to Him. The Supreme Being could not remain all by Himself. So, He brought forth all this creation, for the sake of His own sport. Having laid aside *Rajas* and *Tamas*, if we worship Him, if we offer our devotion to Lord Krishna, taking Him as our very own and meditate on Him, think always of Him, our mind gets steeped in *Aham-vritti* and *Hrid-granthi* or the body

idea disappears. The seed of "*Aham Brahmasmi*" (I am *Brahman*) then sports in us and grows.

When difficulties of all sorts confront us, we sometimes wonder if God is there or not. We ask ourselves : Are we right in trusting One whom we cannot see. Shaunaka is, therefore, told by Suta : "Trust such a One by remembering Whom your verybody idea disappears, and only *Aham Brahmasmi* remains. Then all your doubts too will disappear. Then, whatever *Karma* is still left to be done by you spends itself." Usually, man does *Karma* for his own pleasures. Even a mad man does something for what he regards as his pleasures, so also every man on this earth does something only to derive happiness, be it for a job, for education, for a wife or a house—all these activities are aimed at getting peace of mind and happiness. Suta says whatever fruits of past *Karmas* are due to you and whatever future *Karmas* are destined to your lot, all these will cease to be once you surrender yourself to Lord Krishna, think of Him, read of Him and meditate on him. Then, only one *Karma* remains for you, namely, meditation on Lord Krishna.

Suta tells the *Munis* that in every act of man, there are *Samskaras*, the fruit of past *Karmas* and this gives birth to a desire for new action, new activity which, in turn, gives birth to new *Karmas*. Thus, our life becomes one constant pursuit. As this *Bhagavata* is mainly on Lord Krishna, greater importance is given in it to Vishnu, the Preserver. Suta says that this creation is based on the three *Gunas*—*Rajas*, *Tamas*, *Satva*—and the three divine controllers of these *Gunas* are Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwar. Brahma is the Creator, Vishnu is the Preserver and Shiva the Destroyer. In fact, our ancients have given these three divine forms of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva to the three functions of creation, preservation and destruction. They are also co-related to the three *Gunas* in man. Brahma represents

Rajo Guna or harmlessness, in which state you do not feel like hurting anyone, which is an attribute of Brahma Himself. Vishnu represents *Satva* in which state one sees all with equal vision, with no partiality, just as Vishnu Himself preserves all creatures alike. Shiva represents *Tamo Guna* in which state you feel destructive towards other. So, our ancients tell us. They ask us to understand what is *Rajo Guna*, what is *Satva Guna* and what is *Tamo Guna* and you will realise what is Creation.

This *Bhagavata* is meant only for people like us who do not know much of *Vedanta*, who even if they understand a little of the *Upanishads* do not know how to carry out its precepts, people who are always troubled that they may not be as devoted as they should be, as pure as they should be, as meditating on God as they should be and, thus, go on experiencing increasing difficulties. We should have one persistent thought in us that we should progress on the spiritual path. So, this *Bhagavata* has been composed. It doesn't matter if you do not know *Vedanta*, it does not matter if you cannot follow the *Upanishads*. Only listen to Krishna's glories and teachings, regard Him as your friend even as Arjuna did. We remember here one *Shloka*. There is one individual on whom our scriptures usually do not dwell. He is Duryodhana. Krishna says in the *Gita* that he who loves Him realises Him. There is a saying attributed to Duryodhana which carries the essence of all *Gita* and *Mahabharat*. It is highly relevant to the present times. Keep this quotation always in mind. Duryodhana tells Krishna: "I do not know what is *Dharma*, what is *Veda*, *Upanishad*. I do not find any *Pravritti* in *Dharma Shastras* etc. I also know what is a Supreme Power. He tells me what to do, what not to do, I do as that Power within me tells me." We have all become Duryodhanas today and having become Duryodhanas, we can attain Him only

after 18 chapters of struggle like the *Mahabharat*. We may not become Arjuna, every one of us, but let us at least be Duryodhana and attain Him after the struggle. Now, Krishna had stood by Arjuna, become his friend and so on, but He was not the same to Duryodhana. Sometimes, it appears, God regards some as evil and keeps them aside. Such doubts may arise in anyone's mind. The same is the case with Rama. Rama who fought Ravana face to face and overpowered and killed him is said to have concealed himself behind seven trees in order to kill Vali whom He considered as evil.

Suta tells the *Munis* : "You may have done all austerities but if you want to be stabilised in *Satva Guna*, you must think of Krishna and keep Him always in your heart."

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देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥



SUTA say when we start to meditate on Lord Krishna, when we hear of Him, when we think on Him, whatever we have so far hugged as our own because of our *Hrid-granthi* (body consciousness) falls away and also our doubts and misgivings about God, If we see Lord Krishna then, having overcome our *Hrid-granthi*, only the functions of the body remain and go on and we do all this with a sense of detachment. After all this has happened, having gained knowledge of *Aham-vritti* or Cosmic Self, having realized God Himself, our *Hrid-granthi* or body idea loosens itself from us, and fall off. All our past *Karmas* and their fruits, the fruits of *Karmas* yet to be born and the cumulative effect of our past deeds, even these fall and we are free from them. After all these are subdued, the devotee merges with the Infinite Being. Then, laying aside all that we have been experiencing of external objects in this life of ours, laying aside all the pleasures and experiences tied up with finite objects, the true devotee of the Lord concentrates only on offering his devotion to the Lord, does only *Bhakti* and nothing else, and goes on doing *Bhakti*.

Now, the basis of this corporeal form is in the three *gunas*, *Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. This world itself moves on these three *Gunas* and its functions. We may take it that *Satva* is Lord Vishnu or Krishna, the Preserver, Shiva the destroyer is *Tamas* and Brahma the creator is *Rajas*. This creation has gone on from time immemorial. The power that preserves all this creation and maintains

a balance between different species is Vishnu, the Preserver. Likewise, the forces of destruction are controlled by Shiva who is also known as *Ishwara*, *Shambhu* etc. So, the three functions of this world have been given the three faces of divinity. This Purana, which is on Lord Vishnu, describes the Lord as One who is not bothered about the creative or destructive aspects, but only about preservation, who wants the welfare and wellbeing of all creatures and things on earth. If we meditate on such Supreme Being, we will be saved and we will merge in Him. Suta has spoken beautifully about this triple cycle of creation, preservation and destruction.

In the beginning of time, people did not know what was fire. Really speaking, idol worship was not at all known in those early times. As man evolved in civilization, he needed a prop in life to climb to higher things. Thus, idol worship and religion came to be born. We do not mean to say that there is anything wrong in idol worship. But, just because one person follows this path, others also should not follow it blindly. Before civilization was born, man used to regard *Agni* as his God. Suta says in the 24th *Shloka*, in the beginning, man used to live in wilds, in the caves, forests etc., and he had no protection or means of protection. Before the advent of the *Puranas*, before the the advent of civilization, man also needed a prop in life, a goal to aim at. He needed a power that would come to his rescue in time of need. So, in those early days, seeing bolts of lightning and the damage of destruction done by lightning wherever it fell, man invested lightning with his worship and reverence. Thus was born fire worship, and man came to regard fire as his God. First, he created smoke and from the midst of smoke, he created fire. Where there is smoke, there is fire, is scientific theory. But, here, in the *Puranas*, it is said that smoke came first and *Agni* or fire came afterwards. We

can see the same adoration of fire or Agni in the description of the three *Gunas*. *Satva guna* is depicted here as a white bright, lustre (*Brahma Prakash*), as light itself, and the other two *Gunas*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*, are pushed into the shade by this lustrous light of *Satva*. Now, when you hear of *Akash* or void, you do not know what it is and you cannot visualise it also. But, we can realise its beauty and grandeur when it assumes different hues and serves as the background for other creation. Only when other colours stand against it, do we know what is *Akash Tatwa*. The artist also paints the background on his pictures in different colours so that the real object of his painting may stand out in bold relief. As we said yesterday that *Brahma Tatwa* can be understood only by those who actually experienced it. But, even to describe it a little, we have to see *Satva* against the background of *Rajas* and *Tamas*. *Satva* is therefore described as *Brahma Prakash* or the light of Brahma Himself.

Suta says, even though we have all the three *Gunas* in us, we cannot be in all the three states at the same time. We cannot see Krishna when we are in *Rajas* or *Tamas*. If, on the other hand we take only *Satva Guna* and offer our worship and adoration and love to Lord Krishna, looking at nothing else, only then, does He come towards us. Every individual on earth has *Rajas* and *Tamas* in him. He cannot escape them he has to put up with them but, while doing so, should remember to use them only as a background to see *Satva Guna*. To give a simile, if you draw a picture on a white background, it has no beauty. If, however, the artist paints a background of a variety of colours, like blue etc., it appeals not only to the artist's sense of beauty but also to ordinary people. So, also, if we keep *Satva Guna* which is Lord Vishnu Himself, the Preserver, to the foreground, before us, no matter what background colours are there, they only serve to enhance the impact

of Vishnu on us. In fact, because of the play of *Rajas* and *Tamas*, the *Satvic* image in the foreground can be seen more vividly and prominently. So, the essence of what we have so far said is, if we seat Lord Krishna in our heart, keeping Him in our heart, keeping Him in the foreground, it does not matter to us if we push all our *Rajasic* and *Tamasic Gunas* to the background. Only Krishna looms large before our eyes. The *Munis* tell us, if we, instead, were to push Krishna to the background and allow *Rajas* and *Tamas* to come to the forefront, then it does not avail us whether *Satva* is there or not.

Though all the three *Gunas* may be present in us, we should have our eyes only for *Satva Guna* and see that it stands out prominently. The *Rajas* and *Tamas* are present in us because of our past actions or *Kriyas*. If we keep these two *Gunas*, the cause and the fruit of our past deeds, to the background and only keep the lustrous Lord Vishnu, *Satva*, before us, we will have nothing to worry about. It is in our hands to see which *Guna* should stand out in prominence in our life, and which *Guna* should go to the background. We can be benefited spiritually only if *Satvic Guna* is kept to the fore. We should not, therefore, dwell too much on *Rajas* and *Tamas* or worry about them.

As We said before, one who has attained peace of mind, who knows *Rajas*, *Tamas* and *Satva* for what they are, one who knows about creation, such a person need not do any *Upasana* or spiritual practices. But, he has to first understand *Aham-vritti*, the Cosmic Self. We should meditate on Him who has become *Satva* Personified, Lord Vishnu, the Preserver, whose devotee takes on the same qualities as that of the Preserver Himself. Vishnu's Bhakta is one who will carry on all his duties in the world with mental equilibrium, wishing well to everyone. This *Bhagavata* is devoted to Lord Vishnu's *Lila*. That is why, Vyasa laying aside all other gods, concentrates only on Vishnu. So, he tells us, laying

aside all other forms, let us think only of Peace Personified Vishnu, let us meditate on Lord Krishna. Vyasa tells us not to think of anything or anyone else but Krishna or Vishnu. He describes Vasudeva as the greatest of *Vedas*, greatest of *Yagnas*.

Suta tells Shaunaka whatever *Yag* we may be doing, we should first understand that Krishna, Lord Vishnu, is in all *Yagnas*, all activities. *Yagnas* and even *Karma Kand* is useless if we do not see Krishna in them. In the beginning, only *Brahman* was there, only perfect Bliss prevailed. Then, the Lord, to enjoy His own Bliss, created *Shakti* and, through that *Shakti*, *Vedas* and *Upanishads* tell us, He brought forth all this creation. He is therefore both the enjoyer and the sufferer. He is the experienter, and the experience. The cause is He, the effect is also He. He tells us: "I am everything. Put all your burdens on Me. Do not worry about anything. I am there." We may not be aware of it immediately but we can realise His *Nirguna Tatva*. This world is His *Maya Swarup*. Even though He is Eternal and Formless, *Nirguna Nirakar*, He has brought forth this creation by projecting Himself through the *Triguna* or the three *Gunas*.

Many people have been asking Us when will Krishna's story begin. Only two chapters are just over. Suta is still elaborating the same point again and again in his talk with Shaunaka. He tells the *Munis* what is God, what is their goal, what is *Sadhana*, why we should do it, why we are immersed in external objects. Having told them all this, he also speaks of Krishna's glories, of Krishna's *Lila*. We may be living today in *Kali Yuga* but we should cease running after transitory pleasures. We have another object in life, other than these finite perishable things of life. It is called *Brahman*. Our ancients tell us, to achieve that *Brahman* or the Supreme Being, everyone does *Sadhana* according to the best of his own right and within his own limits. To help them realise their own limits, to help them realise their own

goal, Suta tells Shaunaka all this, how fire was created (this was before the days of match-boxes) by rubbing two pieces of wood. Suta says that *Agni Tatva* was one but present in many forms. *Agni* was one but He manifested Himself in many beings and things in many ways. At the same time, It pervaded everything. So, also, if you realise the universal all-pervading Being of *Krishna Paramatma*, you can make spiritual progress and be saved. Suta says even though. *Agni* appears differently in different creatures and animals, do not think that it is different from form to form. It is all one *Agni Swarup* in all.

We do not want to simply read out the original *shlokas* and their meanings and go ahead very fast. We do not want to simply read it out like a novel. We want you to understand the significance of each and every *Shloka* and we want to share with you all the immense joy that we derive while understanding the meaning of each *Shloka*. Why should we alone enjoy that bliss? We want to share it with you. That is why we started on this *Bhagavat*. There are certain *Shlokas* in this work that need elaboration. There are *Shlokas* which need more *Shlokas*. Even if we happen to be slow, it does not matter even if we do only four or five *Shlokas* every day. We feel that this way we can all spend some time in His remembrance. From all this, we derive only this God-remembrance. We can spend this short while every day talking about Lord Krishna's *Lila*, Krishna's glories, Krishna's *Acharanas* (ways). Let us take consolation in that. Till the actual story begins, we may have to take each *shloka*, therefore, and elaborate a little on it. Please come daily and listen to this. You will benefit from such listening and imbibe spiritual benefit from that. All those who want to progress on the spiritual path will do so.

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WE feel the *Bhagavata* is going a little too slowly. We have decided that from today, we will make it quicker giving only the *Shlokas* and their meanings rather than elaborating on the same. Suta is told by the *Munis* to tell them the story of creation. They say that they have started on the thousand-year *Yagna*, they are *Karma-kandis* and want to know the meaning of creation. Suta tells the *Munis* : "At the time of Creation, according to *Upanishads*, because the Supreme Lord could not remain alone, He brought forth 16 "Kalas". He created *Purna Avatars* and *Kala Avatars*. *Purna Avatars* were those who appeared on earth in His full divine effulgence and power while *Kala Avatars* were those who appeared on earth as part of Him (*aunsh*) for specific purposes." *Kala* could also be taken as the arts and the 16 *Kala Avatars* as representing the Arts. The 16 *Kalas* were : five *Karma Indriyas*, five *Jnana Indriyas*, five *Mahabhootas* and the 16th is what men experience of the 15. That act of experiencing these *Indriya* and *Mahabootas* is the 16th *Kala*. God has given us these senses of the body and senses of the mind to realise the secret of creation, preservation and destruction. In the beginning of Time, only *Aham-Tatva*, the Supreme *Brahman*, existed. All else came after He had created the 16 *Kalas* and pervaded them with His own Being. This *Purana* tells us that from the navel of such a Being, Brahma the creator took birth. Usually, people mistake Brahma of the trinity Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwar as same as the *Brahma Tatva*, the

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Supreme Being and so accord special importance to Brahma. *Brahma Tatva* is different from this Brahma. *Brahma Tatva* is *Nirguna, Nirakar*, the Supreme Being whereas the Brahma who created this world and its innumerable creatures is said to have sprung from the navel or the middle of Lord Vishnu. This has special significance for us because our present state is similar. We are in a "middle state", we are neither in heaven nor in hell, yet we experience both the conditions during our life on earth. When we experience sorrow and difficulties we feel we are in hell itself and when we experience joy, we think we are in heaven. Brahma, who was born out of Vishnu's navel had only one duty and that was to create this world. Therefore, His creation can be seen only in this world of material objects. It cannot be seen either in heaven or in hell. Every creature thus born on earth is entrusted to the care of Brahma who is responsible for all creation. As this Purana is about Vishnu, we are asked to regard Him as the Supreme Being, the *Brahma Tatva* from Whom Brahma, the creator was born.

Suta tells the *Munis*: it is not sufficient to tell you of the gods alone. So, first let me tell you why Vishnu came on earth as Lord Krishna. Lord Vishnu was in *Yoga Nidra*, lost in Himself, when He brought forth Brahma to act as the Prajapati, father of creation, and to create all the creatures. Entrusted with the task of creating this world, Brahma decided to make all the creatures in the image of the Lord Himself so that every single creature and object in this world would be an "aunsh" or part of the Lord, so that all creatures and beings can one day attain Him and go back to Him. Taking the whole universe as pervaded by Lord Vishnu (*Vishnu-maya*), Brahma made this creation. The *Brahma Tatva* thus covered all creatures and beings and all were to be found in the universal Being.

In the Gita, Lord Krishna gives *Vishwa-rupa Darshan*

or universal vision to Arjuna. He projects forth His own universal Self as containing thousands and thousands of arms, legs, eyes, hands, all the *rishis* and *munis*, all creatures are seen emerging from Him in that *Vishwa-rupa Darshan*. It only means that *Tatva* which brought forth all this creation is itself composed of all these innumerable legs, hands, arms, eyes, ears as well as all the creation itself, in all its diversity. When we are born in this world, we undergo many experiences. We realise all these experiences with the help of our pair of eyes, pair of ears etc. Our ancients, the *Mahamunis*, tell us—you are born as men in this *Kali Yuga* by His grace. You may be proud that you are human beings. But, remember, no matter what thoughts you get, good or bad, no matter what experience you undergo, good or bad, no matter what sights you see, good or bad, no matter what things you hear, good or bad, all that you see, hear, do or happen to you, take them all as the Lord's own incarnations, *Avatars*. Even Arjuna was said to have been first scared when he witnessed the Lord's universal vision. We should take all the forms around us as Krishna's own form just as Arjuna was enabled to see the whole of creation emerging from Krishna. We should only remember one thing, and that is, that whatever we see, hear or think, good or bad, is pervaded by Him. It is not easy always to take whatever happens to us as good. This is difficult even for *Sadhakas* who have to perform a lot of *Sadhana* before they can reach a state where they take everyone as good. Till we reach that state, what we can do is that the thousands of people we see with our eyes, thousands of people we hear about thousands of people with whom we have to deal are all Krishna's forms. Such a Supreme Being who has brought forth all this creation is seen by the *Yogis* not merely as the Creator but they see Him with the eyes of *Jnana* or

knowledge, remembering Who He is, why He has created all this and what He has created.

When God created Brahma and Brahma started bringing forth all the creatures and things of this world, Lord Vishnu Himself took birth on this earth as *Avatars*. These *Avatars* took place before *Dashavatars* with which we are all familiar, they took place before the dawn of civilisation itself. We know, people are eager to hear Lord Krishna's story but this *Purana* is such that it has "stories within the stories" and we cannot come to Krishna's story unless we complete these stories within stories. We will try to skip through this part as quickly as possible. From the same Brahma, Vishnu first took birth as Sanat Kumar etc., the four great *Rishis* who meditated on Vishnu and attained Him. Then, He came forth as a wild pig who, with its snout, saved this world, from deluge. Here Suta explains Vishnu's earlier Avatars and why He assumed them. Then, He took *Avatar* as Narada. Narada had so much love for Krishna, for Vishnu, that there is a *Shashtra* written by him known as Narada Bhakti Sootras. If you read that *Shashtra*, you can realise that the Lord's greatest devotee is not *Adi Shankara* or *Shuka* or *Vyasa* but Narada. Here Suta tells us that Narada was Vishnu's own *Avatar*. Then, Vishnu projected his fourth *Avatar* as *Nara Narayan*, born to create peace of mind in the world. The world, Vishnu knew, would be badly in need of peace of mind and so He projected Himself as *Nara Narayan*, the giver of peace. Then, as the fifth *Avatar*, Vishnu came as *Kapila Muni*. Now when we read the story of this world and its creation, we are told that the world is made up of *Pancha Mahabhutas* or the five great elements (*Akash, Prithvi, Vayu, Jala, Agni*). This earth was composed of these five elements and so also all its creatures. This is called *Sankhya Shashtra* and Vishnu was born in His fifth *Avatar* as *Kapila Muni* to expound this. There are some people in this world

who, even though they know that there is a supreme Power responsible for all creation, by surrendering to Whom one can attain peace of mind, who, yet, for the sake of argument will argue at length with a devotee and try to defeat him and shake his faith in the Lord. The vicarious pleasure that such people get from crumbling other people's faith is known as *Akruti Anand*. Even in our present times, there are such people who take a vicarious pleasure in destroying other people's faith. Vishnu is said to have taken His fifth *Avatar* as *Kapila*, in order to deal with such people, faith-destroyers.

The *Bhagavata* tells us that Vishnu took birth in His sixth *Avatar* as the son of Atri as Dattatraya who demonstrated filial love and showed to the world how one could attain God by serving one's parents. Suta tells the *Munis* at length why the Lord assumed all these *Avatars* before the *Dashavatars*, what were these early manifestations of His and why they were necessary. In those early years of creation, it was a case of survival of the fittest, of big fish eating small fish, of man eating man, before the dawn of civilisation. The *Bhagavata* tells that Vishnu assumed all these early *Avatars* in order to make a man truly a man and invest him with civilisation, with humanity and with fellow-feeling. In that early age, says Suta, man had only one craving and that was to fill his belly with food. So, Vishnu was born as King Prathu, the Giver of food as Vishnu's ninth *Avatar*. He was born in answer to the prayers of *Rishis* and *Munis*, to civilise man. At that time, there was no question of imparting *Jnana* or Knowledge to the early Man. As his only concern was food, Vishnu in the form of King Prathu fed this uncivilised human being. From here on, the *Dashavatars* begin.

When we talk of *Avatars*, we may wonder why was it necessary for the Supreme Being to be born as a

fish, as a wild pig, as a turtle and so on. The main thing we have to know from the *Dashavatars* is that not only are all these His manifestations but we too are all His manifestations, His manifestations, His *Avatars*. We might be immersed in the five senses, *Pancha Indriyas*, but we are nevertheless His own forms. To make us realise who we truly are, God took birth as *Dashavatars*. For example, Krishna behaved just as we do, He too married, had wives and led the life of an ordinary man on earth. Therefore, we are asked not merely to worship these *Avatars*, prostrate before them, garland them and so on. We should also think to ourselves why these *Avatars* were created. In the times of our ancients, conditions were different from now. There were no cities and houses as existing at present. In those times, the stronger always vanquished the weaker being. These *Avatars* teach us that because one is strong, he should not hurt the weaker one. This is indeed the importance of *Matsya Avatar*. It teaches us that if we do ill to another, someone else bigger than us will do ill to us also, if we try to eat a small fish, there is a bigger fish behind us, waiting to gobble us up. This is the real meaning of Vishnu's *Matsya Avatar*. Every *Purana* tells us why these *Avatars* were created.

Now, take it that there are two men, one good and the other bad. The bad man falls into a gutter and the good man steps into the gutter to lift the bad man and bring him up to safety. To an onlooker, however, it might appear as if there is little difference between the good man and the bad man, as both seem to be in the gutter. Now, just as the good man stepped into the gutter, into the slime and dirt, to save the bad man, so also God has assumed these earthly forms to save the bad ones and bring them up. Just as even the good man is mistaken for a bad one, simply because he is seen standing in the gutter, so also we try to take the Lord's earthly incarnations from our own level and

judge them accordingly. We should know that the Supreme Lord assumed all these diverse forms only in order to save us.

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TILL yesterday, We had spoken to you about why the Lord took *Avatars*, what *Avatars* He took, for whose sake. He took so many *Avatars* and so on. According to *Bhagavata Sampradaya*, Krishna's devotees like Narada, Dattatraya and others were the *Avatars* of Lord Vishnu. After telling us about them, Shuka now narrates about other *Avatars*. As we said the other day, to explain how this world was created, the author of this *Bhagavata* tells that Prithu was first created. Long before dawn of civilisation, the first concern of man on earth was how to get food, how to carry on this life. For the sake of welfare of all, to provide them with an ideal remedy for survival (*Aushad*), King Prithu was born. Prithu is described in the *Puranas* as the giver of medicine, in other words he taught man how to live on this earth, what food to grow, what to eat and so on. We had ended our discourse last time on this *Shloka*.

Now, Suta tells Shaunaka: All these *Avatars*, Dattaraya, Narada and others were born first. Later, when man took birth on this earth, when civilisation itself did not exist, only the strongest used to survive by eating the weaker ones. The stronger ones used to harass and conquer the weaker ones and exploit the weak. Even today, it is happening before us. According to this ancient Sanskrit lore, God assumed *Matsya Avatar* (fish) to teach us something. A big fish usually eats smaller fish. That is in its constitution and nature to do so. Lord Krishna assumed *Matsya Avatar* to

Summary of the discourse given on July 16, 1977.

protect and save all the creatures on earth and mainly to teach us. King Prithu, who was also an incarnation of the Lord, had created "medicine" appropriate to the times. He taught man the right kind of food to grow to live on, to survive. Those were the days when the strong ate the weak ones. What did the Lord then do? He assumed *Matsya Avatar* and came to the rescue of the weaker ones. As a big fish, He assured one and all that He would not eat them, that He would not eat those who surrendered themselves to Him. It seems to be the only reason why the Lord appeared on earth as a *Matsya Avatar*. He teaches us that we should always surrender to Him and He would protect us all even as *Matsya Avatar* protected all weaker creatures. Now, you know the story of man. He had to undergo many difficulties before he could become a man and attain '*Manavatva*'. Manu was the primeval being. It was to protect that Manu and his creatures that the Lord took pity on him and was born as a fish. First, it was a small fish which Manu put in a small vessel. Then, the fish became bigger and bigger. The fish told Manu of an impending flood and assured him that He would come to his rescue when that happened. The fish told him that with the help of its horn (even fish had horns in those early days), he would be saved while all else was carried away by the flood. Manu was told "You will be saved to give birth to a new race of man on earth. So many died in the flood but only Manu with the *Upanishads* was saved, holding on to this fish. We are all here today because of Manu. *Matsya*, *Kurma*, *Varaha*, *Simha*, *Vamana* etc., are all taken as the *Dashavatars*. The *Bhagvata* speaks of an earlier list of nine Avatars. So, when you take these earlier divine manifestations into account, *Matsya* actually becomes Lord Vishnu's 10th Avatar and *Kurma Avatar* which came next becomes the 11th Avatar. When the ocean was being churned, to hold up the earth and

save it, the Lord appeared as *Kurma Avatar*.

Kurma or tortoise, you will notice, has a habit of withdrawing all its four limbs and head underneath its shell whenever it senses any danger approaching it. Then, only the hard shell is left on the outside. Lord Krishna tells us, if you cannot surrender to Me rightaway, at least withdraw your five senses (*Pancha-indriyas*) and take them in and concentrate only on Me who is seated in your heart. If you do this, even if some one or something were to attack you, even if difficulties were to oppress you, you will not be affected. Because our senses are projected outside, to the world of externals, we experience joy and sorrow. But, when you sleep, you are completely at ease, you have no awareness of either friend or foe. God assumed *Kurma Avatar* only to tell us :if you cannot meditate on the Lord, be like the tortoise, take in all your senses and then try to concentrate on Him. In such a state, you develop a thick crust or outer shell towards the world at large and, no matter what ills and afflictions befall you, nothing can touch you just as the shell protects the *Kurma*. Once man learns to protect himself, he becomes bold and courageous and is ready to face up to any situation.

With each incarnation of His, God helped man progress in his evolution. As the *Bhagavata* tells us, first the Lord taught man as *Matsya Avatar* that the strong should not oppress or eat the weaker ones, that they should protect the weak, that they should surrender to Him. Then, as *Kurma Avatar*, the Lord taught man how to achieve total concentration on Him, not to be afraid of any situation, but to withdraw within your selves and think only of Him and Him alone. Then, as *Varaha Avatar*, the Lord taught man to face up to every situation bravely just as the *Varaha* shows its horn to anything that comes near, no matter how big. So also, man should put up a brave face to

all odds and difficulties. Then, came the *Narasimha Avatar*. It had taken about 500 years for *Matsya Avatar* to be born. Another 500 years for *Kurma Avatar* and still 500 years more for *Varaha Avatar* to appear. So, 2,000 years had gone by when *Narasimha Avatar* appeared on earth.

We should always be happy but, because of difficulties oppressing us, we cannot always be happy. Even if we are all strong, evil forces still persist. In such a situation, *Narasimha Avatar* appeared on earth. Till the advent of this incarnation, all the *Avatars* of Lord Vishnu were in the animal species because man himself had not yet shed his own bestial qualities. The descendants of Manu did not know how to behave as men. So, the Lord took pity on them and was born as *Narasimha Avatar* to teach him filial love. In *Narasimha* form, the Lord killed *Hiranyakashipu* tearing his entrails to shreds. *Narasimha* was half-man and half-animal. He assumed *Narasimha Avatar* to teach us how to love and protect each other. After *Narashimha*, *Vaman Avatar* came. The Lord assumed all these incarnations not only to destroy evil forces but also to give man something new each time to think about. *Vaman* is described as only one-and-half feet in height. But, He was so powerful that with three feet, he encompassed the entire universe. Just as in the case of *Narasimha Avatar*, as *Vaman Avatar*, the Lord taught us what was animal and what was man in us. *Vaman* had none of the features of the earlier incarnations of the Lord. The Lord told the people that He assumed this human form because by then man had learnt to distinguish between animal and man. From here, with *Vaman Avatar*, *Karma kand* begins. As the 15th *Avatar* of Vishnu, *Vaman Avatar* went to Bali's *Yagna* and asked for three feet of territory. As *Vaman Avatar*, the Lord appeared as the protector of all mankind, no matter how small.

Man never learns to give up his pride. Man's mind is unfathomable. He does not know what would happen to him in the next moment. As *Vaman Avatar*, God taught man never to be proud. Then, came the *Parashurama Avatar*. He is said to have girdled the globe 21 times killing all Kshatriyas. Vyasa tells of how Parashurama was born and what He did in this incarnation. Then comes Rama who killed Ravana and assuming full powers, reigned in his kingdom of Ayodhya. Then, as the 19th and 20th *Avatars*, Balarama and Krishna were born to carry on Lord Vishnu's work on earth.

Till now, we have spoken of the *Dashavatars*. We will speak about Krishna *Avatar* later on. Now, why did these *Avatars* come? What was the reason for the Lord to assume these incarnations and come to us? God is such that He can do anything He likes from where He is. He could have, from where He was, instilled courage in the weak to face up to the strong. He could have taught the bad ones to become good. Yet, He assumed all these earthly forms to only teach us how to go by the direct path to Him, never to stray from this path. He knew what all situations would face us on earth and He experienced with us all that we ourselves underwent. One thing we should always remember and that is, that, whether we experience joy or sorrow, we should never forget Him who has created us. We may forget Him but He never forgets us. He wants all the time to look after us, to tend us, He wants to teach us to walk on the right path. Therefore, He assumed all these *Avatars* to teach us by becoming one of us, to teach us Knowledge and to give us His *Darshan*. Therefore, do not think that because He is God, He is different from you. He is just like you, you may not understand Him but He knows you and understands you all right. You can be saved only if you understand His true Self, realise why He

has assumed all these *Avatars*, listen to His story and understand Him. So we stop here now for today.

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देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥



THIS *Purana* is such that for a long time, for many days, for many years, till it is completed, you have to go on listening to it, and not only keep on listening to it, but also absorb the essence of it, and devote as much of your time as possible in making use of the experience you gain in listening to this *Purana*. The only reason for our telling you this is because many are eagerly awaiting the beginning of Krishna Lila, they want to know when the story of *Kapata Manush* will start. Yesterday, some how, we came into Lord Krishna's birth, Krishna's *Avatar*, ninth in the *Dashavatar*. We spoke about all this just to create some enthusiasm in our listeners. But, with regard to these *Avatar Purushas*, you should not assume that once They have taken birth, Their story begins immediately. This *Purana* speaks at length on why God has taken birth in these incarnations, why the Lord has descended from His *Brahma Swarup* and so the narrative stretches and stretches infinitely. That is why, Shaunaka tells Suta : we have just started on our, 1,000 year *Yag* and we have ample time to listen to your narration. Now, that is why, Suta devotes so much to the preliminaries themselves. Till now, he has only described Lord's *Avatar*. It will take another four or five *Shlokas* for *Krishna Lila* to actually begin.

At the moment, Krishna is still in His mother's womb. He has not taken birth yet. He is still being praised by Shuka. As you all know, especially the womenfolk present here, once the child gets born, the

woman goes into the background, nobody pays much attention to her. But till the child is born, she gets every care and attention. So, the early pre-natal description of Lord Krishna is still going on. The Lord assumed various *Avatars* like Parashurama, Rama and others. The main reason for these *Avatars*, as we said yesterday, was to see whether the great ones of the community, of the country, the stronger ones were taking proper care of the weaker ones or not, whether the welfare and well being of the people was being attended to or not. The *Matsya Avatar* taught us that as the big fish always ate the smaller fish, the Lord took *Avatar* to put an end to man killing and eating man, to end this fratricidal conflict. The Lord took birth to teach us not to be awed or afraid of the stronger ones. So, as *Matsya*, the Lord told us : "I am Brahma, I am God, I will not eat you. So, do not be afraid, I will vouchsafe to you My divine Self." The people did not pay heed and the Lord felt sorry for them and took birth again as *Kurma* (tortoise) to show man the way to self-preservation by taking in all his senses and presenting only a thick crust to the world. The Lord taught us that just as the tortoise, at the approach of danger, withdrew all its limbs and head within its shell, so also if we were confronted by any difficulty, we should withdraw our *Pancha-indriyas* from the external world and concentrate only on Him. Even then, the people did not listen. So, the Lord was born again as *Varaha Avatar*, to teach us how to show our "horn" to everyone, weak or strong, and defend ourselves. When even this did not show any results, He was born again as *Narasimha*, to show man how to shed his bestiality and become man. So, from every *Avatar*, the Lord tried to teach us something.

Then came *Rama Avatar*. Rama stood for a single object in life, one word, one bow, one wife, one code of conduct, one straight narrow path and so on. Rama

had his own fixed path on which He guided His entire life. But, the people did not take benefit of His presence. Those times were such that people did not know what was good for them. Our condition today is very much the same. People then (as now) did not know what their goal in life should be. Vyasa does not describe at length Rama's *Avatar* or tell us why this divine incarnation who fought the ten-headed Ravana face to face and quelled him, had to be behind seven or eight trees in order to kill Bali or why He abandoned His wife Sita even after putting her through the test of fire. Rama did not enjoy, therefore, the joy of domestic felicity. He could not even enjoy the company of His children. All this is only to show us that the *Avatars* were very much like us and they teach us, by Their own example, how to overcome these difficulties.

Krishna was born to teach us to conduct our life in this *Kali Yuga*. So, Vyasa called Him *Kapata Manush*. Actually, this is a kind of abusive term, if we come to think of what it is. Yet, Vyasa calls Him *Kapata Manush* because He taught us how to deal with every kind of situation that might confront us in our life. Krishna is the *Ishta Devata* for all His devotees, for *Karma Kandis*, for *Yogis* and *Munis*, for all. He who has truly understood Lord Krishna, no matter what he is, he takes Krishna as *Ishta Devata*. That Krishna is known as *Kapata Manush*. He is the Lord who teaches us how to lead our life in the present times and how to deal with every situation.

As you all know, Shaunaka goes to Suta and asks him to describe to them Krishna who is *Kapata Manush*. So, Suta then tells them in what all ways and manners the Lord assumed His *Avatars*. Suta tells them of Rama *Avatar* and what He did in that *Avatar*. Then he was born again in Yadava clan to maintain the balance on earth by restoring the equilibrium between different kinds of people. Shuka has said that in this *Kali Yuga*,

Dharma will be very much on the wane, there will be no Kings and Kingdoms, thieving people will rule the roost and try to rob the people of their belongings. In such time, the Paramatman will be born again in this *Yuga*. He gives the example of how, even at the height of summer, one can come across patches of water and wetness here and there in the dried-up river bed, how a little of water manages to remain in ponds and puddles. So also, Lord takes birth as *Avatars* just when we are feeling that everything is going to pieces, and reveals to us all His glories.

Indeed, all these great men like, *Rishis, Munis, saints*, were born as part of Him. They were His *Avatars*. They were his "*Aunsha*". Krishna is Lord Narayana Himself. As we said in the beginning, we too are composed of the same *Aham-vritti* (Cosmic Self). Those who have *Aham-vritti* are all His *Avatars*. All human beings are therefore *Aunsha Avatars* or part *Avatars* of Him. When we have blended our *Hridgranthi* (body consciousness) and Mind with *Aham-vritti*, only *Aham-vritti* remains and we realise we are Brahman and become *Purna Avatars*. So, the sages tell us that Lord Krishna was born just like us. Then how do we call Him a *Purna Avatar*? How did He remain a *Purna Avatar*? All the earlier *Avatars* are regarded as *Aunsha Avatars* but Krishna alone is regarded as a *Purna Avatar*. To understand Lord Krishna, Suta tells us what preparations we should make. There is *Akash*, or Void, the *Akash* that is manifest before our eyes as sky. That is Maha *Akash*. There are three kinds of *Akash* : *Maha Akash, Ghatakash* and *Chitakash*. But, if we are really asked to define what *Akash* is, no matter how learned one might be, no matter if he is *Jnani* or *Brahmin*, he will be unable to give an answer. Then, how can we describe what Krishna is? So, when Shaunaka, tells Suta to show them Krishna's divine form, to tell them what Krishna is, he asks back this question. Such a

Lord, such a Knowledge (*Jnana*), such a *Tatva* can only be experienced. He cannot be described. We therefore cannot describe in precise terms what is the Self, the *Atma Swarup*, what is *Krishna Swarup*. We refer to *Akash* in terms of the clouds that move in the firmament, but still we cannot say what *Akash* is. The atmosphere in which clouds move we call as *Akash*. Likewise, we speak of *Vayu* (wind) but we cannot see it or say what it is. When wind blows and dust is carried away in it, we say that is *Vayu* or wind. So, if you ask what or who is *Krishna Paramatman*, we cannot describe Him to you. But we will try, Suta tells the *Munis*. Only if you realise *Aham-vritti* can you also realise what is *Akash*, what is *Vayu*. Others cannot describe it to you or tell about it to you. It is for you to experience It yourself.

So, says Suta, as said at the outset, *Sthoola* (gross form) is *Hrid-granthi*, *Sukshma* (subtle form) is *Manovritti*. If we can separate ourselves from both these consciousness, in seclusion, in meditation, and only *Aham-vritti* remains then we become *Brahma Swarup*. In fact, *Aham-vritti* itself is *Brahma Swarup*. But, we have mixed *Aham-vritti* so much with the body idea and mind that we cannot distinguish one from the other and say what is *Aham-vritti* and what is *Hrid-granthi*. When we came into this world, we forgot God and concentrated ourselves only with our worldly pursuits. The very reason why God made us was to test whether we remembered Him or not. Parents keep many toys before their children and stand apart and watch the children play. Engrossed in the play, the child may even forget the parent but the kind parent does not forget the child. The parents keep watching the child and wait and see if and when child will leave aside its toys and run back to them saying "*Anna, Amma*". He alone has created us. We may be old but in His eyes we are all children. He has created so

many diversions and pleasures only to test us, to see when we will get over these attractions and turn round to Him, saying '*Amma, Anna*'. So, all the time, He is thinking; when will man shed his *Hrid-granthi* and *Mano-vritti* and remember Me and call me '*Amma and Anna*'. When man does this, he remembers *Aham-vritti* and the child and parent become one.

So, to give us an illustration, Suta says : when you shed your body idea and are trying to merge in Lord Krishna (whom *Vedanta* calls as *Brahman*), Who is our Father and Mother, that itself is God-realisation, *Brahma-Darshan*. Lord Krishna who is our *Ishta-Devata*, our divine Parent, our Guru, if we keep our devotion on Him, He will save us and help us realise our *Aham-vritti*. The Lord too was born on earth like us and underwent many difficulties. But, we should remember who we are, from Whom we have come, where we are going and what is the goal in life that we have to attain. You should take Krishna like one of you. He too had His problems and His difficulties as you do, you should identify yourself with Him and make Him your friend. He is not far from you, He is in you. As Arjuna did, ask Him what you should do in any situation facing you and He will tell you from within. It doesn't matter if you regard Him even as *Kapata Manush*. Your body is Arjuna and your Inner Power is Krishna. Turn to Him for guidance, instruction and direction, and follow that guidance and instruction. Then, no sin will be committed at your hands. Even if any so-called sinful act is performed by you, its adverse effects will not touch you and only good will come out of it. So, you and I, all of us, should become *Sadhakas* today. We should regard our body as Arjuna and, while facing up to all the situations in life, if we turn to Krishna, He gives us His strength and guidance and then nothing can affect us. Arjuna too underwent many difficulties but he had one consolation, Krishna

was his friend. So, also, whatever difficulties face us, we should remember Krishna is always within us, Krishna protects us, He will never let us down. This is the essence of *Bhagavata*.

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ONE Supreme Being, the Self, is in every creature but we do not try to understand such a Being. We speak of *Akash* but we cannot show what it is except by pointing to the clouds wafting in the sky and say that is the sky. So also, *Vayu*, which we cannot see but when dust blows about, leaves fly and flutter, then we say that that is *Vayu*. *Vedanta* gives us a good example. At the time of a girl's marriage, there is the rite of showing the Arundhati star to show the path by which she must tread following her husband. *Vaidiks*, on such occasions, point to the Arundhati star by pointing their finger at a particular tree and its branch and say that the star behind it is Arundhati. So, also, to show that God is in everyone and everything, the *Bhagavata* says that those who cannot understand *Adi Tatva*, *Brahma Tatva* easily and immediately, are told of trees waving in the wind so that by indirect exempt, one can know what God is. Suta tells us to take aside all that we have given names and forms to and what is left is *Brahma Tatva*. Likewise take away the clouds from the sky and what remains is *Akash*. To impart understanding of such a divine Power, one has to speak in terms of finite objects and say—take away all these objects that you have given a name and a form to, and what is left is *Paramatman*. When we understand what this world of illusion is, if we learn to separate ourselves from the world of transitory objects and go into our being, we then realise *Atma Tatva*, the Supreme Self.

You cannot, nevertheless, describe the Lord by citing

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any parallels because He has no parallels even though we have created examples. The *Vedas* say that *Brahman* could not remain alone and so he brought forth this world. They also say that having created this world, God filled Himself in each and every object that He created. Really speaking, we cannot say that He created all these things. We created them with our senses and gave these finite objects a name and a form. What He created was only *Adi Shakti* and She brought forth all this creation. Even the *Vedas* and other scriptures do not describe anywhere the "birth" of God. He is beginning less and endless, without any birth and without any death. He is changeless, He is infinite. He is always Himself. But, forgetting Him, we create so many objects and give them name and form. He is the immortal Eternal Being. Describing Him further, Suta says, it is of such a Lord who is seated in the hearts of all that the *Vedas* and other sacred books speak. In the *Upanishads*, there is a *Shoka* which speaks of a bird with one body but two faces. One face is subject to all passing moods and cravings. It plays, laughs, cries and does everything. The other face, though part of the same bird, stands apart as it were and keeps only a watch on the other face remaining an eternal witness. God, *Brahman*, created this world. To suit such a creation, He also created so many creatures and things. He also preserved the creation and when the time came, destroyed what He Himself had created. His own creatures created these things with names and forms but the Lord stood apart, like the second of the two faces of the bird mentioned earlier. So, like a witness, He stands apart from us, watching us, to see what we do, how we deal with this world, whether we will turn to Him or get lost in worldly pursuits.

Just as an actor on the stage is different from his real self, so also one who acts in this world should realise that his real self is different from what role he portrays

on earth. When an actor comes on the stage, he gets so engrossed in his role in the drama that we see before us only the role played by him, we do not see his true self, his original entity. So, also in this Divine *Lila*, the dull-witted give names and forms to the diverse acts and actors on this world stage and take them for real, without seeing or realising the real Self behind these acts and these roles. To understand such a Reality, we should prostrate before the lotus feet of such a Lord and only one who surrenders to Him can understand His *Lila*, His *Tatva*. Nobody else can truly understand Him. Even more than His *Lila*, He endows us with strength to understand the Real One behind this *Lila*.

Suta says to Shaunak : You are blessed. You are mindful not only of the *Lila* of the Lord, you are mindful not only of Vedic practices, you have not only not relied on His earthly projections and manifestations, but you want to understand Krishna. But, just as you have to mention objects like stars, clouds to describe the sky (*Akash*), so also you cannot make one understand Krishna unless one speaks of His *Lila*, of why He was born, etc. The *Upanishads* say '*Neti, Neti*' meaning 'Not this, not this' and so on. Under this process, you identify each and every object and say 'He is not that'. When you have exhausted the entire creation, what is left is the *Brahman*. So, also, he who understands *Brahma Tatva* can be saved from this terrible cycle of birth and death and suffering, starting from his mother's womb to his ultimate death. You can then stand apart from all the difficulties that confront you. Suta says : You can do all this by listening to the story narrated by me. You can verily attain salvation. If you have attraction and love for this *Tatva*, you and all can be saved from this cycle of birth and death. You are indeed blessed that you have got this desire to hear Lord Krishna's *Lila* and glory.

Such a *Bhagvata Purana* speaks of "*Dhanadayak*".

Vidyaranya has given us a beautiful connotation of this expression. The world knows of many kinds of wealth. Not only riches but also worldly possessions, prosperity, whatever we accumulate during our lifetime on earth is considered as "*Dhana*" or things that we have received and "*Dhanavan*" is not merely a rich man but anyone who has received many things or gifts in life. That is why, even he who has received *Vidyadhana*, or gift of knowledge, is also a *Dhanavan*. Here, *Dhanadayak* does not mean only who gives money or is rich. As we said before, the chief reason for the *Bhagavata* itself is to give us *Aham-vritti*, it imparts to us lasting awareness of our real Self. However much of worldly wealth and other assets you may possess, you are not satisfied and always crave for more. Like, if you have money, you would all the time be planning where to deposit your money and earn more interest and so on. But, once you have acquired this spiritual "wealth" of His realization, you will be content and happy. You will not then look at any worldly wealth. Even the greatest of *Atma Jnanis* like Veda-Vyasa's son, Shuka who knew that all selves were his own, took the trouble of narrating the *Bhagavata* to King Parikshit so that he might get salvation and that others too may eventually benefit by listening to it. This *Purana* was narrated to King Parikshit who, to escape death, had taken shelter in an impregnable castle and taken such precautions that even a small fly could not get in. Even then, he did not feel confident and called in the *Rishis* and *Munis* and appealed to them to save him, taking pity on him. Shuka then narrated to King Parikshit this *Krishna Lila* on the banks of the Ganges.

When Krishna, who is Lord Himself, was returning to His own Supreme Being at the end of His *Avatar* on earth, *Kali Yuga* had started and people became ignorant of *Vedas*, of Knowledge. Those who follow *Jnana* and *Dharma* are known as sighted ones while those who

do not know either *Jnana* or *Dharma* are described as blind ones. In *Kali Yuga*, *Dharma* and *Jnana* would not be followed by the 'blind' people. Now, the blind cannot see anything but if the slightest flicker of light falls on their eyes, they cry out that their eyes are hurting. So also, for the sightless ones of *Kali Yuga*, the veritable Sun of spiritual power, *Dharma*, has been created. Such a *Krishna Samhita* or *Bhagavata* did Veda-Vyasa tell to a *Maha Yogi*, equal-visioned Shuka who was always in a state of *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* and always engrossed in his own divine Self, who always remained in seclusion and in a disinterested condition, having neither motives nor motion. Even mad people have a method in their madness and do something for some object, however foolish it might be. Shuka was one who appeared '*Mudha*' or mad but whose actions were also '*Gudha*' or profound in meaning. You may have seen the great *Rishis*. Once they gained knowledge of *Maya*, *Yoga Nidra* etc., their ways and manners might appear to the world at large as those of a mad person. Though we know they have become *Jnanis*, they act like very mad persons. We do not know the meaning of such behaviour. There is the poem that reads. "O God, the world calls me mad, I have to act like a mad man because I know what is truth, what is real and what is unreal. I am described as mad because I do not want to act madly. O Lord! You know who I am, but the world calls me a fool. So, I, in turn, call them fools. So, O Lord! Always keep me in Myself." This is what a great *Jnani* has said. So also, this *Jnani* Shuka, acted like a mad man.

Once Shuka, devoid of any clothing—he was a boy of eight or nine then—was passing a lake where *Apsaras*, divested of any clothing themselves, were bathing. He noticed nothing unusual because he was in a state where he saw no difference between men and women, he had gone above all genders and above

all differences. *Jnanis* of Shuka's eminence usually remained in a devotee's household only till sunset or milking time as it was known and would then repair to their own hermitages. But, Shuka stayed with King Parikshit day and night telling him the *Bhagavata*. Why did he do so? Shaunaka wants to know why did a *Maha Muni* like Shuka live with a *Grahastha* for seven days. Shuka was a *Jnani*, one who had realised his Self. He could have imparted knowledge to Parikshit from his own hermitage. Why did he then go and live with the king for seven days? Why did such a powerful King, who, it was said, had Goddess Lakshmi Herself at his beck and call, give up everything and sit on the banks of the Ganges to listen to the story of Krishna narrated by Shuka? This story goes on in this strain— why did King Parikshit renounce all his wealth and position? Why did Shuka give up his hermitage and go and live with this king? Why did Veda-Vyasa write the *Bhagavata*? Even though these matters may be repeated over and over again, we must keep on listening to it, because it is all about Lord Krishna and brings Krishna's lustrous image before our eyes, in the deepest recesses of our mind and gives us eagerness to see Him. Though now, we are hearing only of "*Vyasa Uvacha*", "*Suta Uvacha*", etc., etc., very soon we will be hearing of Lord Krishna. Because we are going to hear of Lord Krishna, whether the story of Krishna comes sooner or later, Krishna's image is implanted in our mind and we will all benefit thereby. This itself is the beginning of *Aham-vritti*. With our prayer that all of you may be benefited by listening to Krishna, we close today's reading.

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 देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥



SUTA says : When Parikshit realised that his death was approaching and renounced all his wealth, his food etc., and sat on a mat of grass, he asked Shuka to tell him about Lord Krishna. Parikshit was known for his immense wealth and richly possessions, so much so that when he walked, people used to touch his footprints so that they too might acquire some of his prosperity. Such a wealthy King renounced all his wealth and possessions. Usually, people think that death comes to them only in old age, that is after one has led a happy *Sansar*, got a wife, begotten children and done all that he wanted to do in this world. But, this thing called death is such that nobody can ever say when it will come to him. Here, now, was a world-conqueror, a King who had Goddess Lakshmi at his call, such a *Samrat* was young Pariksheet who renounced his all, gave up all his acquisitions. He gave up his *Rajalakshmi*, *Dhanalakshmi* and everything. Why did he do it? Why did he desire to even give up Lakshmi? King Parikshit, we must remember, was also an ardent Deva-bhakta, devotee of God. Such devotees and *Sadhus* do not lead their lives in this world only for themselves, for their own happiness. Even more so, when the devotee happens to be a King, he thinks more of the welfare of the humanity at large and never of himself because their well-being is in his hands. More than his own life, he concerns himself with the problems of others. Their problems he makes as his own as everyone tends to take his problems and

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worries to the King, expecting him to solve them. Such a one was King Parikshit who, at one stroke, snapped all his earthly ties, even his good relations. Why did Paikshit give up a life that used to be of service to so many people? Shaunak requests Suta to tell them in detail answers to these questions. They request him to tell them only what they have asked for. 'Do not speak to us about *Vedanta*, about *Tantras*, about *Brahma Satya* and *Jagat Mithya*, don't tell us about all that. Leaving aside all these religious matters, tell us about Parikshit. We regard you as a good speaker. So, as a speaker, tell us about Pariksheet who gave up his all to attain Krishna, about Shuka who had till then never lived after cow's milking time at anyone's house, tell us about Lord Krishna."

Suta says : "I was also there, when Shuka started telling Parikshit who had given up all food and was fasting, taking only Ganga water. When Shuka started telling the *Bhagavata*, I was present and heard a little and whatever I have gained with my little knowledge I will gladly impart it to you." There are repetitions here but one need not be sorry for it. As you go on reading *Puranas* and hearing *Puranas*, the narrator's or the listener's mind is likely to go astray and he might lose the thread of the narration. So, the same thing is said again and again, so that the continuity is maintained in our mind. Suta says : In every *Yuga*, *Dwapara Yuga* happens again and again. In the third *Dwapara Yuga*, it is said, Vasuki's daughter, Satyavati, a fisher woman, received Lord Vishnu's blessing and thus Vyasa-deva was born, as an "*Aunsha*" of Vishnu. Such a Vyasa-deva wrote this *Bhagavata Purana*. Only man is a creature of time. We have created time going by what our ancients had laid down for us, measuring each day as from sunrise to sunrise. Now, with clocks and other time-pieces, we divide each day into 24 hours and each hour into 60 minutes and so on. Thus we

Speak in terms of yesterday, day before yesterday, today, tomorrow and day-after tomorrow. Nobody can tell about the past or the future; but Veda-Vyasa had encompassed both past and future. In *Kali Yuga*, taking pity on man and in order that man may be good and lead a good life, God felt like creating one who would write the *Vedas*, *Puranas*, lay down norms of behaviour for the earthly man, lay down a code of conduct and so on. So, God was born as Veda-Vyasa.

In our *Paramapara* of *Sannyasis*, just as we give the greatest importance to Lord Krishna, so also we give importance to Vyasa who is the Guru of all *Sannyasis*. So, we regard *Vyasa Purnima* as *Guru Purnima*. But when one reads of how he was born, to whom he was born, we of the present times may as well get misgivings. But, come to think of it, we can never tell why God acts in a particular manner. The Lord felt like creating one who can explain the *Puranas*, the eternal truths, to man and so He took birth as Vyasa. Speaking of how Vyasa was born, Suta says that even though he was born to a fisherman's daughter, in what is usually considered as a 'low birth', he was so learned. This is to teach us that to be good or to do good to others, circumstances of birth do not matter. Even in those times, our ancients were worried—what kind of people would be born in this world, what future awaited them, whether powerful persons would rule over the weak and make them miserable? Yet, they say if you have *Shraddha* (faith), all your strength and power is of no avail. *Kali Yuga* was spoken of as an age where people would take to bad ways, where their life span would be reduced (*Alpa-Ayur*) because they would take their ills and hurts to heart. It was for the sake of the people of *Kali Yuga* that Veda-Vyasa was born, to create the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Puranas*, to hold before the people a path to attain Knowledge. He divided the *Veda* into four parts or four *Vedas*, namely,

Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda. As many people could not understand the meaning of the *Vedas*, or how to chant each *Veda* in the manner (*Swara*) that it should be recited, Vyasa next created the *Itihasa* and *Puranas*. *Itihasa* and *Puranas* are indeed called as the fifth *Veda*. *Veda-Vyasa* wanted man to understand the essence of what he had written. He then wrote the *Bhagavata*, the story of Lord Krishna. Here was a work which, it was said, could be heard by anyone, be they *Shudras* or women. The *Vedas*, *Upanishads* etc., are all meant for man's salvation, to help him attain his goal in life. That is why all the *Vedas*, *Upanishads* were created. But, with the passage of time, all these scriptures came to be misused. Then, only *Vedas* were taught to *Brahmins*, *Nithi* etc., to *Kshatriyas* and so on and thus the four *Varnas* came into being and *Shudras* and women were barred from hearing the *Vedas*. These *Varnas* which came to be regarded as castes were in fact created by our ancients, the *Rishis* and *Munis* who wrote and taught the *Vedas*.

Even Lord Krishna has said in the *Gita* : "I have created these *Chaturvarnas*, the four *Varnas*, Myself, according to the conduct of man, according to his practices, I have created the four *Varnas* on the basis of their virtues (*Gunas*) and *Karmas*, and not to create any castes or discrimination between man and man. "What Krishna meant was the four *Varnas* were based on what qualities man had and not where he was born. If you read the *Gita*, you will know its profound meaning. Lord Krishna admits : 'I have created the *Chatur-varnas* but only on the basis of the virtues and deeds of man.' That is why *Veda-Vyasa* created the different scriptures so that they could be understood by the various people according to the level of their intelligence. Now, to give you an example, chemistry is one, but learned these are written on it by scholars, dealing with different aspects of this subject, for their

Ph.D. So also, the central idea behind all the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* is one, only they appear different and are differently presented for us to imbibe easily. For the benefit of people who did not know *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, Vyasa wrote *Ithihasa* and *Puranas*, which it was said, could be heard by one and all, "even *Shudras*." Now, until recently, all sorts of restrictions used to be there about *Japa* even, for women folk. They were not supposed to Chant *Gayatri*. Even *Omkar Japa* was forbidden to them. But, there were so many women saints even in those times, who could not have attained the spiritual heights they did without knowledge of *Omkar*. For that matter, Ravana was known as a *Shudra*, yet he recited the *Sama Veda* and performed many *Yagnas* to gain power and weapons and thereby attained Lord Shiva Himself. When we read of all these stories, how can we say that *Shudra* should not hear the scriptures? Therefore, there could not have been any such blanket ban on women or *Shudras* listening to the scriptures. What was intended by our ancients was that each one should be taught according to his or her grasping power. Knowledge could be imparted only to one who understood and grasped what was imparted.

When *Kali Yuga* came many people did not know what to do. *Mahabharata* was also written so that people might atleast understand, in story form, the real essence of the scriptures. Vyasa knew beforehand what sort of times would come in this world and therefore wrote the *Mahabharata* with due relevance to our present times. Every situation described in the *Mahabharat* has its parallel today. Today, also, brothers fight over property and engage themselves in costly litigation against each other. So, the epic *Mahabharat* was written, to describe how five brothers were ranged against 100 brothers and fought a war over common ancestral property. All this was intended to teach us

not to fight among ourselves. *Mahabharata* speaks of Dhritarashtra being blind and his wife Gandhari also blindfolding herself. This is only to show that where the faults of children are concerned, parents usually are blind or turn a blind eye as we say. *Mahabharat* tells us that when our children quarrel, we should not be blind or partial but be balanced and restore amity among them. Whether we regard ourselves as Pandavas or Kauravas, we will see that *Mahabharat* is indeed the story of our own times, our story in fact. Parents are always blind where their children are concerned. They can, therefore, never decide in any dispute between their children.

After composing the *Mahabharat*, Veda-Vyasa feels uneasiness and becomes restless in mind. He wonders why it be so, when he has done so much, when he has composed the *Puranas*, written about Krishna, *Dharma*, *Nyaya*, the four *Vedas*, and so many other scriptures, all for the sake of people's edification. Yet, the people failed to do the *Sadhana* that he had exhorted them to do and continued to be in troubles. When Vyasa was thus seated in his hermitage brooding and wondering why he should feel so uneasy of mind, Narada, the third *Avatar* of Lord Vishnu, who was born before the *Dashavatars*, came on the scene. Vyasa told Narada of his despondency, that he had written so many scriptures for the people, yet he was not feeling contented, he was not happy at heart as he should have been and sought Narada's advice on what he should do to attain mental satisfaction and peace of mind. Then, Narada tells him about *Bhagavata*. Vyasa is described as one who also strove for the welfare of humanity, irrespective of caste, he wrote for the spiritual uplift of all, be he a *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* or *Shudra*. He wrote to keep everyone on the path of his *Dharma*, to follow a code of conduct—not just follow the code of conduct blindly but to gain lasting

happiness. Vyasa was a *Chiranjivi*, eternal, he was all-knowing. Yet, creatures of little knowledge like Apsaras (who were attendants of the gods and were chosen for their beauty rather than for their intelligence), had to tell Vyasa what his position of attainment was and to teach him what he still had to attain.

Now, Vyasa used to be concerned over the welfare and progress of the people. He wanted the people to benefit, wanted society as a whole to benefit by his work. So, he would come age after age, giving *Upadesh* through the *Vedas*. Though a *Chiranjivi*, Vyasa assumed human form time and again to teach us the eternal truths, to tell man what he is, what he should be. Vyasa wrote the *Bhagavata* not only for his own satisfaction but for the general good of all the people. He regarded the happiness of the people as his own happiness, whether they were women, *Shudras*, *Vaishyas* or *Brahmins*. This is known as *Puranic Dharma* and if we keep listening to it, we can concentrate our minds on our *Ishta Devata* and merge our minds in Him, then the writing of this *Purana* will have been worth while, our having taken birth in this human form will also have been worth while. When we go to bed at night, we are in the habit of wishing one another "Good Night, Sweet Dreams," it does not necessarily follow that we will get sweet dreams. So also depending on our *Karmas*, we cannot say that we will always be happy, that we will always get pleasant experiences, Whatever experiences confront us, such a Lord Krishna's story that Veda-Vyasa has narrated to us will make us constantly remember the Lord, remember that He is in us. Then we will be able to carry on our life so beautifully, taking everything that befalls us as for our own good. We will be then taking all our experiences in the proper spirit, as if we are actors in a play wherein we may cry and make others cry but at heart we do not really cry. The tears shed by an

actor on the stage do not make any impact on his own mind or outlook. We too have come here on this world's stage as actors and our Director is none else than Lord Krishna Himself. Our object, on having been born in this world, is to regain our divine Self—who we really are and merge once again in the divine Entity. We will then be able to remain always in *Aham-vritti*, we will enjoy endless bliss of the Self who is indeed inseparable from us.

Let us, therefore, remember that we are all acting in this world, playing our diverse roles as per the wishes of the Lord and that these roles that we play do not reflect the real Being that is in us. If we keep this one central idea before our mind, then we can leave the role to the stage only and, when we return to the wings, we can merge ourselves in Lord Krishna forever.

वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम् ।
देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥



MORE than *Puranas*, one's mind must go into *Namasmaran*. So, we just now listened to *Namasmaran* which is most elevating and important. Only devotion to the Lord can give us God-experience and help us to attain spiritual strength and power. Every *Sadhaka* should devote all his 24 hours in God-remembrance, in His service. This may not be possible for a house holder but he should give as much of his time as possible to remembering the Almighty. While repeating the name, we must give Him our mind, our tongue, our hands and all our thoughts. If we this, we attain such a happiness as is not there anywhere else.

Our ancients had the *Vedas* for this very reason. If one were to recite the *Vedas*, it would take a whole lifetime. The idea was that we should spend all our life remembering God. We should meditate on God as much as possible. We should not merely recite the *Vedas*—this itself would not suffice—the ancients introduced different kinds of *Swara* for recitation of *Vedas*, namely, *Ucche Swara*, *Madhyam Swara*, etc. The same text could thus be recited in different ways, it could even be sung as a song by the *Sadhakas*. This was to make *Sadhaka* take interest in the *Vedas* and, having taken interest, that they should get engrossed in them and understand their Self. God is called as *Vedapurush*, *Atma Tatva*. If we can understand the essence of the *Vedas*, we can realise Him this way also. When you recite the *Rig Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sama Veda*, you will realise how differently the *Vedas* are

recited, from *Veda* to *Veda*. The main object of our ancients was that every moment should be spent in *Namasmaran*, that they should remember God even while doing their routine duties. That is why the *Vedas* were revealed.

Now in *Kali Yuga*, our people do not know the importance of *Swara*. Our ancients, our *Rishis* and *Munis*, used to preach about *Swara Shastra*, what should be chanted at a lower pitch and so on. Its reason was only this, namely, it is easier for every man, for every *Sadhaka* to take his mind within if he chants a hymn in the form of a song as the ears are attuned to music. But, for people these days, only *Namasmaran* or *Bhajan* can help them take their minds within. As they go on singing or listening to *Namasmaran* or *Bhajan*, they become so engrossed in it that they forget everything else. So, we always say, if we hear *Namasmaran*, *Bhajans* etc. we feel like keeping on hearing it. Even *Puranas*, *Vedas*, *Shastras* recede into the background before *Namasmaran* and *Bhajan*. These days only *Namasmaran* can help the *Sadhaka* control his wavering mind and take inside.

Really speaking all the *Puranas* you will find in *Namasmaran* because the words in praise of the Lord sung by the devotees in *Namasmaran* describe the Lord's *Lila* which is also the object of the *Puranas*. The main thing is that the Lord's *Lila* should be propagated. That is why the *Puranas* were born. As he said yesterday, our object should be to keep our mind fixed in *Namasmaran*. We will continue now what we had read yesterday. Having written all this, having written the *Brahma Sutras*, having completed the *Puranas*, instead of being satisfied, Veda-Vyasa felt uneasiness, despondency as if he had been remiss somewhere, that he had been at fault somewhere and his mind is in turmoil. Where could he have gone wrong? He was called Veda-Vyasa, the great *Mahamuni* who had

divided the *Vedas* into four parts so that the people may understand Him and His glory better, he had set different tunes to each *Veda*, that also to increase people's understanding of the *Vedic* lore. Then, he wrote the *Puranas*. Yet, his uneasiness remained.

Sitting in seclusion, Vyasa started thinking : Having done all this for people, having written scriptures for every kind of people, be they *Vedantists*, women, *Shudras*, atheists, devotees of the Lord, and having used all my powers and my strength to create all this spiritual literature, why should I still feel discontent of mind? Why am I not still happy? I have written the *Mahabharat*, I have written for all, without showing any discrimination between *Brahmins*, *Shudras*, women, seeing all alike, seeing the Lord in all, with an open heart have I served the humanity by telling them about the Lord. I have written this, keeping the *Gurus*, *Vedas*, *Agni* before me, having observed *Grahasthashram* and *Varnashram*, without moving from this place, with single-minded devotion to the Lord. Yet, my mind is so full of uneasiness. I did so much of *Karma* for the welfare of humanity then why should I be assailed by such discontent? So, grieving in his mind in this strain, he recalled how he had tried to first understand the essence of the *Vedas* himself and then taught it to others. When Veda-Vyasa was sitting in his hermitage in such a state of mind, Narada comes that way.

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TO continue today where we have ended yesterday, Veda-Vyasa for the welfare of the people, wrote *Vedas, Itihasa, Puranas* etc., yet all the time he was going through deep mental turmoil and discontent. He was not happy, no matter what he did. Once, he was seated on the banks of the Ganges brooding over this, when Narada came that way and he told Narada : "I have narrated the four *Dharmas*, I have written *Itihasa, Puranas*, etc., yet I feel mental discontent and experience some unknown fear. I do not know why. That is why, blessed Ones like you should tell me where I have gone wrong so that I may set it right and be happy again."

Then, Narada tells Vyasa : "You have indeed described the Lord all right in story form, in your epics, but every *Shloka* that you have written does not project forth His lustrous full personality. That is the reason why you are feeling so much dissatisfied." Usually, we do not give much importance to crows but at the time of *Shraaddha* (annual rites of the departed ones), we give first priority to crows and first feed them before feeding our guests, as laid down by the Scriptures. This is known as "*Kaaka-Gaurava*" or honouring the crow for a limited purpose. So, says Narada to Vyasa : "You have given God *Kaaka-Gaurava*, that is, you have used God in your writings only for a limited purpose, you have described Him only once, and have done with Him. You have not described God and His glories in every stanza, you have not steeped

your literature in Him. You have kept the Lord aside and apart for a particular purpose." Narada says "Because you have not described Him in every *Shloka*, you are feeling this mental turmoil. Hitherto, for the sake of *Sadhakas*, for the sake of the people, you have laid down *Pravratti Marga*, you have written *Itihasa*, *Puranas* etc., for the people of *Kali Yuga*. You have also described at length how one should perform *Karma* suited to this *Kali Yuga*. What you have done is all quite appropriate to these times. But you yourself have known, *Nivritti Marga* is greater still. A *Sadhaka*, who is firmly on the spiritual path, does not need to provide for his wife and children. He has to renounce all this. According to our faith, we have to go through all the experiences of the world before we can turn our minds to the Lord and concentrate on attaining Him and Him alone. Thus, we have to first experience *Sansar*, beget children, collect wealth etc., and having produced all this, when man does not get happiness, the *Upanishads* tell us, he must renounce all this. *Tyaga* or renunciation does not mean giving up sons, exhausting all one's money and shedding one's worldly responsibilities. *Tyaga* means that you surrender at the Lord's lotus feet all the fruits of all your actions. Whatever fruits have accrued, good or bad, you look at them with equal vision when they befall you. *Tyaga*, our elders have told us, means looking with equanimity at everything that befalls you at whatever situation you are faced with as a result of your past actions. Whatever fruits fall to our lot we should accept willingly, without allowing it to affect our minds. That itself is also a *Sadhana*. From USA have come recently reports of scientific discoveries that extreme joy can cause heart attacks as much as extreme sorrow or shock. Usually, the popular belief is that only excess of sorrow causes a heart attack but now it has been proved that excess of joy also brings about the same results. This only

means that both the joy, the sorrow that we experience should be treated by us as non-existent for us. Whatever life we are leading we should learn to keep it engrossed in the Lord's divine form, in *Bhagavat Rupa*, *Paramarth Rupa*. We should take it that these passing experiences do not belong to our real self but pertain to the body. We are suffering because we are still rooted to the body idea.

Narada tells Vyasa about *Pravratti Marg* and *Nivritti Marg*. Every man, after being born, goes by the *Pravrathi Marg* to enjoy pleasures of the senses, his eyes, ears, nose, mouth and sense of touch are all projected on externals. So, every man, instead of adopting *Nivritti Marga*, which takes him inside, continues to seek his pleasure outside, even though he knows that *Kama* does not grant him happiness, that the pleasures of the body are transitory and do not last long. He forgets these truths and pursues worldly pleasures. *Upanishads* lay great stress on *Tyaga* and say that man can get happiness only with *Tyaga*. This *Tyaga* is such that our elders have asked us to renounce our all. According to us, *Tyaga* however does not mean renouncing something that man does not possess. For instance, you cannot renounce what you may have never had. Real renunciation is when you give up what you like the most. We hear of people who go to Kashi and give up certain dishes or foods which they, anyway, never liked. This is not renunciation. Real renunciation is when a man renounces the very articles that he loves the most, articles which he cannot do without, articles on which he is physically most dependant. Try this for yourself. Give up what you like the most and not what you do not like. The *Upanishads* describe that experience. Giving up what you love most does not mean giving up your husband or your wife and your children. *Upanishads* ask you to give up what becomes an

obstacle in your spiritual progress.

Narada tells Vyasa : You who have understood what is real renunciation, you who are wrapt in *Atmanand* (Bliss of the Self), who has understood *Nirguna Tatva*, why should you be afflicted by this discontent? You have liberated yourself from all ties and steeped yourself in Vishnu's meditation, why should you be so troubled? Tell me, O Noble One !

Narada says : Man is such that he is subject to *Mahamaya*, subject to physical and mental afflictions. To make their minds serene and blissful, tell them of the story of Lord Krishna. It will be useful to them. Such a Lord's description, such a Lord's life story, as we keep on hearing it, as we keep remembering His lotus feet, all our difficulties, our ideas of friends and foes will all disappear. If we keep on listening to the nectarine story of Lord Vishnu, the *Kathamrit*, love will blossom in our heart. So, says Narada to Vyasa.

Many of our great saints did not live in *Nirguna Tatva*. Even Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa loved to meditate on Divine Mother Kali's form, on *Kali Rupa*. Others may not agree with what we are saying but we feel that Ramana Maharshi, Pujya Papa, Anandashram Swamiji and other *Mahapurushas* may have spoken about *Nirguna Paramatman*, they may have said a lot about *Nirguna Brahman*, but so far as *Jnana* of *Nirguna Brahman* is concerned, they did not describe what it is. Because, this highest state can only be experienced, it cannot be described. Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa experienced *Kali Swarupa* in *Saguna* form. So, also, our Anandashram Swamiji. Though He spoke of *Nirguna Tatva*, He was a Krishna *Bhakta*. He hailed from a family of Krishna *Bhaktas*, they had their own Haridas temple where Gopalkrishna is worshipped and He had spoken to Us of His *Sadhana*, We remember. He had said that you may not realise the *Nirguna Brahman* in this life itself but His *Saguna Swarup* one can attain in this

lifetime. This assurance, *Pujya Swamiji* had vouchsafed to Us. This is not from the *Bhagavata*—it is from Our personal *Bhagavata*.

Now-a-days, when Krishna is worshipped, His idol is kept in a decorated cradle and lullabies are sung to Him. Swami Anandashram, when both of Us were alone with each other, used to sing to Us the tunes in which Krishna's lullabies were sung in His childhood days and how they were sung now! When we remember what *Pujya Swamiji* had told Us, Our hair stand on end. All this is only to stress that in our opinion, it is not possible to attain *Nirguna Brahman* with this body but you may attain *Saguna Swarup*. So, Narada tells Vyasa, if in every *Shloka* of yours, you describe the Lord's *Saguna Swarup*, he who swims in this ocean of life will be saved by holding on to the raft of His name. Then, Narada says, in whatever country may a man be born, whatever sin he may have committed, whatever bad deeds he might have done, if he feels that he has only followed his duty and has not done any wrong or ill to anybody, and surrenders himself to Lord Vishnu's lotus feet, even such a sinful man can be saved, even if he has not done any other *Sadhana*, even if he is devoid of intelligence. Later on, Narada tells us that everyone should attain happiness without making much effort. Man on earth is already experiencing worldly pleasures, the sense pleasures based on external objects. Such pleasures can be defined as those derived from all objects other than *Aham Vritti*, all such pleasures which are not *Parmartha* are worldly objects.

We are giving the illustration of the dog with an old bone. It was a very old bone without any juice or flesh on it but the dog goes on chewing it expecting it to yield it the elusive pleasure of its marrow. It goes on and on chewing till its teeth cut through the bone and bite into its own tongue and draw blood from the

bone and continues to chew on it. As *Upanishads* tell us, so also, all of us born in *Kali Yuga* think that our pleasures lie outside us and keep trying for it, as the dog with the bone, and pay no attention or make no striving for real Bliss that is within us. So we go on and on in this cycle of birth and death. We do *Karma* by compulsion, we enjoy the fruits good and bad, do more *Karma* and get born again and again as is mentioned in the saying "*Punarapi Maranam, Punarapi Jananam*" (To die again and again and be born again and again). God has created such kind of external pleasures for us that it gives only a little glimmer of pleasure and not in full or substantial measure. Everyday, you experience only a little of even this transitory pleasure. So, O man of the *Kali Yuga*, O listeners, do *Vishnu Seva*, do *Krishna Kirtan*, otherwise you will be born again and again. Even *Shankara* says : "We get this precious human birth because of the merits of our elders and our own past births, so do not waste it. Be determined and resolved to liberate yourself in this life itself, so that you may not be born again, that you may be free from the cycle of births and deaths. Otherwise, you will have difficulties once again, starting from the time you spend in your mother's womb, through childhood, adolescence, youth and old age." If you just look back on your life so far, you will realise that though you may have had joys now and then, 99.9 per cent of your experiences have been of sorrow and misery. You have not experienced true happiness. The *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavata* have been composed that you may enjoy happiness. So, *Narada* says, this world is full of people who are plunged in sorrow. That they may feel bliss, he says to *Vyasa*, you should write on *Krishna's* glory in every *Shloka*. You too have experienced sorrow because you have not described *Lord Krishna's* greatness in every *Shloka*. You have concentrated only on *Dharma, Adharma, Acharana*,

etc., but not on the love of Krishna, on Krishna's glories. So, you too are feeling miserable.

That is why, Narada tells Vyasa, keep describing such a Krishna so that on hearing that description, the sense pleasures, the experiences of *Sansar* cease to exist for the listener. Then, you too will be happy. This is very interesting. Vyasa, who has attained *Brahman*, even such a Vyasa could not attain contentment because, in those times, many used to be in a state of *Nirguna Tatva*. But, as *Kali Yuga* began, *Nirguna Tatva* receded into the background and *Karma kand* assumed importance and people went on doing more and more, working more and more. That this should not be so the Lord assumed *Avataras*. That is why Veda-Vyasa prompted *Shankara* to write the *Bhashya*.

In *Kali Yuga* man is idle and indolent (*Aalshi*). No matter how busy he may be, as long as he does not engage himself in spiritual practices, he must be considered as idle and indolent. He has no time for *Japa*, meditation or any other spiritual practices. His entire activity is so preoccupying that he does not get any time for any spiritual practice.

Really speaking, in *Kali Yuga*, it is possible to attain the Lord within two minutes of thinking on Him. But this *Kali* has made it impossible for us to think single-mindedly of Him. So we should try to keep our mind on Lord Krishna's lotus feet, on our goal and we will be able to kick at the "*Kali-kaal*". We should firmly tell it that we will not pay more importance to *Kali Kaal*. If we resolve like this and meditate on Lord Krishna with faith, determination, our *Ishta-Devata* brings us an opportunity to merge in Him. Then you can kick away *Kali Kaal*, for good. The main reason for telling all this is that in *Kali Kaal*, many *Sadhanas* are there such as *Japa*, meditation. You can do any *Sadhana*. The only thing that man has to remember is that whatever *Sadhana* he is doing is for not only for his benefit but

the benefit of his people, his country and the whole humanity and to pray to Lord Krishna to give him appropriate guidance at the appropriate time to attain Him. If we do such a *Sadhana* and keep doing such a *Sadhana*, then *Kali Yuga* cannot do anything to you. Our *Ishta Devata* can help us to kick away *Kali-kala* and take us forward to Him. We cannot promise you *Nirguna Brahman*, we cannot say that you will get it in this life but we can definitely assure you that you will attain *Saguna Brahman*. We want you all to achieve it.

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USUALLY, as you all know, even those who strive to attain God find it difficult at times to follow the precepts laid down in the scriptures. So Narada tells Vyasa "Whatever the basis of the spiritual literature you have produced so far, is of no use in this age. Because of that literature, people have to go through great struggles and difficulties, great sorrow and you also do not derive any mental satisfaction from what you have done so far, neither do others get any peace of mind. That is why you too are not happy. So, bring forth such a literature that every *Shloka*, every syllable, every word that you write is full of love for Lord Krishna. Instil Cosmic *Shakti* of the Lord in every word and *Shloka* and you will be happy forever."

Narada says : "Simply going by *Advaita*, saying all is Vishnu and speaking in lofty terms is not enough. Instead of doing all this, if you go by "*Yasho-wardan*", description of Lord Krishna, "*Yashokirti*", the glory of Krishna, everyone will be able to understand Krishna *Lila* and Krishna's life story. So, write Krishna's life story for us all. Simply going by *Nirguna Tatva*, describing what is outside the worldly firmament, you will not make anyone understand what you are saying. Instead, if you describe the *Saguna* form of Lord Krishna and such a Lord's glorious life, you will not only make yourself happy but others will also be equally happy." As Krishna says in the Gita, He created the four *Varnas* only on the basis of the inner virtues and qualities of man. If a *Shudra* sings of His glory

Summary of the discourse given on July 22, 1977.

from his waking up moment to the time he goes to bed at night, he cannot be called a *Shudra*. So, says Krishna beautifully, I created the four *Varnas* taking into account the past *Karmas* and their present virtues of the people and not to create any divisions in society or a caste system. A *Shudra* striving for Self-realization is greater than a *Brahmin*. So, says Narada to Vyasa, you should create such a *Bhakti* for the Lord in all the *Varnas* so that all may become happy. By reading what you write, everyone should get steeped in love for Krishna, devotion for Krishna, so much so that they all should attain *Mukti* or liberation and you will thereby be happy yourself also.

No matter how much one considered his *Dharma* as great, if devotion for Krishna does not sprout in his heart, if he does not have devotion for God's lotus feet, such a person can never attain God-realisation. If we do not understand why we are and what we should aim at and go on doing our daily *Karmas*, we will be only born again and die again and be reborn once more as mentioned in the saying "*Punarapi Maranam, Punarapi Jananam.*" Narada tells Vyasa to compose his work in such a manner that pleasures of the senses, the *Panchaindriyas*, will be captured by every *Shloka*. No *Sadhana* is needed to achieve this. The five senses of their own accord go after body pleasures. But, happiness or "*Sukha*" is of two kinds, one worldly and the other spiritual. What is happening today is that we willingly accept, recognise and even pursue transitory worldly pleasures, imagining it to be the real happiness. To give an example, when a man eats a *ladoo*, it tastes very sweet at first. So, when you have eaten the first *ladoo*, you feel very happy. Then, you feel like eating one more and one more and so on till you eat ten or eleven *laddos*. But, when you have tasted the tenth or eleventh *ladoo* you feel a disgust for it as you are oversatiated with *laddos*. Once we acquire a

nausea for *laddos* and feel even sick to see it, after eating the eleventh *ladoo*, we can call it as total misery or distress, so much so that you cannot even stand the sight of any more *laddos*. So, we may assume that if one man can sustain ten *laddos* till he gets nausea for it, others may take in even upto 25 of them till they too are overcome by the same sense of disgust for it. That means, each *ladoo* carries only a small fraction or a per cent of happiness for the eater. Likewise, the body pleasures are also transitory. Man should understand this. Having been born on this earth and acquired a body of five elements, he should know why he is here, with whose power he is able to carry on his life and conduct all his activities etc. More than all other species like animals, birds etc., it is given only to man to attain the highest in this human birth and for that he has to strive for liberation of his self and to realise the *Lila* of Lord Krishna.

Whoever he be, man is always restless and looks for happiness and peace of mind. If he really wants it, he should meditate on Lord Krishna and do *Sadhana* to attain Him. He should reason out for himself—What is my true Self? What should I do to attain it? What should I give up, what should I retain with me? What is my body? Where should I begin? He should realise that it is possible for him, being a human being, to attain the highest spiritual state of oneness with God. He should not become engrossed or enamoured of his worldly possessions like wealth, family, etc. They are known as "*Vishayasukh*". This *Vishayasukh* or worldly pleasure is reflected outside and does not concern itself with man's lasting happiness. When man realises that he is the Supreme Power, that the Supreme Being is within him, then he attains the real happiness. Narada keeps on saying that man is so much tied up in the alternates of joy and sorrow that he cannot free himself from its bonds and liberate himself. But, though our

senses be projected outside, we can, forgetting all this, work for others' welfare and others' well-being. Usually once we are caught in this worldly coil, we say that world is such that unless one attains God, realises his self, he cannot escape from this world of life and death. If on the other hand, he realises the Self, then coils of this world do not bind him down or tie him up. That is why our ancients have told us to free ourselves from this cycle of births and deaths which happen to us continuously. The moment man exhausts his merit of previous births, he gets born on earth again and does more sins and *Karma* and suffers once again for it. If man does good deeds, he goes to heaven but the moment his merit from those good acts gets over, he comes back to earth in a new birth. This has become a vicious circle, a wheel of circumstances in which man rotates unable to free himself.

But, if man wants to be free from this cycle of birth and death, he should understand what is Self, what is *Atma-tatva*. Even the most learned man, if he cannot understand what is *Paramanand*, or the Supreme Bliss, all his learning and accomplishment avails him not. However, once man gets a taste for Lord Krishna and has Him as his *Ishta-Devata*, once man gets a whiff of the fragrance of Lord Krishna's lotus feet, gets a taste for Him, then even the *Kali Yuga*-born man will not let go that experience. Such people who have once laid their head at Lord Krishna's lotus feet and understood what that supreme Bliss means, they will never let go of His feet. But, if man does not turn his mind towards God, he should be prepared to be born over and over again. This only means that such a Krishna *Paramatman's Lila*, glories (says Narada to Vyasa) and life you should go on describing in your *Shlokas* and, if you do so, you will attain ineffable peace of mind. Narada says : to enable everyone to do *Tapasya* for Lord Vishnu, to perform *Anushthan* of Vishnu, describe

Him at length in your work. Narada recalls 'what he was before, what he was doing before and what he had become now dedicating himself entirely to Lord Vishnu, etc. Narada says that in his last life, he was the child of a "*daasi*" (servant) of a *Muni* and he therefore grew up playing with the *munis* and doing good deeds. He was not interested in playthings and, giving up such childish pursuits, he used to listen to the advice of his master and act accordingly. Narada says to Vyasa later (this *Purana* has story within a story): Since my childhood, I had done so much of devotion to the Lord, without retaining any *Swartha*, I courted the company of saints, befriended them, whenever they spoke of Lord Krishna, religion and *Ishta-Devata*, my restlessness would disappear, *Rajas* and *Tamas* would also go and only *Satva Guna* remained. Because of this *Satva Guna*, I remain firmly aligned now to Lord Vishnu's lotus feet. If you do the same, you too will get the peace of mind that I am now enjoying. Narada says : Such a happiness taught me to merge myself with Lord Krishna who is such a Lord that once you surrender to Him, He makes you forget instantly all your baser qualities and surmount them successfully.

There is an interesting *Shloka* here. It says that food which gives rise to disease in your body cannot cure you of that disease. When you have experienced any disease or suspect any disease is lurking in you, if you have learnt to take precautions against the advent of such a disease, then that disease will not assail you or infect you. The same disease, however, if you blend it with another, by the process of chemical reaction, it can be destroyed. We have a "disease" in us that we cannot attain God. Why? Because, we have *Sansar*, because we cling to this illusory world, and, therefore, the idea that we cannot attain God is imbedded in our minds. To impress upon us that it is possible for us to

attain God, this *Shloka* says: Whatever your pleasures, whatever joys and sorrows you undergo in this world, that also is God." Now, if you have small-pox epidemic in town, you are vaccinated with vaccine drawn from the same disease and this gives you both strength and body-immunity to withstand infection of small-pox. Our body develops such a strength that it can give a fight to that disease. So also, as this *Shloka* says, you regard *Sansar* as a source of discomfort and agony. This is a fever of your mind. But, if you use this *Sansar* of yours to attain God, then it does not become so difficult for you to carry on with it. This *Shloka* says—Don't think that God has created this world of difficulties to harass you and to make you miserable on earth. God has created this world so that the difficulties themselves give you an immunity against them so that you should acquire in your constitution a power and strength to give a fight to these worldly difficulties and help you to attain Him, in the end. Just as a vaccine injection in you empowers you to give a fight to the disease, we should get the necessary strength in our constitution from the worldly difficulties and become self-confident. So, whatever difficulties may confront you, you have to fight them and overcome them. That will by itself enable you to progress on the spiritual path. That is why God has created this society, country etc.

No matter what difficulties you may have to bear, please come here daily and listen to this *Bhagavata* during *Chaturmas*. This *Bhagavata* deals with Lord *Vishnu*. You know the importance of *Chaturmas*. *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Maheshvar* stand for the three divine functions of creation, preservation and destruction. It is easy to create or to destroy but difficult to preserve, to maintain. So, our ancients gave four months' rest to Lord *Vishnu* after His year-long effort at preservation of creation. During this period, *Vishnu* entrusted His

tasks and responsibilities to the *Sanyasis*. Lord Vishnu or Krishna entrusted this responsibility to the *Sadhus* and *Sanyasis* so that plenty of rain may fall, so that good crops may grow, so that people have plenty and so that the world may have prosperity. The Lord entrusted all this to the *Sanyasis* and took rest for the *Chaturmaas* period. So, we *Sanyasis* should worship Lord Krishna, and let Him rest while we carry on with His work. Whether we are ourselves doing all this, we do not know but, as the Lord told us to do, we have taken up this *Purana* and you all should come here and hear such a *Purana*. We too feel very happy about it. So, we can say then our days have gone off well, then I too will get its benefit and so will you all also derive benefit from hearing this *Purana*.

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NARADA tells Vyasa what brings about disease, what food you eat, what acts you do bring about disease and sorrow. He also says that the same cause (of the disease) cannot provide you the remedy also for the disease or sorrow. But, if we modify the source of the disease, we can use it to save the people just as small-pox vaccine is used to prevent small-pox infection. Why this *Shloka*? Because, as we said earlier, due to *Karma*, man gets born and dies over and over again. We have to go through whatever pleasures of this world we have earned by our past deeds and, at the same time, commit more deeds also. This cycle has no end. So, Narada explains that the *Karma* which ties us down to bondage cannot, by its performance grant us liberation from the same bondage. *Karma*, by its very nature, in fact pushes man deeper and deeper in *Sansar* and makes it impossible for him to attain bliss of the Divine. Therefore, Narada tells Vyasa : bring forth such *Karma* that would prove instrumental in helping man to attain divine Bliss. The venom of a snake is poison to all, but the antidote made out of the same poison can save people from snake-bites. This is the secret behind small-pox vaccination or cholera inoculation. We use modified doses of the same disease to secure immunity against the disease.

So, Narada tells Vyasa, do such *Karma* by doing which *Karma* the people will remember the Lord and be always grateful to you. The main object of life is to attain divine Bliss. Whatever *Karmas* we have to

Summary of the discourse given on July 24, 1977.

perform we keep on performing, but we think that we are doing it of our own free will and for our own sakes, for our happiness and our earthly betterment. Really speaking, we are already full of Bliss divine, so we do not have to go through all the experiences of a struggle to get bliss. But, God has kept us so far away from the within us that we tend to forget it and go after the pleasures outside us. There is no escape for us from doing the *Karmas* that fall to our lot because of circumstances of our birth, our times, clime and country. Now, *Karmas* are as variegated as *Sadhana* is. We should regard whatever *Karmas* we have to do are a test for us by the Lord. We have to do our *Karma* and offer its fruits at the lotus feet of the Lord as our "response" to God. Do not, therefore, regard that the *Karma* you are doing belongs to you. Whether the result is good or bad, offer it to the Lord. It is called "*Krishnarpanam*". Whether we derive any joy or not from this *Karma*, if we humbly lay it at the lotus feet of God, we can escape from the cycle of birth and death. This is not so difficult as it might appear. For, we are all doing our *Karmas* in the first place by His will alone. If man, however, thinks that he has done or is doing the *Karmas* of his own volition and that the fruits belong to him alone, he remains miserable and subject to earthly moods. If, on the other hand, he dedicates his deed, good and bad, to the Lord, then he is saved. Whatever *Karmas* he does he should, therefore, offer them *Krishnarpanam*, *Devarpanam* to Him. Be like the lotus leaf which, though standing in water and remains untouched. Keep always in mind that whatever you do you are doing by the will of God and then births and deaths do not any longer afflict you.

If you keep on doing *Karma* in this spirit, you will be on the path to attain Lord Krishna, and understanding of your goal begins to dawn on you.

The germ of a longing to attain *Jnana* sprouts in your heart. When a man gets devotion to the Lord like this, and though living in *Sansar* he does all his *Karma* as offering to Lord Krishna, his *Ishta-Devata* and then stands apart, then such a *Sadhana* grants him ceaseless remembrance of Lord Krishna. Then, he remains away from the world and even if difficulties and struggles beset him he remains unaffected and ever blissful.

Vyasa says here beautifully how to pray to the Lord : *Om Namo Vasudevaya*. He teaches us how to meditate. People of these times have such restless minds because they are used to having desire only for food and the day's tasks. But, today, the mind is so restless and will become even more so in the days to come that the prospect for the future is indeed frightening. Then, we read papers and get even more alarmed, we become slaves of this worldly knowledge and keep our minds distracted and restless. Actually, such worldly knowledge is useless to our greater goal in view. We too read papers, you too read papers, so it becomes difficult to concentrate this restless mind of ours. Hence, we are asked to first control the mind and concentrate it on our goal. So, as Vyasa says, "O Lord Vasudeva, I prostrate before Thee". For men with such restless minds, it is not possible to go into *Nirguna Brahman* directly. That is an experience that one can alone have, it is not something that can be imparted to another. So, *Saguna Swarup* is shown to us, because this is something that can be imparted to another and is based on duality. Take any idol or image. If you ask different people to describe it, each one has his own experience and describes *Saguna Swarup* differently. Be it Brahma, Vishnu, Krishna or the *Dashavatars*, the *Saguna Swarup* of the Lord appears before us in the form we worship Him. If man keeps aside all idle discussion and fixes his mind in only *Nirguna Tatva* and loves Him, He is always there before him. As we

told you earlier about *Nirguna* and *Saguna*, *Saguna Tatva* or idol worship is possible for everyone. This *Purana* has been written to project the *Saguna* form of the Lord in our minds and our lives.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa and other great saints, though they had divine vision, they did not try to achieve knowledge of *Nirguna Rupa*. So far as I can see, no saint or *Mahapurush* of our times has tried to experience *Nirguna Rupa*, they have been content to remain in *Saguna Swarup* of the Lord. Therefore, nobody has described what *Nirguna* is. It is in fact indescribable. Narada tells Vyasa: "You are mentally unhappy and uneasy even after producing so much of spiritual literature. Therefore, if you describe Krishna's *Lila*, you will make yourself happy and others also happy. Further if you can write the life story of Lord Krishna, even when one reads it, his doubts should get resolved." Here begins the fifth chapter of the *Bhagavata*. Suta tells Shaunak who came to him after starting the 1,000-year long *Yag*, that Narada comes to ascertain why Vyasa is in a worried state. Vyasa tells Narada : "Tell me what were the circumstances of your birth, how you got love for Krishna form living with *Rishis*, how you have reached this state? Time (*Kaal*) is such that nobody remembers his past or can tell the future. What were your deeds (Vyasa asks Narada), what all did you do, what all you had to do, why and when did you come to be born in this world?"

Then, Narada says - describing how he was born - I was the only child of my mother and I was loved very much by mother who was a servant woman and was deeply engrossed in earning a livelihood for herself and me. Her one and only idea was to work for my well-being and prosperity. She wanted to raise me to high standards. Her circumstances were such that I could not have lived all alone by myself - I had

to spend five years of my childhood living in the house of the Brahmin where she worked. The Brahmin, like my mother, wanted to educate me well and give me the best but could not do so. One day, in that Brahmin's house, at cow's milking time, death in the shape of a snake-bite came to my mother and killed her. The five-year old Narada was then filled with so much dispassion and aversion to the world by the death of his mother that he could no longer live there. So (he says), I set out towards the North from my house to reach the rich kingdom called Gokul which was known to be such a fabulous place. While going to such a place, I had to cross many thick and dense forests where trees bore the trunk-prints of elephants, to reach Gokul where gold and silver and other minerals lay strewn all over, where there were lakes big and small, birds of different plumage and all looking beautiful. There is a beautiful description of the forest here, which was full of flora and fauna, of bees, of bamboos. Such a forest infested with owls, snakes and foxes, Narada passed through to reach the city of Gokul which he describes as a beautiful place. What is this Gokul? Narada describes it in three ways - it was a kingdom, it was full of precious stones and to reach it, one had to go through a forest full of colourful flora and fauna. What Narada did there and whom he met there, we will tell you tomorrow.

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NARADA tells Vyasa, at his request, of the circumstances of his birth, how his mother was killed due to a snake-bite and how, as a small boy, he journeyed through a dense forest, what kind of a forest it was and what did it contain. We have covered all this in the *Bhagavata* reading. In describing the forest through which Narada had to go, Vyasa here says it was infested with big snakes, big wild animals and was full of variegated sounds including that of "Keechaka" which was a peculiar sound produced when strong winds passed through the holes of hollow of bamboos in the forest. Different types of bamboos emit different types of *Keechaka* sounds and Narada heard them all when he journeyed through the forest on his way to Gokul. Narada says that he was so grief stricken at his mother's death that he gave up everything and went through the forest. Narada says : Because I was tired, miserable of mind, had walked over a long distance, when I came to a river in the forest, I bathed myself in it and then refreshed myself, filling myself with food and water. Then, in this refreshed condition, I sat for meditation. Narada had said at the outset how he had attained knowledge at the feet of a God-realized *Rishi* and how *Bhakti* for Lord Vishnu had taken root in his mind. That is why he mentions now that even though the conditions in the forest through which he passed were dreadful, with frightening sounds etc., he felt no fear because he was convinced that his God, his Protector, was

Summary of the discourse given on July 26, 1977.

with him all the time. So, now having had his bath in the river and refreshed himself, Narada sat for meditation.

This has a lesson for us. At first, we have to look after our *Sthool Sharira* (gross form) and attend to fatigue of the physical being. Only then we can attend to spiritual "fatigue" ("*Thakavat*"). To remove such a fatigue, our *Upanishads*, our ancients, have prescribed God-remembrance and chanting of His Name. So, *Sadhakas* have to remember, whatever you are doing, even at work, you can meditate, do *Dhyana*, and keep His remembrance constant in your mind. But, from this *Shloka* we may aver that we have to first remove uneasiness and *tiredness* of our physical being. Only then will we be able to attend to matters of the spirit, to take our mind inside in meditation. So we have to take care of our *Sthool Sharira* first. When the *Sthool Sharira* is exhausted, fatigued and uneasy, it becomes very difficult for the *Sadhaka* to gain experience of *Sukshma* (subtle form) and, with the help of *Aham-vritti*, to transcend from *Sukshma* to *Karan deha* (Causal form). Our *Pujya Swamiji* (Anandashram Swamiji) is among those *Mahapurushas* who have been advising us to perform *Japa* at all times, even at work, on the way to work etc., while going to office by train so that they should not break off their continuous link with the Lord. *Sadhakas* come and ask us also whether they should do continuous *Japa* even while at work on the way to work, in market place etc. We tell the *Sadhakas*: if such a continuous *Japa* gives you peace of mind, by all means do it. But, see that first you attend to *Sthool Sharira* and its physical needs. As long as the body is unattended to or neglected, when the body is tired and is not in a shipshape condition, then the fruits of *Japa* do not come to the body to the extent that we want.

Now, why is *Japa* there? It is there to help the *Sadhaka*

to go into himself. Narada says here the same thing. At first he cleaned his physical being by bathing in the Ganges, then he fed himself and felt refreshed. Only after attending to his bodily needs, he sat for meditation and immediately achieved concentration of mind. All should remember this. It is of no use doing *Sadhana* or *Japa* if you neglect your body. To begin with, you should first take care of your body and then concentrate on your *Sadhana*, on your *Japa*. Only then can the *Sadhaka* derive full fruits of his *Sadhana* and *Japa*. So, even if we or His Holiness (Swami Anandashram) has advised you to do your *Japa* all the time, to maintain your continuous link with God, you can think of God only with a fully refreshed body. When your body is refreshed, you control your wayward mind more easily. If your mind is restless you will never understand what is *Ahamvritti* (Self-consciousness). That is the real import in what Narada said when he narrated that he first took his bath and food and only then he sat for meditation.

Narada says - This was my last act of service of my *Sthool Sharira*. After that, I set out (in meditation) to the place of which I had heard so much. I concentrated all my mind on the adorable form of His of which I had heard so much. I brought to my mind all that I had heard of the Lord's lovely form, His description etc., and meditated on the indescribably beautiful form of Lord Vishnu. As I sat meditating on Lord Vishnu, because of devotion welling up within me, my eyes started shedding tears. Then, Lord Krishna revealed Himself in all His glory in my heart. When such a *Paramanand-dayak* Vishnu revealed Himself to me, my body, my country, my relations began to fade away from me. Usually, God's deeds or *Kriyas* are such that they are intended mainly to endear Himself to us to make us love and adore Him and, to this end, He does everything. But, we tend to overlook His real

form and only think of what all we should do to attain Him. He has created us to see if we will go within ourselves and use His *Shakti* to attain Him or whether we will remain engrossed in the objects and get lost in His manifestations outside us. Whether we go to Him or not, whether we try to become one with Him or not - this is the real test that He sets for us and He loves to go on testing us every now and then, by plunging us into *Sansar*, by giving us difficulties of every kind. So to enable people to increase their understanding of the Lord's doings, Narada says here that once we are born on earth and are in *Sansar*, we have nothing but difficulties. This, His Holiness Anandashram Swamiji had also said, so also had Swami Ramdas of Ramnagar. We can enjoy the pleasure of the world only so long as man has strength, his mind is strong and he is full of self-confidence. But, as he grows older and his faculties become weak, then it becomes very difficult for a person to carry on his *Sansar* and perform all his worldly acts that used to give him so much pleasure once. You may have seen many examples of this. Our ancients tell us that even if we are happy and have no difficulties, it only means that you have not yet struggled to attain the goal of life, your *Adhyatma Vritti*. This *Shloka* of Narada is for *Sadhakas* only and teaches them how to attain God.

Narada says : "God gives us a glimmer of happiness and then disappears. A *Sadhaka* who meditates on Him sees God in a flash and then God disappears." The reason for His doing so is this. To give an example, a poor man gets a sum of Rs. 10,000. He feels so happy and elated and, then, suddenly, the whole money is snatched from his hands and it disappears. He becomes very miserable and thinks of nothing else but his lost treasure. So, also, in order that the *Bhakta* may think of Him and Him alone, laying aside

everything else the Lord gives him a glimpse of His divine personality when he sits for meditation and then disappears. His *Sadhaka* then feels so bad, so miserable that he gives up his all in one supreme quest for the Lord. That is when he gives up all his *Dharmas* in response to Lord Krishna's call. In the *Gita*:

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।

अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि माशुच ॥

He gives up his all to attain the divine Self of Lord Krishna. Many think that this *Shloka* exhorts them to give up their duties, their family, home etc. This is not so. This *Shloka* and this state of mind of total renunciation is intended only for those who have already meditated, and meditated on Him and Him alone, so much so that without Him they have become utterly miserable. In that state of utter desperation, the *Sadhaka* gives up his all in one ultimate attempt to capture the elusive *Ishta-Devata*, Krishna *Paramatman*, in his heart once and for all This is the real meaning of *Sarvadharmam Parityaya, Mamekam Sharanam Vraja*. "Then," says Narada," when *Sadhana* becomes complete, Krishna Himself comes into our heart and reveals Himself in all His lustrous glory. Says Narada : "I forgot everything when I beheld that luminous Lord Krishna in my heart and held fast to Him in my heart. Even then, He disappeared." God does like this only, He appears to His *Bhaktas* for a split-second and then He disappears after giving His devotee a 'taste' of Himself. It is just like giving a sweet to a child and then snatching it from the child's hands. So, also, the Lord gives His devotee a glimpse of His divine form and then removes Himself so that thereafter the devotee does nothing but think of Him and Him alone and does not hanker for anything else on earth.

Narada tells Vyasa : "I tried many ways to purify

my physical being and plunge into deep meditation to recapture Lord Vishnu's image but it was not possible. But, I heard words of that God whom I had just seen in my heart, of whom I cannot even describe to you. As I sat meditating on Him, I heard his sweet and stentorian voice come forth from within me. (Here, Narada refers to the voice of the Lord as both "*Madhur*" and "*Gambhir*".

Through his *Akashvani* or Inner Voice, Narada is told by the Lord : In this life, he who is subject to *Kama, Krodha, Lobha* and *Moha*, he whose mind is not pure, such a one can never see My pure form. He can see only worldly activities and can never see Me. (The Lord says this because *Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha* are qualities related to the world and cannot help man to attain God. These qualities can help him attain only worldly objects of *Sthool Sharira*. So, Krishna tells Narada : Narada, you cannot see Me in My divine form in this world, because you are in *Kali Yuga* where the qualities of *Kama, Krodha, Lobha* and *Moha* reign over the minds and hearts of men. Even if a man in this world knows what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong, what are the three *Gunas*, yet he has to carry on according to the times in which he lives. I don't show Myself to such person. I showed Myself to you once in your heart only because you had so much love for Me from your childhood though you too are still ruled by *Kama, Krodha, Lobha* and *Moha*. O Narada, you do not have to cry to Me to show Myself to you. Nor need you feel so depressed. He who loves Me as you do will gradually give up all these bodily qualities and come closer to Me. You have taken the leavings of food (*Prasad*) of saints and *Sadhu Purushas*, you had heard so much of Me and loved Me so much. I revealed Myself to you once. This was because you had mingled with and lived with saints and acquired love for Me, so you have

become close to Me. As you had removed your love from everything and everyone else and kept love only for Me, to attain Me in your heart, so you become dear to Me. You became close to Me."

There are people in the world who do all kinds of *Yoga, Hata Yoga, Kundalini Yoga* but, at the same time, they are not prepared to shed their *Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha* and *Matsar*. Such people are neither *Yogis* nor non-*Yogis*. As long as the qualities of the body are still active in us, we cannot be called as *Yogis*. This is what Vishnu tries to impress on Narada. Such a Lord who revealed Himself in a quick flash to Narada and then disappeared did it only to increase Narada's longing for Him, because it is human nature to yearn for something precious that has come into your hands and then disappeared. The Lord does this with His *Bhaktas* only to test us and see whether we are pursuing Him or not. It is not because the devotee's *Sadhana* had been less or because the Lord loves His devotee less. This is only His divine sport. To understand the Lord who is both manifest and nonmanifest, says Narada to Vyasa. I decided to go round the world looking for my Lord Krishna. This means that man should go on doing his *Sadhana* for that ultimate Bliss; that becomes yours when you merge in Him for good. Then the Lord reveals Himself to you. Many *Sadhakas* worry why the Lord should act in this fashion, to reveal Himself and then disappear from the sight of His devotees. This is only because we are *Kathputlies* (puppets) and God is testing us all the time, to see if we are hankering for Him with our heart, body and soul. By so disappearing, God is testing us all the while to see if our resolve and determination to realise Him is keen or not. Narada who is none else but Lord Vishnu's *Avatar*, narrates here his struggles and difficulties from the time he was orphaned by the death of his mother,

how he got disillusioned with the world and, then, after a bath and refreshment, how he sat for meditation, got a glimpse of Lord Vishnu, his beloved Krishna, and then the Lord disappeared, and how the Lord assured him through His *Akashvani* that He would show Himself again to him — but not in this world of *Maya*. The Lord tells Narada : Carry on this life of yours in my remembrance. If you think of Me alone, the results of your *Karmas* will not trouble you and you will be doing only good. All this is there in this *Purana* that Vyasa has narrated. The main thing is : In this life full of *Kama*, *Krodha*, *Lobha* and *Moha*, will we get Lord in this life of ours or not? Even a man like Narada had to go through many lives to attain Him. This is, indeed, not in our hands. It is in Lord's hands. Ours is only to do *Sadhana*. Even if we insist that we should attain Self-realisation in this life itself, we cannot say for certain that we will so attain. There was the *muni* who kept on repeating '*Shunya, Shunya*' to dismiss everything worldly as non-existent and to attain Self-realisation, but he failed to do so in this life. When even such a man could not do it, how can we attain self-realisation? We have to perform a great deal of *Sadhana*, in this *Kali Yuga*, so that if not in this life, at least in the next life we can attain God. Vyasa has written this *Purana* to teach us all this.

There are many who have never been able to capture Krishna in their heart as also people who might have had one glimpse of Him, who might have caught Him but once in their heart and then lost Him. To both these people, there is only one thing to be said; let us not be deluded by the different shadows of happiness that lie in the worldly pursuits. Let us concentrate on Him. Real happiness is that which stops all further craving in man for happiness. Such a happiness is possible only after attaining God, only after we have seated the Lord in our hearts and His

lustre and glory permeate us through and through.
Narada tells us how the Lord assured him through
the inner voice on attaining Him.

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NARADA tells Vyasa that just as he, Narada, had been going round preaching *Bhakti*, so also Vyasa should write a *Purana* that will increase *Bhakti* in the people. Narada recalls the circumstances of his birth, how he had lost his mother in his childhood, how he had set out for Gokul to get peace of mind, how Krishna Bhagavan had appeared before him and then disappeared so that he might be seized by a keen longing for Him. We had come to this point yesterday and now we continue. These *Shlokas* are involved sometimes and we might err sometimes and you may feel that you are hearing the same thing again and again. But, as the goal of this *Purana* is what we all want to attain, you should not feel sorry to hear the same thing again and again. If we spend our time in meditating on Lord Krishna, any hearing about Lord Krishna, in repetition about Him should not worry us. We should not mind it. Of course, repetition here means repetition of His remembrances, and His constant *Japa* is necessary to attain Him. That is why our ancients laid down that we should constantly remember Him.

So, to repeat what we said yesterday, Narada heard Lord Krishna's assurance and he now tells Vyasa; I bathed in a fountain and sat for meditation. I meditated on whatever I had learnt from the sages and Krishna appeared only to disappear. In that moment, when I was acutely feeling for Him and missing Him, I heard an inner voice tell me "You will

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not see my real form because you are in *Kali Yuga*. You still have many ideas to fulfil. Keep one thing in mind, namely, I will reveal Myself to you. How? Since you are sinless, I showed my divine light in your innermost being. Yet, I can't reveal My *Virat Swaroop* to you because you are, by human nature, still in *Rajas, Tamas* and *Satva*. So, I can only make you keep hearing My voice and you will continue to hear My voice. When you have ceased all actions of *Rajas, Tamas* and *Satva*, I will show Myself to you. I will do this, because you are so dear to Me and because you love Me so much." Even though Narada was a devotee of Krishna, he was full of *Rajas, Tamas* and *Satva* and the Lord tells him that because of presence of these three *Gunas* in him, He could give him only a glimmer of Himself and could not reveal to him His universal Self and had quickly withdrawn that vision.

Narada tells Vyasa : "In this way, the Blessed Lord withdrew His image from my vision but continued to speak to me." We have already told you how, after bath and refreshment, Narada had sat for meditation and had moved from *Sthool* to *Sukshma* to still higher state when the Lord had revealed Himself to him granting him a taste of the unparalleled happiness-happiness that he had earned by having *Darshan* of sages and saints and by meditating. He had this happiness almost in his hands but it had vanished. Why did it vanish? This is the Lord's doing—to show himself to His devotees and then disappear so that the devotee gets a fixation of His image and keeps thinking of Him and Him alone. This was the condition of Narada. Also Lord Krishna tells Narada : "In this life, in which merit and sin are closely intertwined, you cannot attain self-realisation. If you had merit only, you could have seen God but when sin is mixed with merit, you cannot see Him. Lord Krishna told Narada" I showed Myself to you only to increase your

devotion for Me. But, you are so much involved in worldly action. I want you to give up all your affairs and in order to make you do so, I gave you a glimpse of Myself and then vanished."

Lord Krishna tells Narada : "Whatever *tapasya* (Austerity) you do, if you do not have devotion or love for Me, in this body you cannot see Me. But, in another body, I will reveal Myself to you, because you have seen My devotees, you have spent all day and night in meditation on Me and My spiritual Being. When your faith in Me becomes stronger and your intellect loses itself in Me, then you will start seeing Me again." Lord Krishna asks Narada to strive to rid himself of all his mundane affairs and concentrate on Him who is within him, to aspire to go deep within and become one with Him. Krishna tells Narada that if he cannot achieve this state in this life, he would do so in his next life. In His *Akashvani*, Krishna says : "Though you may not attain Me in this life, because of your unstinted love and service of *Rishis* and *Munis* and by meditating on Me all the 24 hours, you have come almost near to Me. So, if not in this life, in the next life itself, I will reveal Myself to you." This is the experience Narada underwent on his way to Gokul. Krishna says - "You have to go through many lives before you can reach Me. In your case, you need be born on this earth only once again to see Me." On hearing His divine voice, Narada prostrated before Him, with his hands standing at their ends, and promised to do as the Lord wanted him to. Narada tells Vyasa : "Once I came to know that in this life I would not get His *Darshan*, I devoted my entire life to remembrance of Hari, Hari *Chintan*, propagating His glories and began on this pilgrimage drawing Myself within and severing my worldly ties and duties and giving myself wholly to His service. I went on wandering, removing everything on which I used to

dwell in my mind in the past and tried to rise above the consciousness of this body of five elements. In this way, I have dedicated myself entirely to the Lord."

Just as one cannot say in monsoon time when lightning will next flash in the sky, so also one cannot predict when his end will come. All of us seated here, no doubt, expect to live for 25 to 50 years more but no one can positively say he will survive so long. Therefore, to impress on devotees, Narada says : I was such a great devotee of Lord Krishna; I spent my life time in His remembrance and then I shed this body of five elements. He speaks as if he was not frightened of his end and took his last moments easily, because he had already realised the aim and purpose of life, of the transitory nature of this body and that his real Self was not the body. Narada knew his body, composed of five elements could not last forever. Normally, everyone is afraid of death. Whoever he be, once he is born on this earth, he begins to dread the hour when he has to die. To remove such a fear, our scriptures, our culture, our *Vedas* keep on asking us not to fear death. Every creature on earth is God's instrument but man alone has been endowed with intelligence and therefore man is considered superior to animals. Gifted thus, man should go on thinking of God, perform His *kirtan* and when his turn comes to shed this body of five elements (*Akash, Jala, Vayu, Agni* and *Prithvi*), he should do so cheerfully. Yet, we are afraid at the prospect of giving up the body because we have not realised the importance of *Aham-vritti*. We worry what will happen to us after death, where we will go and so on. To allay such fears, God has created the *Vedas, Upanishads* etc. They teach us that death means only the end of this gross form of five elements but there is no death or end for our soul, that our *Aham-vritti* is deathless. We can realise this truth only when we take pains to understand our

Aham-vritti. Just as we shed a soiled dress, so also we shed one body and take on another. But, many people continue to be scared of death. In the final moments of the body, even great *Yogis* who have lived all their life in the highest *Yoga*, find it difficult to reconcile themselves to shedding the body. Then, what of ordinary *Sansaric* people who find it even more difficult to give up the body. Only people who have not understood *Aham-vritti* will find it difficult to shed their bodies.

Narada speaks of giving up his body so beautifully, comparing it to the suddenness of lightning and that he gave it up happily as his turn had come to do so. Everyone, whether a devotee or an atheist, is scared of giving up the body. We had been this morning to hear Swami Akhandanand who spoke on the *Upanishads*, but more than his discourse, what captivated us was the speech of Shri R.R.Diwakar. Diwakar had been to Russia and he said that the Communists, though they deny the existence of God, they recognise God as a Supreme Power. Even in Russia, people have started reposing faith in this *Shakti* whether they call it as God or not. Only when we awaken this *Shakti* in us, we will stop fearing death. Russians are atheists but even such people recognise the existence of a Supreme Power.

We should realise that this act of giving up one's body fearlessly, with full faith in God, itself is a *Sadhana*. If we are truly God's devotee, if we are His *Sadhakas*, we should not be afraid of death. We should tell ourselves that we are only giving up one gross form but that we can never give up our soul which is deathless. If we surrender ourselves to Lord Krishna, we are released from the bondage of *Karma* and even if we take rebirth, it is only to complete our half-finished *Sadhana* and we are born as His *Sadhakas* right from the beginning. All the *Karmas* one performs are

related to the five elements we have spoken about earlier, and we are born again and again by the pull of past *Karmas*. Rising above the body consciousness, if we hold on only to *Aham-vritti*, we can do anything. Even death when stands before us, we will willingly and happily give up the body just as man throws away an unwanted article nonchalantly. As Narada says, he gave up his body holding on only to *Aham-vritti* and stepping himself in remembrance of Krishna. Narada was such an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu that he had understood *Aham-vritti* and death held no terrors for him. He had merged his breathing with the Lord, remembering Him with every inhalation and exhalation. Narada says that though his breath was merged with Vishnu just as Lord Vishnu had re-created Creation after each *Kalpa*, he too took birth again. Once he became close to Lord Vishnu, he lost himself in Vishnu and attained *Brahman*. Once he had attained this state, he became fit to go all over creation, all over the universe, singing Vishnu's glories, describing His *Lila*, singing about Him, etc. in such a *Kali Yuga* full of life's sorrows and miseries, difficulties of *Sansar*, full of nameless fears, indefinable terrors, what should man do to get over all these? There is only one way by which one can cross this ocean of difficulties and that is by singing His name and by remembering Him constantly. As you know, once we are in *Sansar*, we become heir to all kinds of problems and difficulties, one thing or the other continues to harass us, either the child falls ill at home, there are pinpricks in the office or some other difficulties crop up. If we want to be rid of all these troubles, we should concentrate our minds on Lord Vishnu. This is not so easy as it sounds.

Narada says that man by nature continually craves for one thing or another and that makes his mind restless and sends him chasing worldly pleasures which can never wholly come within his grasp. If he

gets one pleasure, then craving for another seizes him and he fails to attain eternal happiness. "*Chanchal*" is a most appropriate word here and it aptly describes man's state of mind, it shows how man can become desperate if he does not get his worldly objectives. For such a person, the *Bhagavata Purana* is prescribed. For, this is a vast ocean of *Sansar* where you see only sharks everywhere. Lord Vishnu's remembrance can be the boat that can take everyone across this ocean safely. To reach the distant shores of eternal happiness, Vishnu *Charitra* is useful. Vishnu *Charitra* can take you to spiritual shores or to material shores - the choice of your destinations is yours to make.

Pranayam and other methods are only intended to teach us concentration of mind, to bring about the peace of mind. Many *Sadhanas* are prescribed by our saints and sages but this *Purana* has been created for the benefit of those who cannot easily control *Kama*, *Krodha*, *Lobha* and *Moha*. By hearing Lord Vishnu's life and glories, one can overcome all these four forces within us and attain Him. Narada says that though this is for the present times, for the people of the present age, who cannot observe all the rules and regulations of practising austerity etc. if we live our lives in God's remembrance, the "*Tapatrayas*" of *Sansar* do not prick us. To achieve this, Narada has prescribed Vishnu's life-story to be heard again and again. It is the raft that will weather the storms of your life and take you safely across. In this world, all the *Yagnas*, *Pranayama*, *Kundalini Shakti* etc. do not promise immediate peace of mind. But, when you listen to Krishna's life, do His *Japa*, hear His Name, you can achieve peace of mind instantly. This is the easiest method to attain peace of mind in this *Kali Yuga* and not by *Yagna*, *Dhyana*, *Hata Yoga* etc.

In this way, Suta says that Narada explained to Vyasa how he attained devotion to Lord Krishna, how

he had lost his mother at an early age, etc. Narada says that he who hears of Vishnu's life, he who speaks of Vishnu's life, only such people can shed the body idea and become immersed in *Aham-vritti*, mindless of death itself, such people are true *Jivanmuktas*.

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SO far, we have been hearing of Vyasa's distress at not deriving full mental satisfaction, of Narada telling him to fill up every *Shloka* composed by him with devotion for Lord Krishna and his blissful experience of having Krishna's *Darshan*. Narada tells Vyasa to describe in detail Krishna's glories and His exploits, to create such a work that would also give him mental satisfaction and peace of mind. On this note, the sixth chapter had ended. As you know, this story of Lord Krishna is being narrated by Suta to Shaunaka as heard by him from Shuka when the latter was narrating it to King Parikshit, having heard it earlier from Vyasa, author of the epic.

Shaunaka asks Suta; after hearing Narada speak to him thus, what did Vyasa do? Suta replies: On the vast lake of *Brahmanadi* (Saraswati), there was an Ashram of a noted *Brahmajnani* known as Chanyakesh. Narada advises Vyasa to go to that Ashram and write the story of Lord Krishna and attain lasting peace of mind. With that advice in mind, Vyasa goes to that Ashram where, amid the groves of *Badri-vrikshas*, he performs *Achaman*, prays to God for removal of all his faults and concentrates on Lord Krishna with a clear mind and a heart full of devotion. Vyasa, who had already attained *Bhakti Yoga*, meditates on the Supreme Being, the *Param Purush*. He realises what is really *Maya* and this body of three *Gunas*, which has made us slave to the *Maya*, that there is another being aloof from the three *Gunas*. He experiences that

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innermost Self also and realises that the three *Gunas* do not do any good to the human being. Even *Satva Guna*, howsoever good it might be, may give man merit but it will deprive him of his chance to attain *Atma Jnana*. It will only add to his merit "*punya*" and grant him happiness in heaven (*Swargiya sukha*). But, as Krishna Bhagavan tells us in the Gita, man thinks that his welfare lies only in *Satva Guna*, that *Satva* takes him to God. This is a wrong notion. With all the merit of *Satva Guna*, man may attain heaven but when the merit is exhausted, he will be born on earth again. So, says Krishna, man should shed all the three *Gunas*. To do that, we have to invoke Lord Krishna's power and strength by offering our unstinted devotion to Him. Only in *Bhakti Yoga* can we transcend all the three *Gunas* and be free from birth and rebirth. Krishna who is above the play of the three *Gunas*, such a Krishna who creates *Maya Rupa* and deludes the people and who prevents the people from coming nearer to Him, such a Krishna Bhagavan Vyasa realises in his heart.

Suta says - Nobody can, after being born on earth, give up *Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha* or the three *Gunas* any more than we can give up *Maya*. They are all related to the body and tied to the body idea. So, once your body is created and takes birth, your soul takes refuge in the body and it becomes impossible to eliminate *Kama, Krodha, Lobha* completely. This body functions according to these elements. So, we should all remember that we are not the body. Let it do what it likes but, ultimately, our goal is to attain Self-Knowledge, Self-Bliss and Eternal happiness. So, disregarding the physical cravings of the body for pleasure, let us look only to achieving lasting happiness from the real Self within us. Then, the play of the five elements inside or outside the body do not affect the body. To create such a hunger for attainment

of God, Vyasa created this *Purana*, based on the devotion to Lord Krishna and to grant peace of mind for those who do not yet know what is the real Self and are lost in *Rajas*, *Tamas* and *Satva Gunas*, so that they too may experience Truth.

Having written this labour of love called *Bhagavata*, Vyasa wrote such *Shlokas* that, hearing them, man should forget all the other matters and affairs of the world and thinking only of Lord Krishna, offer all his love and devotion to the Lord. Usually, when any spiritual literature or *Upanishad* was written, they only laid down norms for man to conduct himself, they were full of rules for social behaviour, how man should comfort himself in society, etc. But, in this *Bhagavata*, Vyasa teaches man only how to progress on the spiritual path and to dwell in God. Vyasa tells the Story of Lord Krishna to his son Shuka so that the people may take to *Nivritti Marg* and do not get deluded by *Pravritti Marg*. Suta narrates the whole story to Shunaka who in turn ask Suta : You who had attained *Brahma Tatva* at the age of eight or nine, who had always adhered to *Nivritti Marg* and was always lost in *Nirguna Tatva*, why did such a *Mahamuni* at your father's command, listen to this story? What was the need for you to hear this story? While performing any action (*Karma*) man looks first to the fruits thereof, whatever be the deed he performs he first counts the fruits that would accrue to him. There is no *Karma* on earth which does not have its effect. But, this story of Krishna Bhagavan is such that hearing such *Bhagavata* does not signify any "*Phala-asha*" (craving for fruits). This is because, this *Purana* increases in the listener the devotion for God and love of God. So, by listening to his father narrate the *Bhagavata*, Shuka did not seek anything in particular. He who was already one with Eternal Bliss told his father to narrate to him the whole voluminous story, not for any "*phalaasha*" but because

Vyasa himself was this *Purana* personified and listening to it, Shuka lost himself in Vyasa's own meditation.

Now, Suta narrates an episode from the *Mahabharata*. In the *Mahabharata* war, Ashwathaman killed Draupadi's sleeping sons, thinking that such an act will please Duryodhana and that the latter would crown him with due honour and respect for this deed. That was what Ashwathaman presumed. But, even though he went and killed Drupadi's sons, that did not make Duryodhana happy. For, he was a *Bhakta* and had fallen out with the Pandavas only for the sake of war. After the slaughter of her children, Draupadi felt so distressed that she went to Pandavas and bemoaned that when Kauravas did such a heinous act, none of them could do anything about it. Arjuna tells Draupadi: "You need not feel sorry over the killing of your and my children, while they were sleeping. I will kill Ashwathaman with my *Gandiva* Bow and bring his head to you and you can do what you like with it and thus remove your distress." Having thus promised his wife and sworn to behead Ashwathaman, his Guru's son, and bring his head to Draupadi, Arjuna starts looking for Ashwathaman. By way of illustration, the example is given how the sun was once scared of Shiva and took shelter from Him. There was a devotee of Lord Shiva who performs severe austerities and takes from Him His gold chariot that is so luminous that it can convert the night into day. One night, the devotee takes a ride in his divine chariot, goes up in the sky and the whole place is so lit up that everybody thinks that the being riding in chariot is Surya, the sun-god. They start offering their oblations to this rider. Surya gets very angry and, rising Himself, burns up the chariot, reducing it to ashes. At this, the story goes, Shiva gets furious and opens His third eye and starts looking for Surya who

gets scared of this fierce glare of Lord Shiva and runs away from Him. Just as the Sun god ran away from Shiva's third eye, so does Ashwathaman from Arjuna and he runs hither and thither seeking shelter. The hunt and the chase go on and both Ashwathaman and Arjuna tire themselves out. Ashwathaman had a curse on him that he could only hurl his *Brahmastra* but would not be able to recall it to his quiver. After performing *Achaman*, Ashwathaman finally hurls the *Brahmastra*, knowing full well that once he uses it, he will not be able to recall it, but he goes ahead and hurls it at Arjuna out of sheer despair and getting desperate. Arjuna, on seeing the *Brahmastra* heading towards him, surrenders himself to the Lord as he knows the power of the missile coming towards him, Arjuna tells Lord Krishna : "What kind of weapon is this, so luminous, that is coming to me? Please protect me, please save me". Saying this, Arjuna falls at Krishna's feet. And, Lord Krishna assures Arjuna : Fear not, meditate on your Guru, it will vouchsafe unto you full knowledge of his *Astra*. You too can fire such a weapon and I will extinguish the impact of both the weapons.

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FROM yesterday, the story part of this narration Draupadi's has started. On behalf of Duryodhana, Ashwathaman had killed Draupadi's and Arjuna's son and, seeing this heinous act, Arjuna had got very angry and taken an oath before Draupadi that he would kill Ashwathaman and sever his head and present it to her. And, with his Gandiva bow, Arjuna had started pursuing Ashwathaman who ran from him as Surya had fled before the lustre of Lord Shiva. When Ashwathaman realised that he had no strength to save himself, he used his *Brahma Astra*. This meant using weapons supercharged with powerful *mantras* to destroy the enemy. There was a difference between these *Astras* and the conventional weapons of war. The *Astras* could be and had to be recalled to the quiver by the warrior who used them. They could kill not only the foes but all other creatures, animals etc. which were in its path. To recall the *Astra*, one needed special strength and Ashwathaman knew only how to hurl the *Astra* but did not know how to withdraw it or recall it, once it was hurled.

The fierce glare of the *Brahma Astra* blinds Arjuna and he asks Krishna what it is as he cannot stand its sight. Usually, it is human nature that when something indefinable, frightening situation confronts man, he remembers God and surrenders to Him. Otherwise, he remains engrossed in his *Sansar* and forgets God. Krishna is like the lotus leaf which is in water, but which water cannot touch. So, also, Krishna, though

He is playing his part in *Pravratti*, stands apart from it. Arjuna says, "You are *Adi-Purush*, Creator of all creation." Arjuna had not attained full realization. So, he goes on to tell Lord Krishna. "You are ever in "*Aham-vritti*, You stand apart from Your *Maya Swarup* and save those who are deluded by *Maya*. You are the loving saviour of Your devotees. You have assumed this *Avatar* to maintain the balance on earth, to see that the forces of good are not subjugated by those of evil." As we said before, the sinful are those who forget God, His creation and do their *Karma*. So, unknowingly and sometimes, knowingly, we commit sins. The Eternal Witness, *Aham-vritti*, is aware all the time that this body has sinned and must incur the consequences and experience them. God, seated in the hearts of all, directs us to act according to our circumstances, factors of life etc. and we do sins as well as good deeds as per His command. This is the "balancing feat" that He performs through His creatures. So, God plays with us and makes us play. But, what we usually do is to get lost in sinful acts done with the body consciousness, we get immersed in it and get lost in it. Then, God feels upset why we are forgetting Him and continue to do our sinful acts and He takes steps to destroy such persons and lighten the burden of the earth by reducing the sinful creatures to dust as it were. Arjuna tells Krishna : "You have taken birth to reduce earth's burden of sins. You are born not only for this but also to save Your devotees and relations." Here, Arjuna spoke of Krishna as a relation. The real meaning of this expression is that we should make Krishna part of us, part of our closest kith and kin, evolve close relationship with Him (*Kutumbakiya*). We should regard the Lord as our very own and we should have this close filial relationship with Him, making Him our father, mother, Guru or even as husband, as the Gopis did. Always have such a close relationship

with Krishna. Arjuna says : "You have taken *Avatar* for such a purpose to destroy the sinful and save Your *Bhaktas*."

Arjuna says : "Ashwathaman has launched his *Brahma Astra* which is heading in my direction." Saying this, he praises the Lord just as, whenever we too face any difficulty, we turn to the Lord and sing His glories so as to draw His attention towards us. The Lord tells Arjuna that this *Astra* which Ashwathaman had hurled at him was a gift to him from Brahma Himself. He did not know how to recall the weapon to his quiver but, out of fear for his life, he had used it now. Arjuna also knew *Brahma Astra*. So, Lord Krishna asks him to launch his own *Brahma Astra* and destroy this weapon hurled by Ashwathaman.

Without delaying a moment, Arjuna performed his ablutions, did the purificatory "*Achaman*", went round Lord Krishna, prostrated before Him. He did all this because this *Brahma Astra* was such a weapon that it could be launched only after one had purified himself and prostrated before the Lord. Then, Arjuna launched his *Brahma Ashtra* against Ashwathaman's weapon. The glare of the two opposing *Brahma Astras* hurling towards each other was so great that nobody on earth could say if it was the glare of the sun or some major fire had broken out. Many people thought that the end of the world had come. Arjuna drew the attention of Krishna to the panic among the people on earth because of the double glare of the two *astras*. Then, as the two weapons touched each other they became one and, as commanded by Lord Krishna, Arjuna recalled them both to his quiver. Once Arjuna took back the *Brahma Astra* and made it his own, Ashwathaman's entire strength, *Sadhana* and physical prowess and spiritual powers came into Arjuna's hands and Ashwathaman became weak and helpless and was tied up with a rope by a furious Arjuna.

Lord Krishna warns him : "Do not have any soft corner towards Ashwathaman because he is your Guru's son. Kill him. Show this sinful Brahmin no pity because he has slain innocent sleeping children. Heroes do not kill children, women and sleeping persons. You have sworn before your wife that you will behead the killer of her children and that you will bring his severed head before Draupadi so that she could do her work, sitting on the severed head. So, even if he is a Brahmin, even if he is your Guru's son, kill him, show him no mercy. Because, good men do not kill weak and helpless men, children, drunkards, those who have come in to surrender or those who are sleeping. So, you need not have any compunction to destroy such a man. You need not have any scruples, any qualms to kill him," thus exhorts Lord Krishna to Arjuna.

God tests us every time to see if we are paying due heed to Him. Even to test the progress of a *Sadhaka*, the Lord prompts him from within to do various things, to test his self-confidence, to see if he is stabilised in his state of complete surrender to Him. So, Krishna here exhorts Arjuna to kill Ashwathaman. Krishna need not have done so because He was the Lord Himself. In such a situation, Lord Krishna need not have got angry but He wanted to test Arjuna's *Dharma* and so He put on a show of temper. Guru himself deserves great respect and all members of a Guru's family, his son and others, merit equal respect. Because this thought was ingrained in Arjuna's mind, Krishna had to ask Arjuna to kill Ashwathaman on the spot. Arjuna, however, tied up Ashwathaman and brought him before his wife. Now, Draupadi, when she was confronted by the man who had slain her innocent children, saw in him only her Guruputra, son of the Guru, and bowed her head in salutation before him, and looked at him with merciful eyes. This shows the quality of mercy. Without giving up

one's self-respect, no matter how bad a thing another does, he who thinks that what the other does is but characteristic, part of the latter's nature and forgives him his most sinful acts, displays real mercy. Real mercy does not consist in giving beggar four annas or something of which you have plenty. But, if anybody has done a wrong to you and yet you take it as part of his nature to do so, that is real *Daya* (mercy). There is the example of Sri Ramakrishna who was sitting for meditation on the banks of the Ganges at Kashi. A Brahmin came to the Ganges to have his bath. Just then, a scorpion fell into the Ganges waters and, seeing it, the Brahmin went towards it, picked it up and took it in his hand to keep it dry. The scorpion reciprocated by stinging the Brahmin and he dropped it in the water. Again, the Brahmin picked up the scorpion to save it, again it stung him and again he dropped it. When this happened four or five times, Sri Ramakrishna laughed and called the Brahmin to him and asked him : "Why do you want to save the scorpion, when you knew that this stinging creature is on its way to death?" When the great saint asked him this, the Brahmin whose hand must have been smarting with pain, tells Sri Ramakrishna : "That creature does according to its *Dharma* and does not spare even its saviour. So, as Brahmins, why should we give up our *Dharma* which is to save a fallen creature"? When Sri Ramakrishna hears this, he regards the Brahmin as God Himself and falls prostrate at his feet. So, this is *Daya Dharma*, when you readily forgive another whatever he does, taking it but as part of his nature, even if he has done the worst sins. It was with this look of compassion that Draupadi saw before her not the slayer of her children but her Guru's son in Ashwathaman. She tells Arjuna : "This is a Brahmin, son of our Guru. So, Arjuna, set him free, don't tie him up. This Drona's son has a wife. As

a wife myself, I do not want her to be widowed. Do not kill him. You should not kill or cause to kill a member of your Guru's family and he is your Guru's own son. So, we should prostrate before him and not harm him. You should not make Ashwathaman's mother cry over his death, as I have been crying over my sons." Here, Yyasa teaches us the quality of "*mamata*", or motherhood and womanhood. Though Ashwathaman had killed her sons, Draupadi pleads with Arjuna not to kill him lest his own mother has to wash her face with her tears of sorrow even as Draupadi herself had washed her face with her own tears.

Draupadi tells Arjuna : "Even if this Brahmin has done anything sinful in anger, he will get retribution for it. But, you should not kill him. His mother will be in as much distress over his death as I am. We are asked to look upon others as we look upon ourselves, to look on the sorrow of others as our own sorrow. Draupadi illustrates this saying of our elders with her pleading that Ashwathman's mother should not be made to grieve as she had done, that she should be spared the sorrow of losing her son. We will tell you the rest tomorrow."

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TILL yesterday, we had heard of how Ashwathaman and Arjuna had hurled the *Brahma Astra* at each other, how Arjuna had drawn both the missiles towards himself, defeated Ashwathaman and brought him tied up before Draupadi. As you know, Arjuna had sworn to tie up Ashwathaman and bring him before Draupadi to be beheaded before her eyes so that she could sit on his severed head and do her work. Krishna prompts Arjuna to kill Ashwathaman, reminding him of all the sins that Ashwathaman had committed. But, Draupadi pleads for his mother, pleads that she should not be made to grieve for him. Draupadi here symbolises *Stri-dharma*, forbearance, tolerance and endurance for which womanhood is more famous than men. She had lost her sons to this killer but she does not lose sight of her essential *Dharma*. So, she says, "Just as I am washing my face with my tears for my own sons, I do not want Ashwathaman's mother to bathe her own face in tears grieving over his death." Thus, Draupadi pleads with Arjuna to release him. She tells him: Not only our Guru, but Guru's family should not be harmed by you. This is Drona's own son (Guruputra) in fact. Such a Guru's son merits only *Prana* and not killing or even harming. Just as I am so full of tears of grief over my sons, I do not want the same fate to overcome Ashwathaman's mother.

Man is divided into subdivisions like Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas & Shudras according to his

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qualities. He who kills a Brahmin, he himself gets destroyed soon and does not get any happiness and remains an *Ajnani* (ignorant man). So, Suta tells Shaunaka: "O Brahmins, Not only us, but all Pandavas were there, when Arjuna brought Ashwathaman trussed up before Draupadi." Arjuna also had taken an oath that he would behead his foe and she could sit on his head and bathe herself, meaning thereby that she would give herself peace of mind. With this object in mind, Ashwathaman was brought by Arjuna before Draupadi. But, the woman's *Dharma* is to look on all with mercy. So, she pleads with Arjuna not to kill Ashwathaman. These words of pleading of such a Queen of *Dharma* are accepted by the Pandavas as befitting for they feel that she has taught them all a lesson. Though the man who had killed her innocent sons was standing before her, she forgave him thinking of his mother and so that she should not grieve over his death. Arjuna, Yudhishtira, Krishna, Nakula and Sahadeva accepted the import of Draupadi's words and paid due heed to the same.

Man, by nature, always has some anger in him. Bhima had a shade more anger in him than others. He had taken Draupadi's grief over the killing of her sons more to heart than the others. Now, Bhima's name was not mentioned as among those who had accepted Draupadi's plea to forgive Ashwathaman. Vyasa now quotes Bhima as remarking angrily that Ashwathaman should be killed because, against all canons and considerations which make a warrior spare sleeping persons, mentally retarded ones, women and children, he had slain Draupadi's sleeping children. He had done so (says Bhima) to please himself and his master Duryodhana, thereby performing a most unfitting deed though he was a *Guru-putra*.

Krishna tells Bhima: What you say is perfectly correct but, now, you listen to Me and you will get

peace of mind and you will know why Draupadi has told us in this manner and why we have accepted her advice. Krishna says: "However lowly a Brahmin may be, however sinful he may be, he should not be killed." If at all he has to be killed, the best punishment for a Brahmin is to let him live with dishonour. By letting a sinful Brahmin live, you are taking away his very Brahminhood. Once he has been divested of his symbols and marks of a Brahmin, that itself is his death. You do not have to kill him again. That is what I too have advised, hearken unto Me, says Krishna.

Krishna was the guide, philosopher and friend of the Pandavas and He goes on to tell Bhima : I have told you first that Brahmin need not be killed only by beheading him. Without killing him, you can punish him by depriving him of his rights as a Brahmin, for having done a most unbrahminical act and hold him up before the world as one who is no longer fit to be called as a Brahmin. Thus was Ashwathaman deprived of his symbols and rights as a Brahmin, untied and let loose. He then became very ashamed that in spite of being the Guru-putra, he had killed sleeping children. Such a lacklustre Ashwathaman was set free by Arjuna, who could have killed him but chose not to. Though Bhima advised Arjuna to kill Ashwathaman, in the end Arjuna listened to Draupadi and to the advice of Lord Krishna and, as advised by Him, removed from Ashwathaman his symbols of Brahminhood. Arjuna accepted Draupadi's advice as most befitting *Dharma* and stayed his hand when he could have killed Ashwathaman who was disarmed and powerless. This meant that he accepted the principle of fellow-feeling, that the same *Atma* existed in all, friend or foe.

A Brahmin is said to attain his high status in society because of his good nature and good deeds but, sometimes, because of *Prakruti* (Nature) falls prey to

baser. For a Brahmin who has sinned, if he is divested of his tuft of hair, it is the greatest dishonour, so also divesting him of all his wealth and possessions and to render him poor. Now Brahmins in those times were rich and did not know the meaning of what it was to be poor. So, here, Ashwathaman was given the experience of being poor. In these conditions of humiliation, he is as good as dead. Even in present-day society, we hear of cases of how humiliation is heaped on an individual by shaving half his beard, half his head of hair or half his moustache. Here, by removing Ashwathaman's tuft, he was barred to the world of Brahmins in which he had lived and deprived of his position. After thus deporting Ashwathaman, Arjuna and others performed the last rites of their sons. They first bathed in the river and purified themselves. They then did *Shraadhha* with *Shraddha* (with faith). The sonless Pandavas did all the required charities, worshipped their ancestors Dhritarashtra and Gandhari. To all of them, assembled on the banks of the Ganges river, purified by the touch of Lord Vishnu's feet, Krishna speaks of *Stri Dharma*, *Purusha Dharma* and one Prakruti reigning in the world. This world revolves on the play of the three *Gunas*. There are only two castes in this world, namely, men and women, only one God and one Truth. The duty of everyone is to attain the supreme Truth, the *Brahma Tatva*.

We have already spoken about *Aham-vritti*, *Hrid-granthi* and *Manovritti*. All these stories of *Bhagavata* tell us of how the forces of *Rajas* and *Tamas* work and how, ultimately, *Satva* takes us to the highest state which is a state of bliss and is an aspect of *Aham-vritti*. To illustrate all this, Vyasa has narrated all these stories. Bhima's anger was a manifestation of *Tamas*, Draupadi's mercifulness was *Satvic*. These stories by Vyasa teach us in detail what the qualities inherent in

every man are. They teach us how we can mould our lives in a better way. As, for example, Draupadi's conduct towards Ashwathaman, who had killed her children but was treated by her with all kindness as befitting a Brahmin and a Guruputra. We have to take from this that in our life, we come across many a situation where we might but should not fall prey to *Rajas* or *Tamas*. If we increase our *Satvic Guna*, automatically *Rajas* and *Tamas* become weak and wither away. To make us understand this properly, Vyasa has woven this epic in which Krishna is shown as both a prompter to kill Ashwathaman and as the Guide and Philosopher who holds up the greater ideal. Whenever we are angry, our human nature tells us what we did was right but, on calmer reflection, we realise that we were wrong in getting angry. In our life, *Rajas* and *Tamas* are so much on the increase that we do not know often what to do, which way to turn. But, if we surrender to that Krishna Bhagavan, calmer reflection dawns on us and we are able to face up to every situation. Here, Ashwathaman was as good as killed without the actual act of killing. So, if we keep our *Satvic Guna* in view and sit still and listen to our inner voice, we are saved.

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KRISHNA Paramatman advises Yudhishtira and his brethren to go and seek the last advice of Bhishma Pitamaha, who lies on his bed of arrows on the battlefield, waiting for his end, and to hear his words of wisdom. Bhishma was not only the most respected and worshipped elder of the family of Pandavas and Kauravas but he was, even more, an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna, who had spent his lifetime meditating on the Lord and whose only ardent wish was to die at Krishna's hands on the battlefield. Lying there on the battlefield, he is waiting for *Uttarayana* to commence, to shed his arrow-covered body and leave this world of mortals. Bhishma is visited by Krishna, Yudhishtira and others who stand before him worshipfully, seeking his words of wisdom. Bhishma lying in that condition, had given up all thoughts of *Dharma* and *Karma* and turned all his attention and mind's vision on Krishna who stood before him, resplendant as the Supreme Being. The others saw Krishna as a two-armed human being but Bhishma saw Krishna as the four-armed *Chaturbhuj* Divine Being and began to extol His glories.

Bhishma told Krishna : "Thou has brought forth this vast creation, yet Thou art in every creature and article created by Thee. At the time of our end, Thou art our Saviour. All that I have done so far was only for the sake of the person whose food and salt I have taken. But now, I have no eyes for anything but Thy Divine Self. I see Thee as the four-armed Lord Himself

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and I pray to Thee to retain this divine vision of Thine before mine eyes as the breath leaves my body."

But, though Bhishma prayed thus that the vision of the four-armed Supreme Being be transfixed before his eyes till his breath left his body, other images of Lord Krishna waited before his mind's eye. He saw Krishna as the dust-and-blood strewn warrior on the battlefield, he saw Krishna as Arjuna's faithful friend and charioteer, who handled the horses so skilfully and so many other *Lilas* of Lord Krishna. Extolling the glories of Lord Krishna, Bhishma recalled that though Krishna had sworn not to wield any weapons on the battlefield, to fulfill the ardent wish of a devotee (namely himself) to die at Krishna's hands, Krishna, His body covered with the sharp pointed arrows hurled at Him by Bhishma, laid aside His vows and made a rush on Bhishma with the Sudarshan Chakra in His hands. Recalling this incident, Bhishma Pitamaha said that the Blessed Lord would do anything for His devotee, even going to the extent of breaking His own vow. The *Bhakta*, on his part, had also great faith that the Lord would do anything he told Him to do. Krishna picked up the *Sudarshan Chakra* in the Mahabharata war, not to fight in the war but only to carry out Bhishma's ardent wish to die at His hands. At the feet of such an Ever-Loving Lord Krishna, may my *Aham-vritti* get merged, prayed Bhishma. Recalling that image, Vyasa says that in the forest, one thinks of the Elephant as a giant figure but a lion is not deterred by the size of the elephant and swiftly hurls itself on the mane of the elephant. Likewise, Lord Krishna, holding the *Chakra* in His hand, had made a dash on a smiling Bhishma who waited for His coming, on the battlefield. Recalling this incident, Bhishma says : "I shot so many arrows at Him, I covered His whole person with my arrows, yet He kept on coming towards me to finish me. On

such a Lord Krishna, Beloved of His devotees, may my mind be transfixed."

Of what manner was this Krishna? He was the protector of His family kin Arjuna and his brethren, He went into the great war acting as Arjuna's charioteer. Having assumed a human form, the Lord Himself offered to serve as a humble charioteer. "May my devotion to such a Lord Krishna ever increase", prays Bhishma lying there on a bed of arrows on the battlefield, while he waits for his end to come, "May my mind merge in Him whom I had seen on the battlefield, at Whom I had hurled so many arrows, may I breathe my last with such a Krishna in my mind." This is the Krishna Who is authority on *Jnana*, *Bhakti* and *Karma*, who was advisor and counsellor to Arjuna, yet at the same time took up reins of the horses for the sake of Arjuna, Who is ever ready to carry out His devotee's least behests. The main thing we have to learn in this narration is that virtually at death's door, Bhishma *Pitamaha* was able to give up all his longings and feelings and concentrate on Krishna and Krishna alone, keeping only the image of Krishna in his mind, to the exclusion of everything else. All of us are on the path to death. Today, we may not exactly be in a war as Bhishma Pitamaha was, but as Sant Tukaram says, all of us live in war-like situations, we are all on the battlefield of life. In such a situation, like Bhishma, we too should keep the image of Lord Krishna before us. Though it may not be easy to bring His image vividly before our mind, let us at least recall to mind all His glories and His *Lilas*, Krishna in so many diverse roles. Vyasa here asks us to be like Bhishma and think of Him and Him alone, for ours too is a battlefield. If Bhishma was covered by the arrows thrown at him by his enemies, we too are covered by life's darts. If we are to attain immortality like Bhishma, we too keep such

a Lord Krishna in our mind, if not one single image, then recall all His *Lilas*. Instead of gossiping on worldly matters and frittering away our days, let us bring to our mind Krishna's image, let us recall what He told Arjuna, what He told Bhishma and we too can liberate ourselves from this "*Sharapanjara*", like Bhishma. Krishna had taken many a trouble for the sake of His friend and kin Arjuna, allowed himself to be covered by the dust and grime and blood of the battlefield. He who concentrated on such a Krishna easily attains salvation: Krishna who with others had raised the Govardhan mountain, Krishna who had played with the Gopis, given them His divine Love and received limitless Love from them in return. All these diverse images of Krishna are brought to mind by Bhishma in his last moments. He described Krishna thus : Krishna, who is adored by the Gopis, who is *Virajman* in my heart, Krishna who was outstanding among all the lustrous ones at Yudhishtira's *Rajasuya* sacrifice, on such a Krishna may my mind get fixed, on such a resplendent Krishna may 'my eyes, my mind and all my attention get concentrated. I consider it my good fortune to have been with such a Lord Krishna. Such a glorious Krishna's image is before my eyes and it is my special good fortune that it is so.

Thus, Bhishma reaches the close of his life and as he draws his last breaths, he says : "The Sun is but one though he seems differently to different eyes." What Bhishma says here is, in fact, the highest *Advaitic* philosophy. What is the essence of *Advaita*? It is that Truth alone is, that Truth is all-pervading and steeped in all creatures and things, there is no person or place where Truth isn't. As Bhishma says, the same sun shines on a vessel-ful of water, on the mirror, on the sea and even on the pool of muddy water. It is the same sun who is reflected in all these places, yet to us it seems as if it is a different sun in each place. Just as

the sun shines equally on the holy Ganges and a filthy pond, shedding his radiance and reflection alike on all, so also once God has brought forth this vast creation, the same God sheds His radiance and reflection on all equally. This is the essence of Upanishadic teaching. Every mortal being is likewise pervaded by Lord Krishna. "Such a Krishna has His place in my heart and He is going to save me". Krishna is compared here to the sun, because no other similes are possible to describe Him aptly. The sun alone shines on all alike, on saint and thief, king and rogue. Just as the sun shines on all without discrimination, with equalness, so also Krishna sheds His divine radiance on all, so also is Krishna the same to one and all, shedding the light of His Grace, for Krishna is the Supreme Lord Himself. On such and such a Lord Krishna have I fixed my mind and am going into Him, says Bhishma.

Suta says : "Having reached this highest state of concentration on Lord Krishna and becoming one with Him, Bhishma unites his soul with Krishna." With thought of the Supreme Lord Krishna in his mind, Bhishma gives up his body.

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LORD Krishna asks Yudhishtira to go and seek the advice of Bhishma Pitamaha who lies on the bed of arrows and, accordingly, with a bowed head and with joined hands Yudhishtira goes to Bhishma and tells him—"I have committed many sins, I have killed my kith and kin and on this account, my mind is full of remorse and turmoil. I feel as if all the sins of my deeds are on my head. It is, no doubt, the duty of every Kshatriya to fight and vanquish his enemy on the battlefield. Even so, O Bhishma, even though I know this, I feel I have sinned badly. Please teach me what is my *Dharma*."

Bhishma, who lies there on his bed of arrows awaiting his end, then and there teaches Yudhishtira in a concise manner what is *Dharma*, what is *Daan Dharma*, *Stri Dharma*, *Purusha Dharma*, *Ashram Dharma*, *Varna Dharma* etc. and what he says is the essence of all *Dharmas*. When Krishna Himself was standing before him, when the time had come for him to give up all *Dharmas* and surrender to the Blessed Lord, as exhorted by Him in "*Sarvadharmam parityajya*", Bhishma brings to mind what is *Dharma* for the sake of Yudhishtira and tells him. As we ourselves have been often saying, as time changes, so does *Dharma* change, so also *Artha*. Each one attains *Moksha* according to the *Dharma* laid down for his time and clime. Taking into account the prevailing circumstances at that time, Bhishma teaches Yudhishtira how to conduct his reign, what he should do as the ideal ruler. Having thus imparted to

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Yudhishtira knowledge of kingship, Bhishma reaches *Uttarayan*. *Munis* and *Rishis* usually wait for *Uttarayan* to shed their body. At that time, they release from the mortal shackles the life-breath that they have controlled till then, by concentrating on some divine force and surrendering the breath to that divine power. You may have heard of the expression "*Suryamandal Bhedana*" which means that your breath, you take from the body and deposit it in the sun. This is possible only when the sun is in *Uttarayan*. Hence, *Yogis* and great ones are said to wait till *Uttarayan* starts to shed their bodies. In the case of a great *yogi* like Bhishma, his end might have come earlier but he controls his breath till *Uttarayan* starts and then lets it go. *Yogis* normally shed their bodies at their own will. It is called as "*Ichha mrityu*". He who has realised his self, who has attained Self-knowledge, can give up his body whenever he chooses to, so also he can prolong his life till the appointed hour and then end it. The *Yogis* wait for the fittest moment, when the Lord comes and stands before them, and then, dwelling their mind on Him and Him alone, they give up their mortal coil.

Bhishma now feels that his earthly duties are over. He has done his duty by Yudhishtira, taught him *Dharma* and how to conduct his royal duties, just as earlier he had served Duryodhana for having eaten his food. And, now Lord Krishna Himself was standing before him and, laying aside all other thought, Bhishma prostrates mentally before his beloved Lord, even while lying on that bed of arrows, and concentrates his all on Bhagavan Krishna. Patanjali *Yoga Shastra* tell us that no matter what bed of comfort we are lying on, we should not forget the Lord. Here, Bhishma goes on describing the different *Lilas* of Lord Krishna in verse after verse and, in this state of high devotional fervour and concentration on His form, Bhishma gives up his body.

Vyasa, in Bhishma's words, teaches us what we

should do as our end approaches us, how we should give up all the objects to which we have clung all our life and think of Lord Krishna and Krishna alone. We should feel : "My time on earth is over, I am now ready to give up my body and I am now merging myself into my Lord." The Lord had declared : "*Sarvadharmam parityajya mam ekam sharanam vraja; Aham twam sarva papebhyo mokshayishyami, maa shucha*" (abandoning all duties, come to Me alone and surrender; fear not, I shall liberate thee from all sins). In other words, what Krishna tells us is that we should give up all our duties and functions. When we speak of "duties", one does not mean duties in the world as such but the internal duties and functions carried on by all our senses, the *Karma-indriyas* and the *Jnana-indriyas*, the senses of the body and the senses of the mind. Some people mistake Krishna's exhortation "*Sarvadharmam parityajya*" for giving up their religious practices, giving up their sacred thread, tuft, daily worship, *Sandhyavandana*, *Namasmaran*, etc. Krishna did not mean these functions carried on by us. What Krishna meant was the duties we carry on with our senses in our own selves. In other words, He wants us to concentrate all our faculties, physical and mental, on Him and Him alone. That is the true meaning of this *Shloka*. Bhishma understands the true import of what the Lord has said and takes his heart, body and soul on the four-armed Lord. Though Krishna was standing before him as an ordinary two-armed human being, Bhishma sees only His divine form, as *Chaturbhuj* Krishna, with his mind's eye. Most of us do not take our mind within. It is very difficult to take the mind away from external things and take it in but for Bhishma it was not at all difficult to do so and to merge himself in the Supreme Being, Krishna. Once you think of such a Lord, once you meditate on the Supreme Being, what happens? He describes it here.

Meditating on such a Lord Krishna, all the afflictions

that have harassed his body disappear, all the physical and mental suffering comes to an end, and Bhishma is relieved of his body pains and aches even as he withdraws all his senses and surrenders them at the feet of Lord. Thus, all his senses, physical and mental, drop away and he remains transfixed in Krishna alone. In such a state, all desire to converse with anyone also disappears. Now, when we are hale and hearty and active, we do not realise what afflictions beset us when our turn comes to leave this body, if we too do not meditate on Lord Krishna. Bhishma was a Kshatriya, he was not afraid of death. But, for ordinary individuals, it is not easy to face death. In the last moments, we want to talk to the people standing around us but find that we cannot, we hear what our near and dear are saying but we cannot reply to them, we see them shedding tears but we cannot console them. We find ourselves helpless. When we lie thus gripped by death, we find that we are suddenly burdened by a lifetime of *Karma* done by us, a burden that we must carry with us into the next birth. In such a state, we can rid ourselves of that burden and liberate ourselves only by meditating on Lord Krishna. This is the only way, as spelled out by Vyasa through the lips of Bhishma *Pitamaha*. When we are active and alive, we cannot imagine the terrible sufferings at the end of one's life on earth, when the time comes for us to give up all our desires, our sense of possession as your life slips away from you. Bhishma surrenders all his desires and his senses at the feet of the Lord and slowly gives up his body. It is in this state of exaltation that he praises the Lord and His *Lilas*.

At the time one is at death's door, it is difficult to concentrate on any one object or one form alone. So, what does Bhishma do? He brings to mind all the *Lilas* of Lord Krishna and thus wherever his mind goes, it sees only Krishna in one form or the other. This is an object lesson for all of us. The end that comes to

everyone of us is a fearsome state. Let us all do *Sadhana* now itself and meditate on Him so that we can think of Him and Him alone in our dying moments and save ourselves rebirth. Bhishma says "I lay my *Nishkama Buddhi* at the feet of Lord Krishna. I do not crave anything, I only want to surrender wholeheartedly at Your lotus feet. Krishna, for the sake of His *Lila*, manifests Himself as His *mayaswaroop*. To such a Krishna I surrender myself. He, who is the most adorable of all, blue-hued like the blue-coloured lotus of all lotuses, He who has lustrous curly black hair like the colour of darkest clouds. He who is lotus-faced, whose features are so sweet and winsome who is Arjuna's friend, at the feet of such a Lord Krishna, I surrender myself."

Bhishma then goes on describing one form of Krishna after another. Now, Bhishma had seen Krishna in the past also but he had mainly seen Him on the battlefield, so the forms of Krishna that he brings to mind are those seen by him on the Kurukshetra. He describes Lord Krishna as "One was here, there and everywhere, whose lustrous curly black hair was coated with the dust kicked up by the hooves of His steeds; may my mind go to such a Krishna who was covered by thick dust on the battlefield and who, through His exertions of driving the horses, had sweated and beads of sweat stood on His forehead, whose body was blood-strewn by the arrows hurled by me, may my mind dwell on such a Krishna alone and love such a Krishna alone."

Bhishma describes Krishna further as "one who had taken Arjuna to the centre of the enemy hosts, Krishna who with one divine glance of His had already captured the lives of all those enemy hosts, on such a Krishna may my mind dwell." Bhishma knew right from the start of the battle that victory was where Krishna was, but because he had to be loyal to one whose food he had eaten, Bhishma fought against Krishna. Now, Bhishma describes Krishna as One who had ridden his

chariot to the heart of the enemy hosts to show Arjuna who were arrayed against him. And, who, when remorse, pity and agony overcame Arjuna, who was assailed by self-doubt and did not want to fight, taught him how to fight and do his duty as a Kshatriya. Krishna teaches Arjuna that once a man undertook a task, he should see it through and should not give it up, fearing what might happen. So also, He asks him to fight, teaches him who he truly is and why he must fight the battle without any fear of what might happen, that He is within him and will be doing the fighting. How can you give up your rightful action, Krishna asks him and teaches Arjuna his *Dharma* and *Karma* and, what is more important, imparts to him *Atma-Jnana* or Self-knowledge, Bhishma recalls all this that Krishna did on the battlefield and prays : "May my mind dwell on such a Krishna."

Bhishma then tells Krishna that though He had sworn not to wield any weapon, in order to fulfil his (Bhishma's) own vow to die at His hands, Krishna picked up the *Chakra* and blood-strewn as He was, rushed on him. Describing Lord Krishna thus again and again, Bhishma realises that he is at his last breath. When we die, the breath does not leave us easily and it is said that when it leaves, it some times goes out through the eyes, sometimes through the nose or mouth. Bhishma does not bother about all this but with a mighty effort, concentrates all his senses, his heart and soul on Lord Krishna and then loses himself in Krishna.

Everything becomes still when Bhishma gives up his body. Lord Krishna, Vyasa, other *Munis* who are gathered there, Pandavas, all stand silent, just as the birds and creatures become silent when night falls. Devotional music, *Bhajans* and other forms of homage then begin. When all this was going on, there was a shower of flowers from heavens on Bhishma. Being

the eldest of the five brothers, Yudhishtira lights Bhisma's funeral pyre and performs his last rites and is overcome by grief. Krishna then suggests to Yudhishtira to go to Hastinapura, to Tapaswini Gandhari and to console her. There was a great war, Bhisma had died, Duryodhana had died, so many others had died. It was a difficult task to console who had lost so many, but Krishna precedes the rest to Hastinapura and consoles Gandhari. Yudhishtira also joins him and tells Gandhari in a nice manner what each one did on the battlefield, how he fell and so on. Then, hearkening to the advice of his uncle, Dhritrashtra, Yudhishtira starts his reign with blessings of Lord Krishna. Yudhishtira was known as *Dharma's* son and he begins his reign on the path of *Dharma*. Thus ends one more chapter. Yudhishtira has got back what was taken from him and with the blessings of all his elders like Krishna, Dhritrashtra and Gandhari, he begins his reign. When one has lost his position and rightful place to a usurper, it takes a great deal of effort to regain it. When one doesn't easily gain one's objective, he takes refuge in the Lord, in his *Ishta devata*, Guru and so on. Here, the Pandavas were so powerful, so mighty were their weapons of war that they could easily have wrested back their kingdom, without having to seek Lord Krishna's help. But, they wanted to follow the path of *Dharma*, to have their effort blessed by the Lord Himself and so they first surrendered themselves to Him and then fought the great war.

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BECAUSE of reasons of health, We could not do any reading of the *Bhagavata* for a week or so and We are sorry for the inconvenience caused to you. The *Katha* portion has already gone far ahead. Shaunaka have gone to Suta to ask him to tell them the description of Lord Krishna who was about to go to Gokul, and what all questions did Yudhistira ask Him and what answers did he get from the Lord. The 11th chapter of *Bhagavata* is over and we now open with the 12th chapter. Suta says: "To protect Uttara's child, Krishna had entered her womb and then protected both the womb and the infant from the fierce glare of the *Brahmastra* hurled at Uttara by Ashwathaman." Parikshit was growing in Uttara's womb and Krishna had promised the Pandavas that He would protect Parikshit from all harm. Thus, Parikshit was born with Lord Krishna's blessings but, as no mortal born on this earth can escape death, so Parikshit was also destined to die. Shaunaka wants to know what *Upadesh* did Krishna give Parikshit when he was lying in his mother's womb. Now, to resume the narrative, Yudhishtira first asks Lord Krishna what is *Dharma* and later asks Bhishma who was lying on the bed of arrows on the battlefield. You have already heard that. Now, Yudhishtira begins his reign, giving more attention to his subjects and their welfare, than even his father did. Yudhishtira ruled over a vast area, he had gathered untold wealth because of all his good deeds and the doors of heaven were always open to

Summary of the discourse given on August 16, 1977.

him. In addition, he had a good wife and four valiant brothers and they helped him to rule the three worlds.

Suta says that just as physical adornments and ornaments do not appease a hungry man who thinks only of food, so also the regalia of throne and power did not appeal to Yudhishtira and other Pandavas. They realised that there was no real or lasting happiness in being Rulers, that it was only a shadow of happiness, so, thinking thus, they came to meditate more and more on Lord Krishna. Now, coming to Parikshit, you may have already heard the tale of how, when Parikshit lay in his mother's womb, Ashwathaman had hurled the *Brahmastra* at her in order to kill him. When Lord Krishna entered Uttara's womb in order to protect the growing infant, Parikshit too realised that Somebody was there to protect him. What sort of Krishna did he see then? What kind of a Lord came in to protect him from a dire fate?

Parikshit saw the Lord assume the size of a thumb, yet perfectly proportioned and made, whose figure was very attractive, who was of the colour of "*Shyama*" which is halfway between fairness and blueness, wearing silk robes, with four arms, whose ear-rings shone like molten gold, small red eyes and though tiny in size, very attractive to look at. Such a divine vision did Parikshit see while lying in his mother's womb. He saw Krishna wave His tiny but powerful mace round and round to ward off the evil impact of the *Brahmastra* and to weave rings of protection and safety round the womb and thus neutralise and nullify the heat and force of the *Brahmastra* shot by Ashwathaman. Baby Parikshit lay there wondering who could this thumb-sized divine person be Who vanished after giving him the gift of life. When it was time for Parikshit to be born, Lord Krishna disappeared from Uttara's womb. At that time, all the stars in the heavens were in auspicious positions, exalted in their

own houses and at such a juncture, the scion of Pandavas, who was to carry on their dynasty, took birth. When Parikshit was born a delighted Yudhishtira called astrologers and pandits to draw up the child's horoscope. He also gave away large gifts of cows, horses, elephants, villages and gold to Brahmins. The Brahmins thus pleased, told Yudhishtira that there used to be an evil spell on his entire family which accounted for all their sufferings in the past and that, with the birth of Parikshit, that spell had been lifted once and for all. They told Yudhishtira that taking mercy on him, the Lord had bestowed on them this very great scion of their family. So, it was fitting to call him as *Vishwarath*. Because God had been gracious to them, Parikshit would carry on the reign after them and would rule his kingdom well. Parikshit was then just a few hours old but they already foresaw great deeds for him.

Yudhishtira asked : "Will this little one really be so great? Will he really be a great devotee of Lord Krishna and will he attain the goal of life that we ourselves have not attained?" To all these questions, the Brahmins said : "You need not worry. This child, according to the stars at his birth, will be such a great devotee of Lord Krishna that he will prove the salvation of your whole family and so, you need not worry at all about him. Just as Rama was an *Avatar-purush*, so also Parikshit would prove to be an *Avatar-purush* (this conversation took place in *Kali Yuga*)." The Brahmins went on describing Parikshit's greatness, valour etc. Just as the ocean was vast and could not be checked, so also will Parikshit prove equally great and all-pervading like the ocean itself. He will also do *Sadhana* and ready himself for his salvation.

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DUE to ill-health, our discourses on *Bhagavata* had to be suspended for some days. Meanwhile, we could not also so much as glance at the *Bhagavata* and, now, while starting itself, a couple of leaves flew off in the breeze and it has taken some time to locate where we had left off when we last discoursed on the *Bhagavata*. We have tried but have not been able to locate it, so, instead of reading out from *Bhagavata* to you, We will speak to you something about Lord Krishna and His *Lila*. After all, the main purpose of our reading out to you from *Bhagavata* daily is to make your minds dwell on Lord Krishna. So, in talking to you about Him, today, We are achieving the central purpose of our daily discourses as well.

To speak about Lord Krishna is to speak about the all-pervading Spirit Who dwells in everyone of us. He is *Aham-tatva*, the Self in all of us. Now, whenever we are engaged in worldly pursuits, we tend to forget our true selves, so engrossed we become in mundane tasks. But after completing our duties, if we sit quietly by ourselves, we become conscious of the Supreme Being which is within us. That is why, our elders used to tell us about the importance of sitting in calm and tranquillity, ceasing all activity and to dive within ourselves and inquire who we really are, why we are here and so on. This is the aim of Krishna *Lila* also. Lord Krishna did every kind of *Karma*, yet He remained aloof from everything that He did. Whatever He did, it touched Him not, affected Him not, the

fruits of the *Karma* that he performed were not for Him. The whole purpose of *Bhagavata* is to impress on us this central fact, how Krishna did everything that He did and yet remained away and above everything. Thus, talking to you on Lord Krishna is as good as reading out from *Bhagavata*.

What does Lord Krishna teach the people of our times? He tells us to carry out all our duties and functions of our station in life, as governed by the circumstances, but not to succumb to the fruits of these actions. Do your duty but surrender the fruits of your actions to Him who is seated in you, then no harm can befall you, then you can remain aloof from the effects of your *Karma*, just as the lotus leaf though standing in water is untouched by water. This central teaching is conveyed to us in every aspect of Lord Krishna's life. He was the God of Gods who had assumed a human form and, therefore, He underwent all the commonplace travails and hardships that ordinary mortals go through.

Such a divine personality took birth of parents who were in jail and yet was separated soon after birth from His parents. As He grew up, He was persecuted no end but He bore with every circumstance into which He was cast like an ordinary mortal, teaching us also to bear with fortitude every circumstance that may face us in life. Lord Krishna also gave refuge to all those who surrendered themselves to Him. Even His end in His *avatar* as Lord Krishna was of an ordinary mortal, when He gave up His body to an archer's arrow. If we were to just contemplate on Lord Krishna's life, we can realise that Krishna was not someone different from us. He was very much like us, yet He brought out the divine in Himself and so can we. That is why we are asked to meditate on Lord Krishna. Now, as we already know, Lord Krishna had sworn that He would not wield any weapons in

the Mahabharata war. But, Bhishma had also taken a vow that he would die at Krishna's hands and, to carry out this great *Bhakta's* vow, Krishna was prepared even to break His own oath. Krishna was the Lover of His devotees. We all have difficulties to face in our life and, many a time, we do not know which way to turn, what to do? At such times, if we bring to mind Lord Krishna and His *Lila*, it shows us a way out of our travails and gives us the right direction.

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IT is some days since We last had this discourse on *Srimad Bhagavata*. When We had left off, Shaunaka was being told by Suta how Lord Krishna had been to Bhishma when he was lying on his bed of arrows, waiting for his end and how that Bhishma, who was a great devotee of Krishna, had with his last breath, extolled the glories of the Lord. Bhishma had said that it was his good fortune that in his hour of death, he could see the beautiful form of Lord. Krishna had made Arjuna bring the waters of the sacred Ganga to quench the thirst of Bhishma. This and the presence of Krishna before him makes Bhishma so blissful that he goes into ecstasies describing Lord Krishna.

Thus, describing Lord Krishna's glories with every breath, Bhishma gives up his body. Suta tells Shaunaka and others how Bhishma's soul merged with the Supreme Being, with Lord Krishna, the very moment his breath stop. Suta says that when Bhishma sent his soul soaring into Krishna *Paramatman*, and his breath joins the Void, there was a shower of flowers from the heavens. After all the last rites for this great devotee of His had been performed, Lord Krishna consoles Dhrithrashtra, Gandhari and the Pandavas. Now, except for Dhrithrashtra, there were no more seniors left in the Kaurava family and, in consultation with Dhrithrashtra, Lord Krishna entrusts the Kingship of the vast kingdom to Yudhishtira and, thus, with the blessing and co-operation of Lord Krishna, Yudhishtira begins his reign.

Summary of the discourse given on August 23, 1977.

Then, Shaunaka asks of Suta: "What happened when Lord Krishna, having discharged His duties and responsibilities to the Pandavas, set forth to return to Dwarkapuri?" Having vanquished the evil brothers Duryodhana and other Kauravas, how did Yudhishtira carry on with reins of the Government? How did he manage to enjoy the happiness of ruling a kingdom side by side with suffering over the loss of his Kaurava brethren? Yudhishtira's nature was wellknown. He was indeed grieving over the passing away of the Kauravas. Shaunaka and others wanted to know from Suta how Yudhishtira could be happy (over his bereavement) at the same time?

Suta tells us that man cannot be perennially happy. One part of his mind may be brimming over with joy while another part nursing some sorrow or the other. How can one maintain one's equilibrium between the joy and sorrows of mundane existence? This is the question not only before Yudhishtira but before everyone of us. That is why, Shaunaka, who knew Yudhishtira's kind and compassionate nature only too well, wondered how he could be enjoying ruling his kingdom while grieving over Duryodhana and others.

Suta says that after the annihilation of a whole family as though in a massive forest fire, Yudhishtira at last became the king, he was seated on the throne of Hastinapura by Lord Krishna Himself. Krishna too was happy that Yudhishtira had become the king, because Yudhishtira was Lord *Dharma* Himself and would conduct his Government on the path of *Dharma* or righteousness. This made Krishna happy. Yudhishtira's kingdom covered the whole of *Aryavarta* and stretched to the seas. What was the state of the kingdom under Yudhishtira? Suta describes it thus : There was plenitude of everything. There was abundant rain and enough food for the body and the soul. The atmosphere was suitable for one's physical

wellbeing as also spiritual progress. After installing Yudhishtira on the throne of Hastinapura, Lord Krishna stayed on for some more days with him, before returning to Dwarka. At this time, no disease or pestilence of any kind entered the kingdom because Yudhishtira was reigning and Lord Krishna too was present on the scene and the people were blissful. The cows, it was said, gave so much milk that there was enough to meet the needs of everyone and still a good lot of milk was left over. So, also, the fruits of the trees which were in abundance, satisfied everyone and still grew more and more on the trees.

Then, Lord Krishna takes leave of Yudhishtira and other Pandavas to return to Dwarka. Yudhishtira and his brothers knelt at Krishna's feet and then embraced Him and offered their homage to Him as he ascended His chariot. Suta describes the farewell scene in Hastinapura, who all came to see Lord Krishna, how Gandhari, Kuntidevi, Nakula, Sahadeva, Bhima, Arjuna, sorrowed that Krishna was leaving their midst. All these people could not bear the thought of Krishna going. Their entire lives had been wrapped up in Krishna. Those whose minds have been completely wrapped by *Satsang* of Great Ones do not like any kind of break in this *Satsang* and cannot bear such a break even for a moment. So was it with the Pandavas and the people of Hastinapura, where Lord Krishna was concerned. A devotee wishes to retain the *Satsang* by sight, touch and thought. In the case of the people of Hastinapura, they had regarded Lord Krishna very much their own, their companion, guide and philosopher. As the time came close for Him to leave them, they recalled with poignancy everything that He did and said with them and to them. Yet, at the time of parting from Krishna, Draupadi and other womenfolk determinedly restrained their tears which would have flowed out freely, because shedding tears

is regarded as inauspicious at the time of someone's journey. At the time of Krishna's departure, the air resounded with the blowing of conches, beating of drums, banging of cymbals and playing of other instruments. People of Hastinapura crowded their balconies and rooftops and showered flowers on Lord Krishna and prayed for His safe transit and well-being. In those days, a great man's status was proclaimed by the chariot in which he rode and Lord Krishna's diamond-studded chariot was appropriate to His high status. Then, Uddhav and other lieutenants of Lord Krishna boarded the chariot after Krishna. As the chariot started moving forward, the widows of all the Kauravas who had fallen on the battlefield too started grieving over Krishna's departure from their midst and began to shed tears. They had seen how Krishna, the protector of His devotees, had, *sans* any weapons, upheld the cause of the Pandavas, who had surrendered to Him. For the sake of His friendship with them, He had helped the Pandavas at every stage, on the battlefield and off, though never carrying any weapon. Such a Lord Krishna, having accomplished His mission, was now leaving the kingdom to go back to His own realm.

The Brahmins on the way greeted Lord Krishna extolling His glories, describing Him as the *Brahman* Himself who had assumed this human form to do all things that He had done. They described Lord Krishna as the Ever-Blissful Supreme Being who, in His human incarnation, had taught humanity how to perform one's duties, neither aspiring nor shunning what was to befall one because of past births. Krishna showed us that we too can attain the *Brahman* if we can detach ourselves from the sense of doership. If we can realise that all that happens to us is because of our past *Karma*, good or bad, if we can stand apart from the meshes of *Karma*, we too can attain *Brahman* and lose

ourselves in the Eternal One. Lord *Krishna* is a glowing example of One who carried out all His duties and functions, yet remained detached from everything. The Brahmins hailed Lord Krishna as the Supreme Lord Himself who had remained above all the *Karmas* performed by Him. Krishna who had assumed a *Saguna* form but had retained His *Nirguna* state all the time.

Where there is *Shuddha Purusha*, there is always *Shuddha Prakriti*. The two aspects of the Lord are indivisible. If Krishna was the *Shuddha Purusha*, the Gopis were *Shuddha Prakriti*. Because the two are indivisible, the Gopis were always yearning to be with Krishna. Just as the Gopis of Brindavan could not bear separation from Krishna even for moment, so also the widows of Hastinapura, who had attained a high state of purity with their devotion to Krishna, could not bear the Lord's departure from their midst. What sort of a Krishna was He? He was such that He was always detached from the mundane everyday life and was lost in contemplation of His own Divine Self. These Kaurava women go on extolling the greatness of such a Krishna, describing Him as All-pervading, Who had penetrated every human soul on earth, who was this and Who was that and so on. Normally, when speaking of Krishna and Gopis, all kinds of ideas may fill one's mind, but these women were not ordinary women. They were realized souls, they knew that Lord Krishna represented *Purusha* and they came to know that life was worthwhile only if we attained God. If we want to grasp the Supreme Being by awakening our inner vision, we can always attain Him. He who wants to rise above the play of "*dwandwas*" or dualities and the three *Gunas* and would want to attain Lord Krishna must think of Him ceaselessly as the Gopis did till they lost their own individual consciousness and became Krishna themselves.

So, also the women of Hastinapura had come to love and adore Lord Krishna, making Him their own and now at the time of His going from their midst, they dwelt on His glories, describing Him as One eternally lost in Himself, who had taken birth on this earth only to enjoy His own *Lila*, as He who had brought forth this *Prakriti* and created the world after His own image, projecting His mighty Self in every creature on earth. Having been born in "*sansar*", everyone must strive to realise the Supreme Being, the source of all creation. To do that we must acquire inner knowledge and inner vision. God cannot be seen by our normal eyes. He can be seen only if we open our inner vision. This is possible only through *Sadhana* which helps us to shed our body consciousness, our sense of doership and helps us to realise that we are *Brahman*. In this realm of the Spirit, all the doctorates and learning one had acquired is useless. All these may be reduced to nothing by some later-day theses. So, this is not true knowledge. To attain real Knowledge, we must have devotion for Lord Krishna and it is only after *Sadhana* that such a devotion can be developed.

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KRISHNA has started for Dwarkapuri from Hastinapur and He is being given a rousing farewell with band music and flowers and with all the people of Hastinapur setting forth with Him to see Him off. The womenfolk of Hastinapur extol Lord Krishna's greatness in such beautiful terms and so well. Suta tells Shaunaka that womenfolk are regarded as weak and ignorant but it is from the lips of such women that Vyasa has brought forth such a wonderful description of Lord Krishna's greatness. These women were so ignorant that they did not know anything of the *Vedas*, *Shastras* and other scriptures but, every one of them had Krishna in their heart and knew Him only too well. Suta specially lays stress on the weakness of women where religious lore is concerned and says that even the learned ones have to try a great deal and even then they trip over when it comes to describing the Almighty.

People might wonder why Sage Vyasa should leave out all other great contemporaries of Krishna's time and make only the weak and ignorant women of Hastinapur sing His eternal glories. Vyasa wanted to show that even the weakest human being can aspire for the highest spiritual attainment. Speaking of Lord Krishna, these women declare that He is *Paramapurusha*, the Supreme Being. *Trigunatita*, One above the three *Gunas*, Who is always withdrawn in Himself. Krishna had a thousand wives, yet He was called *Nitya Brahmachari*, He performed so many functions, yet He

Summary of the discourse given on August 24, 1977.

kept Himself apart from all those functions and was completely lost in Self-contemplation.

It is appropriate that while speaking of Lord Krishna, we think of His Holiness Swami Anandashram. You all knew His Holiness. He used to carry out all His functions, sit at meetings, talk to people, advise them whenever His advice was sought. Yet, when He spoke, whenever He moved, one could discern that His Holiness was really far away, lost in divine consciousness, present on the scene amidst us only in body. All the time He was wrapped up in contemplation of the Self, keeping Himself away from all His earthly acts and functions. So, also, Krishna carried out all his multifarious functions without being lost in them, and in a state of uninterrupted divine consciousness. Those who moved with Krishna knew of it. And, to bring out the true greatness of Krishna, Vyasa makes the ignorant womenfolk of Hastinapur sing His glories. Dwelling on Lord Krishna's greatness, these women, who are quoted as talking among themselves, say that this Krishna was the Lord Himself in whom all the actions and happenings in this world were concentrated. This true greatness of Krishna neither Yūdhishthira nor Arjuna could realise but the so-called ignorant women did.

Krishna is the *Parama Parusha* who has assumed the human birth but, at the same time, kept Himself detached from every function that He performed with His human body. Likewise, His Holiness Swami Anandashram used to perform all His functions, in a state of utter detachment, from His childhood days, from the time He came into the Math. We ourselves have always looked on His Holiness as we look on Krishna. No matter what circumstances faced His Holiness, He faced up to it but truly speaking He was there only in body, in spirit He was already one with the Absolute. We are again and again reminded of His Holiness whenever we speak of Lord Krishna. He too

was a worshipper at the Gopalkrishna temple at Shirali from His childhood and His own life was portrayed after that of Krishna. Like Krishna, no adverse circumstances ever daunted His Holiness.

Here, when we refer to the women folk of Hastinapur, we are not concerned with their feminine nature, but with the fact that like the Gopis, they had truly and fully understood Krishna. We have always said that if we surrender to Lord Krishna heart, body and soul as the Gopis did, we too can become like the Gopis, utterly lost in Him. Even Yudhishtira or Arjuna could not become like the Gopis in their devotion to Krishna. These women knew Krishna so well that they hailed Him as One who was in all and as all and yet above all, in Whom all creatures took refuge at the time of *Pralaya* or destruction.

Lord Krishna knew He was *Brahma Tatva*, was *Trigunatita*. Yet, for the sake of His own *Lila*, He created this world from His own being and all the creatures of the world. Our life exists in this world only so long as the breath of life in us. In fact, the play of all the three *Gunas* is because of this breath of life is in us, but we can control the three *Gunas* and thereby gain self control. If we can do that we will not be affected by the vicissitudes of life. This is what our ancients have been telling us from time immemorial. To tell all this, the womenfolk of Hastinapura gaze on Lord Krishna's resplendent form and say : if we want to be liberated from this vale of misery and keep ourselves pure and innocent, then we should meditate on Lord Krishna's lotus feet and think of nothing else. With all our fervour and concentration, we should think of Krishna and Krishna alone.

According to Narada, He created this universe out of *Satva Guna*, preserves it through *Rajo Guna* and destroys it through *Tamo Guna*, thus in Him are combined all the three functions of creation,

preservation and destruction, Yet Krishna is One who does not lose Himself in these functions while performing them but remains above all. As *Prakriti*, Krishna does all, as *Purusha*, He remains above all.

The present *Yuga* is considered full of *Adharma* and ignoble rulers are born of this *Adharma*. At such a time this very Krishna in order to help the people preserve themselves gives them proper advice and helps to withstand the mundane mishaps and surmount the force of worldly distractions. The women of Hastinapur tell one another thus : This *Lakshmi-pati* has blessed the whole Yadav clan by taking birth in their tribe, Mathura was blessed always because of Lord Krishna's comings and goings through that place. We have heard of paradise and its attractions but, say the Hastinapura women, greater than all the attractions of paradise were Gokul and Mathura with Krishna being there. In heaven, one may or may not get to see the gods but here you have only to aspire to see Lord Krishna and Lo! He stands before you in all His resplendent glory. They go on to say that Krishna's 16,000 wives must have prayed a lot and done a great deal of penance in their previous lives to get a boon of becoming Krishna's consorts and thus be able to serve Him and see Him day and night. Rukmini, Jambavanti and other queens who had been espoused by Krishna for their own liberation, must have earned a lot of merit in their previous lives. It was because of this merit that in this life, Krishna had made them queens and His very own. It was while the women of Hastinapur were talking among themselves in this strain, that Krishna set out on His journey back to Dwarka. He was escorted by a train of caparisoned elephants and horses led by Yudhishtira.

वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम् ।

देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥



LORD Krishna has left Hastinapur for Dwarka and the description of the departure from Hastinapur and the farewell accorded to Lord Krishna by Yudhishtira and his brothers is also over. Then, we heard of how the womenfolk of Hastinapur poured their devotion for Lord Krishna, how they gazed upon Him, how they reposed Him in their hearts, how they extolled Lord Krishna—all this we heard yesterday. They are still talking themselves in the following strain: "O friends, how many meritorious deeds in their previous lives must have been performed by the women who were lucky to become Lord Krishna's wives. They must have offered worship to Him day and night in order to earn the privilege of serving Him in this life as His wives. They now have an opportunity to be close to Lord Krishna, to serve Him, to meditate on His entrancing form and be lost in Him." We had come up to this point yesterday. We go onward now.

Lord Krishna is supposed to have had 16,000 wives of whom three were particularly close to Him, and were described as His 'favourite' wives namely Rukmini, Jambavanti and Radha. This is described not only in the *Bhagavata* but in other life descriptions of Lord Krishna also. But the true meaning of Lord Krishna having 16,000 wives and three favourites is something different. We are told that the *Panch* Pandavas are none else but our '*panch indriyas*' or five senses, the *Jnana Indriyas* and the *Karma Indriyas*. All

the characters who come into Krishna's life and play a role in His activities are all to be found in our own system. We had told you at the outset that the central role in *Bhagavata* is played by *Aham-vritti* or the Self. All the characters of the *Bhagavata* are only illustrations to depict the role played by various parts of our own system and our own characteristics.

Thus, the three favourite wives and the 16,000 wives that Lord Krishna is supposed to have had are also comparable to our own physical characteristics. Why do the various parts of our system function in the way they do? They do so because *Aham-vritti* or the Self has taken its place within our bodies, because just as the 16,000 wives of Lord Krishna regard Krishna as their own, so also our physical parts look on the Self as their own and function for Him. Lord Krishna is said to have kept the three favourite queens particularly close to Him. So, also, in our system, *Aham-vritti* has kept three functions close to it. Those who are acquainted with the *Jnana Marg* know what those three close favourites are. The three favourite "wives" are the three "*nadis*" of our life-breath—*Sushumna*, *Ida* and *Pingala*. We may not be aware of them but these three play the most vital functions of our life and are closest to *Aham-vritti*. This is *Yogic* truth and not something to be told in the streets. But, it is being narrated here to explain the real meaning of Lord Krishna's 16,000 wives. The *Rishis* have deliberated for long on these facts and interpreted that the 16,000 wives of Krishna are none else but the 16,000 arteries and veins making up our system. Just as the 16,000 wives look up to Lord Krishna to protect them and nourish them, so also the 16,000 arteries and veins of our system look up to *Aham-vritti* and strive day and night for *Aham-vritti* and to please it.

In the beginning of all creation there was only *Akash* or the great Void. Then from the Void came the first

sound. That is also the first sound that comes from our throat and our lips. It is this sound that our arteries and veins first hear as they serve the Lord within. As the women folk of Hastinapur said among themselves, Krishna's 16,000 wives know of the sound coming from the Lord's lips and have surrendered all their *Jnana Indriyas* and *Karma Indriyas* at the feet of the Lord and thereby elevated their own existence. The Lord never leaves their homes and their minds.

Now, as the people of Hastinapur gaze on the Lord with their pure gaze of devotion and shower praise on Him, Lord Krishna goes in His chariot to Dwarka. Though the enemies had all been vanquished with the help of Lord Krishna, nobody could say when and from where new dangers would come and therefore Yudhishtira and his brothers take elaborate steps to protect Lord Krishna, their Protector. There is a well-known saying that if you want *Dharma* to protect you, if you want the Lord to protect you, you must first be prepared to protect *Dharma*, protect the Lord Protector. This is a beautiful interpretation and Vidyaranya has written very nicely on it. We always assume that the Lord is supreme, all-pervading, omnipotent and so on. Then, why does He need protection from us? Now, you have a temple, you install a deity in it, invest in with all the paraphernalia, the *prabhavali* etc. You cannot leave the temple and the deity to themselves, saying that let the Lord take care of Himself. Vidyaranya Swami has said beautifully that the Lord protects us only to the extent we are prepared to protect and care for Him. If we throw the Lord to the four winds, we too eventually fall by the wayside. This is the real meaning of the elaborate steps taken by Yudhishtira, Arjuna and others to protect Lord Krishna as he journeyed from Hastinapura to Dwarka. The Mahabharata war was over, the Kauravas had all been eliminated, yet they

felt the need to protect the Lord who had helped them, had protected them and made them survive the holocaust.

Vidyaranya tells us explicitly that if we protect God, God protects us. If we protect *Dharma*, if we uphold *Karma*, then *Dharma* and *Karma* protect us and shield us also.

Thus, in the company of the Pandavas, Krishna journeys to Dwarka where the people have been waiting for Him most eagerly. As He nears Dwarka, Krishna takes leave of His hosts, the Pandavas return to Hastinapur and He journeys onward with Uddhav. Suta tells Shaunaka how Krishna traverses different lands like Panchala, Saraswat lands and so on to reach Dwarkapuri. On nearing Dwarka, Krishna has his ablutions in a nearby stream, performs *Sandhyopasan*, rests and feeds the horses and thus comes to a close the tenth chapter of the *Bhagavata*.

Suta tells us how the Lord was greeted by the people of Dwarka as He reaches His kingdom. As Krishna approaches the precincts of Dwarka, He blows His conch to announce His coming. He is described by Vyasa as holding the white conch in His hands and then taking it to His beautiful red lips to blow it. It is such a beautiful sight that Vyasa likens it to a Rajhans sitting amid a red lotus (*Rajkamal*), thus Dwarka had its first *Darshan* of Krishna on His home-coming.

We have been told how Lord Krishna blew His conch during the war, on the battlefield and, now, how He again blew His conch on arrival at Dwarka. The real meaning is this: The conch is known to blow only the sound of *Omkar*, made up of A-U-M. That sound begins in the throat and comes out from the lips. They were also the last sounds uttered by Swami Anandashram before He gave up the body. The sound A-U-M is the primeval sound, it is the *Shankhnaad* itself for the sound of the conch is *Omkar swarup*. You

all know how Lord Vishnu is portrayed as holding the conch, *Chakra*, *Gada* and *Padma* in His four hands. In His right hand, He holds the *Shanka* or conch which signifies *Omkar*. All creation had its beginning in the sound A-U-M. Then, comes the *Chakra*. The *Chakra* is not merely a weapon to destroy the evil-doers. It signifies the wheel of life in which we find ourselves caught, which makes us go through hectic activity all our life. Then, there is the *Gada* or mace which is there to remind us and caution us not to get entangled in worldly activity forgetting the Self. Then, finally, there is the *Padma* or the lotus. The Lord holds the *Padma* in order to teach us to be like the lotus which stands in water but is untouched by water. So should we remain in the world, yet be unaffected by the upheavals and hectic activity we see around us. The Lord tells us that even if we are caught in the "*chakra*" of worldly activity, even if the "*Gada*" of retribution falls on us, we should be guided by the example of the "*Padma*" and achieve detachedness.

Our throat itself is the conch, from its depths comes the sound A-U-M representing creation, preservation and destruction. Lord Krishna is depicted as blowing the conch of His at every turn, in war and in peace, and the sight of the white conch touching His red lips is compared to that of the Rajhans or royal swan seated amid *Rajkamal* or the red lotus. There is a deep esoteric meaning behind this example. On hearing the sound of the conch, A-U-M, the *Mahadhwani* of *Aham-vritti* itself, all the devotees of Dwarkapuri rush out to greet the Lord, and fall at His feet. The clarion sound of the conch which strikes terror in the minds of the worldly-minded is taken by the devotees of the Lord as welcome summons to His presence, to fall at His feet, surrendering themselves to Him heart, body and soul. They are compared to the votaries of the rising sun who turn to the sun and offer *Suryanamaskar*, so also

Krishna's devotees turn as one man to Krishna and fall at His feet. Just as a son seeing his father after many days rushes to his arms joyously, so do the devotees of the Lord rush to Him joyously at His coming after so many days. Seeing Him, with choked throats, in tremulous voices, they say: "O Lord ! Protector, O divine father whom Indra, Narada and all gods worship, we worship Thee. Even Brahma's *Kaal* surrenders itself at Thy lotus feet, such feet are Thine." This is a eulogy to Devotion itself as spelled out by Vyasa. The devotees say : "We are most happy to have you again in our midst after so many days. Your most attractive form, your lotus-spelled face which all gods hunger to have a glimpse of, we are happy to have in our midst again. Each moment spent by us away from you has been like a thousand years, like one long night, without the sun. Since you went to Hastinapura to protect the Pandavas, we have felt cheerless. So, please, in future, do not leave us, be with us always. Without You, our life is one long night, we have become dispirited. So, in future, please stay on in Dwarka itself, giving us Your company."

We have heard till now only the welcome words uttered by the devotees of Krishna. Then, comes the description of the reception accorded to Him, how the elders of Dwarka escorted Him into His kingdom.

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H EARING the sound of the conch, that clarion sound of the conch, that clarion sound which is *Omkar* itself, which is the liberator of all mankind from human bondage, all the people of Dwarka rush out to greet their Lord. To these people of Dwarka, who were thirsting for Krishna's *Darshan*, the clarion sound of the divine conch came like the veritable *Omkar* itself and like divine summons from their beloved Lord. And how did they greet their Lord? Just as we offer *Arati* with a small flame to the Creator of all light. To the Sun of Suns, so also these diverse people of Dwarka offered their small *aratis* as their humble offerings to the Lord. We are told here that whatever we offer to God with a loving heart, with all devotion, God accepts that article, howsoever small it be, God is pleased to accept such a gift. Just as we offer *Arati* to the sun, so did the people of Dwarka offer their worship to Lord Krishna. We are told here by Vyasa how they conducted themselves child-like before their Lord and Master, talking to Krishna with the gushing warmth of sons to their parent, so did the people of Dwarka speak to Krishna in tremulous tones with love welling up in their hearts. They addressed Lord in these terms :

"O Lord! We offer our eternal devotion to Thee who art worshipped even by the creator Brahma and Narada. We offer our constant salutation to Thee who art worshipped by all creation, who is above all time and space. Taking refuge at Thy lotus feet, no time

(*kaal*) can affect us. O Lord Father! Please save us, Thou art mother, father, friend, Guru, Lord, God of Gods, the Supreme Being, so look after us well. You have come back to us after a long time. You are Guru of Gurus to us."

Lord Krishna never posed as a God. Only on the battlefield of Kurukshetra and to Arjuna alone, did He reveal His divine Self in order to remove Arjuna's clinging doubts and fears and disclose His *Vishwaroopa Darshan* to him. To all others, Krishna spoke and moved about like an ordinary human being. Yet, such a man-like being was worshipped and adored by the people of Dwarka in these words : "Thou art an example for all of us to emulate and by emulating Thy example, we hope to attain our own salvation." From these words, we may infer that Lord Krishna never put Himself on a pedestal as someone above the common mankind, but moved everywhere like a common human being, setting an example to other men by His life itself, so that they could model their lives too accordingly. In *Sansar*, we come upon many moments of joy and pleasure when we laugh and many moments of sorrow and woe when we cry. There is a state equidistant between the two states—pleasure and sorrow—which is trod by those who are not affected by either. Lord Krishna is depicted here as One who trod that middle road and whose face was always wreathed in equanimity, who faced every situation with sameness and never got ruffled. And, the people of Dwarkapuri told Krishna : "By seeing that face of equanimity, we take You as one of us, as One on whom we can depend to lead us on."

"Every day that You have been away from us, on one pursuit or the other, either to deal with Kauravas, or to go to Pandavas, or to go to Mathura or to the Gopis, has seemed like an aeon to us and our lives are shadowed like an eclipsed sun. O Ever-loving God

of Gods, please don't ever abandon us." With such thrilling words did the people of Dwarka greet their adorable Lord Krishna and with these words ringing in the air Krishna enters Dwarka. Then, we are told of how Dwarka was decorated to greet the coming of the Lord. Every street was made to look like a veritable garden, with a riot of flowers, festoons, buntings and even the smallest of lanes took on a floral appearance. Mango leaves, arches etc. adorned every door. For His coming, the people of Dwarka had made such preparations that Krishna was greeted by flowers, flowers everywhere. The festoons and arches were so many that they formed a canopy and shielded Him from the sun. He was received and escorted in to Dwarkapuri by heroes of the kingdom like Vasudeva, Pradyumna, Jambavanti's son, Balarama and others. Everyone had articles of auspiciousness in their hands. To see the Lord, people engaged every kind of transport to rush out of town to receive Him. They put Brahmins in the vanguard but Lord Krishna saw no distinction between Brahmin and Vaishya. Those who greeted Him included dancers well-versed in the nine *Rasas*, dance masters, story-tellers, courtiers, bards, all of whom received Him singing His glories.

When they all came up to Him, Lord Krishna received them all with love and enquired after the welfare of each one of them. He showed the same ever-smiling face full of love and compassion to everyone, high and low, Brahmin and '*chandala*', all were equally dear in His eyes. He accepted their oblations as some clasped His hands tightly, every manner of greeting Lord Krishna accepted with sameness.

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