

Discourses/Articles
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BHAGAVAN SRI KRISHNA THE GREAT INCARNATION

Invocation

The One alone, which's all this manifold,
Revealed as twofold inseparables,
Announced the strange togetherness of form,
Which undivided on one side abides
And vast creation on the other stands.
The unseen and the seen are just the one,
The That-which-is, is all this appearance.
Narayana and Nara immortals,
The great resources puissance e'r attained,
Whose radiance o'rshadows all the gods,
Whose lustre fills this world with vibrant life,
And reaches e'n all realms beyond the earth,
Who glow as fire invincible, yet calm,
As sun who shine, as wind are lofty strong,
Dazzling as flame and beautiful as moon,
As Krishna and Arjuna came on earth,
As fullness grown of Vishnu's encompass,
Glory which has no boundaries or walls.
When it descends to picture human frames
Is Superman who wields the field of force
Which throbs in hearts of atoms and all things.
The sea when pressed and condensed into form
To fill a space as wide as human form
Becomes the genius stunning human brain.
Stupendous surges from the infinite
Contain the whole of what's infinitude.
The full when all this world of things projects
Is still the full with no diminution,
And that which comes is also full ablaze;
So Krishna came as full eternity
Which walked the streets of temporality.

Bhagavan Sri Krishna is the *Purna Avatara* (Full Incarnation) of Narayana; the complete manifestation of God. The fullness of the incarnation is itself the difficulty in understanding the life and gospel of Sri Krishna. The many-sidedness of his personality and the multifaceted meaning of his gospel follow the integrality of his being. The human mind cannot think of fullness, as it is a finite instrument of the individual. The

concepts of good and evil, right and wrong, and such other appraisals of the values of life, arise on account of the incapacity of the human mind to comprehend fullness. That which is good is not full, because the bad is opposed to it. The bad also is not full, because the good is opposed to it. The right thing is not full, because the wrong thing is opposed to it. The wrong also is not full, because the right thing is opposed to it. There is no such thing as fullness in this world. No form of thinking or understanding through the endowments of the human being can be complete. The manifestation of God as Sri Krishna, in that fullness and glory, is intended to demonstrate the perfection of God. Sri Krishna is supposed to have incarnated himself to show to mankind the glory and the perfection of God. Perfection is not to be seen in this world, not in its notion of truth, its ethical norms, its moral codes, its idea of reality, or its judgment of any value. It cannot be a content of the human mind or intellect, because the human view is logical in its comprehension; and logic is nothing but the way in which we try to bring together two separated parts of a proposition, the subject and the predicate. And the two parts, imply a dichotomy between the two parts. The very presence of the subject as distinguished from the object, the seer from the seen, severed one from the other, is a proof of the inability of the finite individual to comprehend perfection. Thus, the life of Sri Krishna cannot be correctly understood by man, nor can he appreciate adequately the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita.

What man thinks as a content of his mind, as an object of his perception, and what he himself is, is all comprehended in God-consciousness. It is the spiritual law that is manifest in the life and gospel of Sri Krishna, and not just the human law, the legal or political law of man, as it is enacted variegatedly from time to time according to the counsels of ministers or the members of a parliament. The Divine law is a perpetual one and it is an eternal enactment of the Universal Constitution of God's creation.. To think Sri Krishna is to think the Cosmos. It will stir the personality at one stroke and raise it to a sense of ecstasy. The necessity to demonstrate the *Visvarupa*, or the Universal Form, in the life of Sri Krishna, is enough indication of what was hiddenly present in the personality of Sri Krishna as the purpose of his incarnation. We have been told that a gesture of his hand, a smile from his lips, or any movement of his body, indicated, suggested a cosmic event taking place somewhere. This can be appreciated by us when we see that any movement of a particular limb of our body is related to a simultaneously sympathetic operation of all the limbs of the body, the whole body. If a toe moves, the whole body moves because of the interrelatedness of the parts composing the organism. In a similar manner is the way we have to understand the performances in the life of such a mighty incarnation as Sri Krishna. The whole cosmos was involved. It is only in this sense that we can say that he was considered *Sampurna*, *Purna*, *Akshaya*, complete. As every part of our body in its movement indicates a function of all the parts of the body simultaneously, we can understand how the events and actions of Sri Krishna in his life have relevance to anything that could take place anywhere in the cosmos. Cosmic was Sri Krishna, supreme *par excellence*. Transcendent Man was Sri Krishna. This is why his ethics, his teachings, his philosophy, is found to be so hard for us to go deep into it. Look at the Bhagavad Gita gospel, for instance. It is not easy for us to know what is its essential message. Anyone can read any meaning into it, according to one's own needs, predilections and dispositions. So was Sri Krishna's behaviour, the concretisation of the exemplary Superman.

To some he looked like a small child, to some others a beautiful youth, to some others a terror and a warrior, and to the *Yogins* he was the most beloved and magnificent object of highly satisfying meditation. Like the ocean in which one can find anything, so one could find everything in Sri Krishna, the great perfection. *Narayana* and *Nara* are supposed to have taken form as Sri Krishna and Arjuna. They were almost like twins, working together living together, eating together, one being in two bodies. The association of Sri Krishna with Arjuna, so inseparable, is an illustration of the inseparable relation between God and man. This truth is brought into high relief especially in the last verse of the Bhagavad Gita. “*Yatra yogeshvarah Krishno, yatra partho dhanur dharah; Tatra srirvijayo bhutir dhruva nitir matir mama,*” says Sanjaya. “Where Sri Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, is; and Arjuna, the wielder of the bow, is; simultaneously seated in one chariot, together; there perfection reigns supreme, success is at hand, all glory is there at once, and there is perfect righteousness.” Divine grace and human effort go together. Knowledge and action are in the state of a perfect blend. The absolute and the relative are not two different entities; they are in one chariot. The chariot in which Sri Krishna and Arjuna are seated may be the historical chariot that moved on the field of the Mahabharata, or it may be symbolic for Ishvara and Jiva, God and man who are working together in the human heart. Or, this chariot can be the whole Universe, and it could be the Absolute enacting the drama of the relativity of manifestation. The inseparability of Sri Krishna and Arjuna as friends, as has been told again and again in the Mahabharata, is an illustration of the point of the inseparability of God and man, the Creator and his Creation. It is to demonstrate this truth of the universality of God’s perfection and the ideal inclusiveness of everything that this incarnation shone on earth. “*Yada yada hi dharmasya glanir bhavati Bharata; Abhyutthanam adharmasya tadatmanam srijamyaham. Paritranaaya sadhunam vinasaya cha dushkritam; Dharma-samthapanarthaya sambhavami yuge yuge.*” “Whenever the balance of the universe is disturbed by external interference from any of its parts, then I reveal Myself as the Power of eternal balancing. For the protection of those who are in harmony, and the rectification of everything disharmonious, I incarnate Myself at every juncture of time.”

Through these verses of the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna proclaims the meaning of his descent for the ascent of the spirit of man. God’s incarnation is a perpetual act, an eternal occurrence. It is not merely a historical event that took place centuries back and is not taking place now. The words, ‘*Yuge yuge*’, imply every juncture of time. At a great juncture and critical moment and crisis, God manifests Himself to dissolve that crisis and conflict. The perpetual incarnation of God is taking place every moment of time, which is the work of Vishnu, the Sustainer, who is ever vigilant in maintaining the harmony of all creation, which gets disturbed by an excess of *rajas* and *tamas*, distracting desires in the direction of objects of sense and torpidity due to excessive fixity caused by dark natures, clouds of unknowing.

There are various facets in the life of Sri Krishna, the spiritual or the supremely transcendent metaphysical aspects, the cosmic aspect, the human aspect, the family aspect, the national aspect and the ethical, moral, social, economic and even political aspect. Could anyone imagine a greater warrior, a soldier, a field marshal, than Sri Krishna? Can anyone, any Yogi, any saint, any sage, any Rishi, excel, in any manner, the knowledge and the power of Sri Krishna? The greatest householder, the greatest Sannyasin, the greatest Yogi, the centre of knowledge and an abundant source of

affection and love, embodiment of duty supreme and power magnificent, comprehensiveness of all sublime values, thus he excels. Such was Sri Krishna who could speak to Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra at the same time, and yet wash the feet of guests who attended the Rajasuya sacrifice of Yudhishtira. What a combination! To face Rudra and Brahma in the highest heavens and have concourse and discourse with them perpetually, while walking on the dusty streets of Kurukshetra and wielding a whip in his hand, driving the horses of the chariot of Arjuna in the battlefield! What a comprehensiveness! The highest and the lowest, both find an affectionate haven in Sri Krishna's glorious person. He himself was not a king, he was not an emperor, he was not a ruler, but he could manifest any number of kings. He was a master kingmaker. His word could bring kings down from their thrones. Such was his power. What a glory!

Sri Krishna attended the ceremony of the wedding of Draupadi with the Pandavas in the palace of Drupada, and he was silently sitting there unidentified by people. He uttered not a single word. In that audience he never revealed himself. But, when the ceremony was over and Draupadi was back at home, the Pandavas were in their little cottage with their mother Kunti, Sri Krishna came there with large presents, gold, silver, treasure, horses, elephants and what-not. Yudhishtira was in a state of daze. He was not to reveal himself because they were living *incognito*. Yudhishtira asked Sri Krishna, "Krishna, how could you recognise us?" Sri Krishna replied humbly, "Fire cannot be hidden. Wherever fire is, one can know that it is there." Smilingly, he offered them rich presents and walked back to Dwaraka, as if he had nothing to do with the Pandavas any more, except to pay homage and respect as a gesture of goodwill, love and affection. This is the first time, perhaps, that Sri Krishna met the Pandavas. He only knew their presence and was fully aware of their difficulties. And in his great vision he knew all the things that were to take place eventually. Unfortunately, the mystery of the divine ordinance is that he was not present during the gambling game of Yudhishtira in the palace of Duryodhana. When the Pandavas were driven into the forest as a result of the play, Sri Krishna came to know of this catastrophe, collected a large number of people, and with a huge army, went to the forest, to greet the Pandavas in their condition of destitution, poverty and sorrow. The Mahabharata tells us that Sri Krishna sat for a few moments closing his eyes and he appeared to be filled with an insurge of power which terrified those around him. Arjuna who observed the peculiar manifestation of something that is coming out from him, prostrated himself before the great Master, begged him with folded hands and offered a prayer, "Master, cool down, cool down. If you get angry, the world cannot stand." Sri Krishna spoke, "What a pity that I was not able to be present when the shameful drama of the play of dice took place in the hall of the Kauravas. I was in Dwaraka at that time in an encounter with Saubha who harassed the people of Dwaraka, and, therefore, I was not able to be present. Otherwise, I would have averted this misfortune with the power of my arms." Satyaki was roused. He got up and announced that the Yadava army should proceed straight to the Kauravas and put an end to the whole problem without associating the Pandavas in any way in this matter. Sri Krishna knew the mind of Yudhishtira and said, "The Pandavas are Kshatriyas; they will not accept charity from anybody. There is no point in our gaining the kingdom and handing over the dominion to Yudhishtira. Being a Kshatriya, he would like to acquire it with his own prowess and would not accept it as a gift from us." This reply calmed down Satyaki, and Yudhishtira thanked Sri Krishna for having taken the trouble of coming all the way from Dwaraka to see them in the forest. The Yadavas leave the place; Sri Krishna returns to Dwaraka.

For a long time there is a gap, as it were, after this meeting that took place between Sri Krishna and the Pandavas till the subsequent events. The Pandavas underwent great hardship due to lack of facilities in the forest. Being princes, they were not accustomed to that kind of difficult living. However, time passed. But Duryodhana was not satisfied even with the exile of the Pandavas. He wanted to see their death. He was hatching plans to put an end to the Pandavas even while they were in the forest, so that he might be rid of them and not have the anxiety that perhaps after twelve years or thirteen years they may come back and create further troubles for him. He was thinking what to do. He was conniving with Karna and Sakuni about this idea in his mind, which somehow reached the ears of Bhishma, the grandsire, who became enraged that Duryodhana had plans of this mean nature. Hearing of this, Bhishma summoned Duryodhana and reprimanded him severely. Duryodhana had no alternative but to yield. Then he thought again, what he could do under the circumstances. He concocted some story, as his previous plan failed due to the intervention of Bhishma: "The cattle of the palace have strayed away to the forest and so we are all to go there in search of the cows and bulls." With this pretext he thought he would go to the forest and put an end to the Pandavas by some means. He mentioned this sojourn of his to his father Dhritarashtra—not to Bhishma—that they are all going to the forest for bringing back their cattle that had strayed away. Dhritarashtra knew Duryodhana to some extent. He had some suspicions in his mind. However, he warned Duryodhana, "When you go to the forest side, do not go near the place where the Pandavas are staying. Do not go there. I advise you not to go near the Pandavas." "No, no, we are going to collect our cattle." Duryodhana went with an army. God is great. Indra, in heaven knew why Duryodhana with his army was going to the forest. How God works one can know from this incident. How compassionate God is! Even when we do not ask for help, He comes to our aid.

The Pandavas knew nothing of this matter. No body knew anything at all. But God knew. Indra sent Chitrasena, the Gandharva, to encounter the Kauravas and drive them out. What a coincidence! When Duryodhana's retinue entered the forest, the Gandharva attacked and drove them out, caught hold of Duryodhana, bound him tightly with ropes and wanted to carry him away. Duryodhana cried in a loud tone. The Pandavas were living nearby. Yudhishtira heard a voice which sounded like Duryodhana's. He was surprised. "How am I hearing the voice of Duryodhana here?" He told Bhima, "Go, and find out what is the matter. I am hearing some voice like that of Duryodhana. How is it possible?" Bhima went and saw what was happening. Duryodhana was bound hand and foot by the Gandharva and was being dragged. Bhima came back and exclaimed in joy, "Very good, very good, indeed. Very nice, I am very happy. Duryodhana is about to see his end just now at the hands of a Gandharva." Yudhishtira queried, "Why do you speak like this, he is our own brother. Go and help him if he is in trouble." "No, I will not; let him die." "I am your elder brother; you must do what I say." "No, I shall not. Let the evil Duryodhana go." Then Yudhishtira instructed Arjuna to go and help Duryodhana. Arjuna went and fought with Chitrasena, the Gandharva, defeated him and released Duryodhana from bondage. Then Chitrasena, revealed to Arjuna, "Do you know why I have come here? I was sent by Indra. Otherwise, you could not imagine what would have been the consequence." Arjuna understood the whole situation. Duryodhana was in the pangs of shame and wanted to commit suicide at that very moment. He came to do something, and something else happened! He had come to kill the Pandavas and the Pandavas had to come and rescue him! What a life! When he was sitting there and telling everyone that he would be there till he died, without eating and

without drinking, Karna came and advised, “Kshatriyas do not speak like this. The past is past, dead and gone. Get up and be a hero.” Duryodhana, thus dissuaded from his intention of fasting unto death, was taken back to the palace. So goes this wondrous story which can make anyone shed tears.

Duryodhana was evil incarnate. He was not to be satisfied, yet. He thought of some other plan to destroy the Pandavas. When he was thinking like this, the sage Durvasa came to the palace with his eighty thousand disciples. Duryodhana received the sage with great honour, respect and hospitality, fed him and arranged for his stay in the palace, very comfortably. The next morning, when the sage was to leave, Duryodhana made a request, “I have a humble request, great Master. My brothers are in the forest. They would be immensely happy if you would bless them too, by receiving their hospitality.” The sage Durvasa replied, “Well, I shall go, of course.” The intention of Duryodhana was something different. He knew that the Pandavas were not in a position to receive the sage and to feed this large number of disciples, as they were themselves living in utter poverty. Moreover, the sage was renowned for his anger, his sudden rage, for even the smallest displeasure. Duryodhana thought that this would end in the destruction of the Pandavas, because the sage would be so wroth with the inhospitable reception meted out to him by the Pandavas, that he would curse them to death, and that would rid Duryodhana of the Pandavas. This was the mischievous intention that was in the mind of Duryodhana when he made this seemingly pious request to the sage that he might very kindly receive the hospitality of the Pandavas living in the forest. Durvasa went with his large retinue of disciples. Yudhishtira received him with love. “Sage, today we are all thrice-blessed by your visit. You all shall have your day’s meal with us.”

Why did Yudhishtira speak like this? How could he utter such words when he knew that there was nothing in the house! No doubt, there was a vessel with the Pandavas, given to them by Bhagavan Suryanarayana who was pleased with the worship they offered to him. There was a condition attached to the gift of the vessel. Bhagavan Surya had ordained, “O Pandavas, you are in sorrow; you have prayed to me for succour. Well, I give you this vessel. The food that is cooked in this vessel shall be inexhaustible. You may take any amount of food from this vessel, it shall not get exhausted. But it shall become empty after Draupadi eats from it, so that it could be cleaned for the next day’s cooking.” So there was no difficulty with the Pandavas as far as food was concerned. And, always, Draupadi was the last one to eat, because the condition was that when she ate there would be nothing left in the vessel. It so happened that, on that day, when sage Durvasa arrived, Draupadi had already eaten. And so, the question of feeding the sage and his disciples did not arise. Draupadi was very much disturbed in mind when she heard, through the window, Yudhishtira inviting the sage for meal. She was wondering, “What is this person speaking? From where will we get the food?” The sage Durvasa responded, “Yes, I shall have my bath in the river and come back by noon.” “Yes, please,” said Yudhishtira, “We shall be honoured.” Then Draupadi spoke into the ears of Yudhishtira, “What have you done? How is this indiscreet behaviour of yours? From where shall we get food to serve the sage? I have already eaten. There is nothing in the vessel.” “Well, I have said what I have said. What can I do now? Let the inevitable happen,” spoke back Yudhishtira in his usual demeanour. This was a foolish promise and indiscriminate behaviour of Yudhishtira, which had no remedy. Neither did he know what was to take place. Great trouble was to come; everyone knew the nature of

the sage, a terrible person, short-tempered and capable of getting roused into irascible, cursing mood in a moment.

Draupadi went in and silently wept. "What is going to happen to us? Krishna, are you alive? Do you see what is happening to us? Are you aware of our condition? The wickedest heart on seeing us being forced into the woods like this, would burst." Her soul was crying. When the soul calls for God, God has to come. Tradition holds that Sri Krishna knew the predicament of the Pandavas. He was in Dwaraka, some thousand miles away from this forest where the Pandavas were living. In his omniscience, he knew what was happening. There was a sudden knock at Draupadi's door. She was seated inside and beating her breast in sorrow, weeping. When, on hearing the knock, she opened the door, she saw the miracle man standing there, stunning her vision. "O! You! How did you happen to come in the thick of this forest now, at this moment? From where are you coming?" "Sister, I am tired, coming on a long journey. I am hungry, having eaten nothing since yesterday. Give me something to eat." "Lord, do you tease me, knowing well that I have nothing with me?" "Do not pretend. Do not hide your food." "No, Krishna, nothing is left there with me. Why do you trouble me with this request?" "You do have something left; give it to me." "I have nothing. I have told you. I have already eaten from the vessel and cleaned it. Nothing is left." "No, you are not telling the truth, Draupadi. When I am hungry, you must not speak like this." No, please, I do not know why you say thus. There is nothing left. See, here is the vessel, empty!" Sri Krishna saw that she had not cleaned the vessel properly. There was some little leaf of vegetable sticking to the side. He took out the leaf. "Here is something. Why did you tell me that there is nothing with you. You have not told me the truth. Here is the food for me." He took out that, ate it and mentally invoked his blessings, "May the Universe be appeased." Unceremoniously, he then left the place, saying nothing, to the consternation of Draupadi. She wondered, "What has happened; where has he gone? What is this, he has vanished!" She looks. He was not to be seen. It was noon. The sage was not coming. It was one o'clock; nobody comes. Three o'clock; no news of the sage! Yudhishtira was distressed. "How is it that the sage has not yet come? He must be angry with us. And we shall receive his wrath if he is annoyed." He sent Sahadeva. "Please invite the sage for the meal." When Sahadeva was seen, the sage and the disciples ran in fear. Why they so ran, nobody knew. Sahadeva returned and reported to Yudhishtira, "They are running away." "Oh! They are running away? Are they annoyed with me?" He sent Nakula. When the sage and the disciples saw Nakula, they ran faster. "Listen, Bhima, you go and see why they are not coming. Are they angry with us? Go and find out what the matter is." Bhima went. On seeing him, they all wailed, "Let us run away. He is coming. He will kill us." No one knew what had happened. Only God knew the mystery. It appears, the stomachs of all those people got bloated as if filled with food to the brim; they all felt a satisfaction as if they had eaten up to their noses. They ran because they had no space in the stomach to eat further. The thing was that if they had gone back to Yudhishtira, and he offered food, they would not have been able to eat, which would be an insult to Yudhishtira. They ran in fear of Yudhishtira's displeasure. They ran, and ran, and ran, and never came back. And nobody knew anything. Neither Yudhishtira knew, nor his brothers, nor even Draupadi. The mystery, only Sri Krishna knew. Who else can? Thus did Sri Krishna protect the Pandavas. God listens to the prayer of a helpless soul. This incident is narrated in the Aranya Parva of the Mahabharata.

There again is a silence for a long period. We never hear of Krishna. The Pandavas go on suffering and spending their years in the darkness of the jungle. It is in this context that we hear of the encounter of Arjuna with Lord Siva, when he meditated on the Lord for receiving the boon of a divine weapon, the *Pasupata Astra*, from the Lord, for the events that were to come. Lord Siva was deeply impressed by the austerity of Arjuna, and appeared before him, assuming the form of a hunter, with Parvati also beside him, dressed as a huntress. A wild boar attacked Arjuna in a vigorous manner, which he struck with an arrow, while, at the same time, the hunter also sent an arrow at it. "O! I have killed this boar," said the hunter. Arjuna retorted, "No, it was I who killed it." "No," said the hunter, "it was I." There was an argument between the two. Arjuna, being a Kshatriya, had his own pride of honour. So there was a fierce duel between him and the hunter. An unfortunate event took place. Whatever weapon Arjuna cast was countered back by the hunter. Finally, he took up the best of his weapons, which was broken into two! Arjuna took up his sword. It broke into pieces on the shoulder of the foe, as if it was striking steel, or rock. There was no weapon left with Arjuna, everything was swallowed by the wild man. Arjuna could not understand. "How, today, I am defeated by a mere forest dweller, when I could engage even gods in battle?" Then took place a regular duel, a hand-to-hand fight, between Arjuna and the hunter, in which context the hunter gripped and threw down Arjuna with such force that he fell unconscious. And it took time for him to regain awareness. Befeeling, put to shame, totally helpless, bereft of all strength, Arjuna wept and offered prayers to Lord Siva for help, as a last resort. "How is this that I am in this predicament today, that a hunter has thrown me into this condition? Who is this rude fellow, that can be so strong?" Arjuna was offering flowers at the feet of Lord Siva, in an altar that he had kept there for worship, that he may be blessed with His Divine Grace. It is said that every flower that Arjuna offered on the altar rushed to the feet of the hunter and fell there. Arjuna could not understand, again. Perhaps the wind was blowing in that direction and the flowers were blown by the wind towards the hunter who was standing nearby? But, continually, every flower that he offered at the Sivalinga that he was worshipping moved away from that image and fell again and again at the feet of the hunter. Arjuna was surprised. All that he offered, leaves, flowers, hastily moved away from that place and adored the feet of the wild hunter who was tauntingly laughing at his victory over Arjuna. Arjuna began to feel, then, that there was some mystery behind this man, and fell at his feet. "Who are you? I cannot understand you." Immediately the hunter and the huntress vanished and they appeared in their true forms of Siva and Parvati. Here the story ends. Grand and hair-raising. Siva gives him the *Pasupata Astra* and tells him that he shall be at his disposal even in the future, whenever it was necessary.

The Pandavas completed their period of exile. The thirteen years were over, and Arjuna overcame all the Kaurava forces in a battle that took place in the city of King Virata, where the Pandava brothers were then living in disguise. The Kauravas had to withdraw into safety. King Virata thereafter recognised who his guests were. The royal brothers who were all serving there in their different capacities, he recognised them to be the Pandavas. Now, knowing who they were, the king could not contain himself. All were deeply touched, and the whole palace honoured the Pandavas and the queen. On this occasion, Sri Krishna, with the chiefs of the Yadavas, comes to the court of Virata, uninvited, and, after formal greetings, summons a conference. Here, in the meeting, Balarama, elder brother of Krishna, somehow speaks in favour of Duryodhana. "What mistake has Duryodhana committed? If the Pandavas lost their kingdom due to their

foolishness, getting defeated in playing the game of dice, it is their fault. What is the fault of Duryodhana? I do not understand the meaning of this conference, here, which seems to be contemplating on a future conflict with the Kauravas. This is, indeed, beyond me.” This gesture was very strange, indeed. Satyaki and many other Yadavas spoke back fiercely as a counterblast to the view of Balarama, and affirmed the necessity to help the Pandavas, inasmuch as it was not true that they had lost their kingdom due to their foolishness merely. It was a kind of trick that was played upon them by Duryodhana, an unfair game, which was well known to the wise Vidura. Sri Krishna consented to take necessary steps to see that the Pandavas received their share of the kingdom. Long discussions, argumentations and suggestions come forth from the various people assembled. It was decided finally that some emissary should be sent to the court of the Kauravas, to speak on behalf of the Pandavas. This was done, but the mission did not succeed. The Kauravas, also sent an emissary, Sanjaya, to speak on their behalf and to plead that war is not good, that the Pandavas should be satisfied with what they have at present; that everything is fine, nothing is wrong with Duryodhana. So on, and so forth, was the message conveyed by Sanjaya to the Pandavas, on behalf of Duryodhana. Sri Krishna firmly spoke in reply: “Sanjaya, how can you speak like this, that there was no fault on the part of Duryodhana? How cunningly did he manage to deprive the Pandavas of all their possessions, right from the beginning? The Kauravas tried to poison Bhima, even when he was young. The whole series of dastardly events was picturesquely narrated by Krishna to Sanjaya, so that he would go back and convey what was in the mind of the Pandavas. “From the beginning till this moment, it was all ill doing and a vengeful attitude on the part of Duryodhana. There was no iota of goodness in him. He tried his best to see the end of these poor brothers. That he did not succeed was a different matter. Now the time has come, and the brothers cannot keep quiet. They have to receive their share.” And Arjuna speaks, Bhima speaks, Nakula speaks, Sahadeva speaks. Everyone has something to say, confirming the opinion of Sri Krishna that their share is due and they cannot wait anymore. Sri Krishna gives a long discourse, in the presence of Sanjaya, so that he might convey back all that transpired between him and the Pandavas here in this meeting. Arjuna again speaks, “Sanjaya, go and tell Duryodhana: people can swim across the ocean with their arms, they can drink fire, they can shake the Meru mountain, but they cannot face the great Krishna if he is to stand against them, and we have his blessings. Let Duryodhana beware. Let him not be foolish.” The whole of the Udyoga Parva, especially the earlier part of it, is a beautiful dramatic presentation of the glory of Divine prowess, both on the part of the Pandavas and Sri Krishna. It was decided in the end that Sri Krishna, being the wisest of persons, should go on a peace mission to the court of the Kauravas.

Sanjaya returns and explains in all detail, in the Kaurava court, what he heard from Sri Krishna and the Pandavas, and advises, “There seems to be no hope. They are very powerful.” Dhritarashtra called in Sanjaya and asked, “What did you see there? Tell me what happened.” “Venerable king! Krishna is there, and as long as he is there, I do not think that your children have any chance of victory, in case a war breaks out.” “Krishna is there, what of that? Why are you afraid? What is Krishna’s strength? What is in your mind? I cannot understand. Explain to me, what you mean by saying that Krishna is there and so there is no hope for us. What is the power of Krishna? What are you going to expect from him?” Sanjaya answers Dhritarashtra: “O king, you ask me, what is Krishna, what he is capable of, and why we should fear him. I am surprised that you put this question to me. Krishna is a great master, He can burn up all your children by a

mere thought. I have understood what he is. Let the whole world be on one side and Krishna alone be on the other side; the world cannot shake a single hair of his body. He is there, ready to swallow all of your children on the pretext of the war that is going to take place, evidently, since your children are not going to listen to anybody's advice. I am fearing that he might even come here to speak to you all." "He is coming? Oh! such a person! Arrange, arrange, arrange for his reception beautifully and grandly. Let him be pleased. Please him. Appease him. If he is such a person as you have described to me, we should fear him. Please see that he is not displeased in any manner. Let him be taken care of as our most honoured guest and treated finely as a king. Arrange, arrange." Sanjaya, however, warned the king: "Krishna is not to be beguiled by praise, gifts and presents. Do not have misconceptions. Krishna cannot be visualised by those who have no sense of justice, who have no control over their senses." Dhritarashtra orders a grand reception to Sri Krishna who was expected to come.

On the other side, there was a talk among the Pandavas. Yudhishtira's heart would not really permit sending Krishna alone to the midst of enemies. "Whom shall we send as an ambassador?" No one could think of any suitable person who could speak in an appropriate manner and convey the proper message and carry the correct news. Sri Krishna said, "I shall go on your behalf. It shall be my pleasure." Yudhishtira sobbed: "Lord, I shall, not permit this. You go alone? They are like wolves. I cannot send you, my dear friend, to that jungle. I shall myself go; or I shall send one of my brothers." "No," replied Sri Krishna. Have no apprehensions about my safety. I think I can take care of myself." Thus, Sri Krishna goes in all glory, and reaches the palace of Duryodhana and beholds the grand arrangements that have been made to receive him. Duryodhana had organised a gorgeous feast in honour of Sri Krishna, and invited him royally. "Please," said Duryodhana. Sri Krishna's response was unexpected. "I have come to speak to you. I have come with a purpose, and where comes the question of a dinner, unless the purpose for which I have come is fulfilled. Let me be satisfied first that the thing I have come for is gained. Also, what is a meal? One cannot eat when one is not hungry, or when one has not been offered food with love. You know that I am not hungry, and you are not offering me food with love. So, in either case, there is no point in your telling me to partake of your feast. I shall see you tomorrow morning at your court and tell you the purpose for which I have come. I go." Duryodhana was startled and hurt. "What do you mean by saying, 'I go' ? You should not speak like that. What harm have I done to you? Here is my palace, everything is ready for you. You be seated here. Take rest tonight in my palace. Where are you going?" Sri Krishna declines the offer and goes straight to the hut of Vidura. He does not stay at the palace of Duryodhana, because he knew that behind this apparently beautiful arrangement and wonderful show of hospitality there was deception and absence of affection. How could he accept such a hospitality when he was sure that it was not real but wholly fake?

When Vidura, the poor man, who was living in a cottage, learnt that Sri Krishna had come, he was beside himself with joy. He had nothing to give, because the coming of Sri Krishna was sudden, and Vidura knew nothing about it. He could not keep anything ready. He had nothing, literally. The only thing that he had was pure water, with which he washed the feet of the honoured guest, made him seated and in an ecstasy of joy, spoke in a choked voice : "Lord, how are you? How came you here?" The story that we hear in this connection is something touching indeed. Vidura had nothing to offer Krishna except some plantain fruits. In his joy, which made him lose his body-

consciousness, he offered the peels to Krishna and threw the pith away, not knowing what he was doing. Such was the delight he was immersed in, on seeing Krishna in his cottage. Sri Krishna uttered not a word. He went on swallowing the peels. He noted that the plantain stuff was being thrown off, but said nothing. At that time, it appears, the wife of Vidura was taking a bath. When she heard that Sri Krishna had come, she ran without even dressing herself properly. She forgot herself equally. When she saw Vidura giving peels to the Lord, she yelled, "Oh! What are you giving?" The moment she uttered these words, Vidura came to consciousness and he immediately told her, "Go and put on your clothes, please." Neither she knew that she had no proper clothes, nor Vidura knew that he was feeding the Lord with peels. When both began to realise the mistake they had made in their overwhelming joy, the one rushed to put on decent clothes and the other offered the fruit instead of the peels. But Sri Krishna is reported to have smilingly remarked, "Now the taste of the fruit has gone. The peels were tastier." God loves only himself. He cannot love anything else, because anything else does not exist. And Vidura, when he transcended his body-consciousness in the love of God, became one with Sri Krishna. And Sri Krishna loved Vidura, not as Vidura, but as himself. But Vidura came back to body-consciousness. It meant that an independence was established, and the contact was broken. God was delighted at the taste of love, not of the plantain fruit. However, the matter ended there.

"How, O Lord, are you here?" "Well, I have come with a message from Yudhishtira to Duryodhana. I hope to deliver it tomorrow morning." "No, no; you should not go. They are very bad ones. I am afraid they may do some harm to your person." "Harm my person? Nothing of the kind is possible. If they intend doing any harm to me, I shall not wait for the war to take place. I shall give all my blessings to the Pandavas that they be rid of the trouble of making preparations for the war, and reduce the whole host of the Kauravas to ashes with my anger; and go back, and fill Yudhishtira with joy, if any such thing takes place as you are apprehending." The next morning the Lord rides to the Kaurava court, speaks in great detail, in his sonorous tone, the justice of the cause of the Pandavas, and when Duryodhana was adamant, refusing all good advice, and even tried to capture and imprison Krishna, the great Master of Yoga revealed the Cosmic Form of the Almighty in his person, striking terror to everyone, and left the palace of the Kurus.

And, how could anyone forget to rejoice over that event when Duryodhana and Arjuna went to Dwaraka to seek assistance from the Master in the war which they felt had become unavoidable? Duryodhana reached first. The Master was reclining and resting on a couch in the palace. The royal Duryodhana sat, leg over leg, on a chair towards the head of the reclining one. A little later, Arjuna arrives, and, finding the Lord resting, stands, humbly, with folded hands, at the feet of the great one.

The Lord opens his eyes and, naturally, his eyes fall on that which was near his feet. "Oh, Arjuna? How are you here, now?" accosted Sri Krishna. "I came first, Sir; I am here," spoke Duryodhana from the other side. It is said that Sri Krishna, on hearing these words from over his head, turned to that side and looked askance at Duryodhana, seated. Devotees say that this side-glance from the eternal light sealed the fate of Duryodhana, then and there. For it is held a side-glance on a person does speak ill to that person. But, here, it had to be so, because there, was no other way of bestowing honour on pride: "Oh, you are also here?" said the Lord. "No, I came first, and have been waiting for your goodself."

“Now, Arjuna, what for have you come here? Let me hear, please.” “No, Master, you should speak to me first, since I arrived first, and also I am elder,” intervened Duryodhana. Smilingly, the Lord replied, “King, you say you have come first. But I saw Arjuna first. It is proper, therefore, that I should speak to him first. Also, being younger, he certainly deserves a kinder treatment. Arjuna, speak.”

“Great Master, What can I say before you? You are quite aware that a conflict between us seems inevitable. I seek your blessings.” “O, I see; this is why you have both come here. Yes; I understand the whole situation. But, what help do you expect from me? I have a large army, known as *Narayani Sena*, which is almost invincible. If you so wish, have it, and be pleased. Or, I am also here, a single person. If you want me to be with you, you may so choose. But, there is one thing I have to add here. Even if I am to be with you, I shall not take part in the war. I shall not take up arms and fight. I would do nothing, and remain just a silent witness. If you think that there is any point in your having me, such a person as I am, as I have told you, you are free to have me, for whatever worth I can be.” “Oh, Master, I want you alone. Bless me, O great one! I do not need the large army. I seek you, and you alone, even if you would do nothing to help me in the war. Your mere presence shall be my delight.”

“I have won! The idiot has rightly proved true to his salt, by choosing an inactive single man,” so thought Duryodhana in his mind, and spoke in a jubilant tone: “Master, give me the army; I shall be satisfied. Please bless me with the army.” “So be it,” replied the Lord Duryodhana took leave in great joy, and, returning to his court, announced loudly, before all, that he had already won the war.

“How foolish have you been, Arjuna! What made you commit this mistake of avoiding the powerful army, and wanting me, who can actually do nothing for you?” queried Sri Krishna, seeing Arjuna still standing there, in obeisance. “Worshipful Master,” saying thus, Arjuna began to wipe his tears of joy, “Mighty One! What shall I do with the army, if you are not to be with me? Your blessings I consider as of far greater importance than even the whole world of militant generals. I am indeed blessed that you are with me.” Sri Krishna laughed and said, “Do you want to compete with me? All right; may you succeed.” Arjuna prostrates himself, and leaves.

Stupid, of course, was Duryodhana, who thought that he gained all the power because he had the army, and that Arjuna had only a non-combatant single individual. He never knew that the millions of soldiers were millions of drops, and the one chosen by Arjuna, the only one, just one only, was indeed one; but it was the *one* ocean, which could swallow any number of millions of the drops. Who can appreciate that God Almighty, is greater than all the incredibly great and vast universe of power and glory!

There is no necessity to dilate on a chronological narration of the various miraculous incidents that hinge upon the life of Sri Krishna, but it is enough if we try to understand that the completeness which God portrays in this Incarnation, Sri Krishna, is perfection in every sense of the term and that it is a many-sided relationship with the whole of reality. There is no dearth in any aspect of the manifestation. Sri Krishna is a completeness in every field of activity and existence. The greatest was he in every arena, every field and every undertaking. Unparalleled learning and knowledge, incomparable majesty of a prince—this Sri Krishna was. And he was a matchless warrior in battle

whom no one could encounter, and Maha-Yogesvara, the great Lord of Yoga, greatest genius, and yet the most humble servant of mankind. That which is the greatest can also absorb into itself the lowest. Extremes meet at the same point. Perfection is not a one-sided greatness but an unthinkable arrangement of values, where to have one thing is to have all things at the same time. No one has succeeded in writing a competent biography of Sri Krishna, because to attempt such a task would be to assume in oneself the capacity to think in such an integrated manner as would be commensurate with the characteristics embodied in Sri Krishna's Life. He was a mini-universe acting, God descending on earth as spiritual wholeness, the whole cosmos dancing in a single atom, as it were; infinitude operating through the finite features of a visible human form.

Sudama Receives Blessings

The childhood friend of Sri Krishna, Sudama, now beggared and poor, approaches the palace gates in Dwaraka and requests to be taken in to his beloved friend. The gate-keepers were astonished and even annoyed at the impertinence of the beggar wanting to meet the king. The Lord knows everything. On importunity, the news was formally conveyed to the great Master. The Lord, we are told, got up from his throne and ran to receive the poor man, personally, to the consternation of all the gate-keepers and the Officials of the palace. Carefully, he led the guest inside, embraced him with immense love, and made him seated on a soft, elevated cushion, in a raised royal sofa. The feet were washed with great care. They were kneaded by Sri Krishna himself, massaged to relieve the limbs of pain after the long journey. "Why, dear friend, have you come all the way walking on bare feet? You are tired. Your feet must be aching." Thus saying, the Lord was pressing gently the feet of the poor old one, who looked astounded, dejected and much intrigued to find himself in such an atmosphere of cleanliness, neatness and gorgeous magnificence of a princely court, where he was a total misfit in every way.

After a few minutes of hearty conversation, Sri Krishna, in his own mischievous way, asked the friend, "You have come all this way. You must have brought something for me to eat. I can imagine that you would not have come without something for me." Though it was true that there was a little, wretched handful of beaten rice tied in a half-torn towel clutched under the armpit of Sudama, which had been handed over to him by his wife while starting from home days back, the stunned poor man was not courageous enough to reveal that he had brought anything. He was in utter shame even to think that he could offer such a petty thing to this great one in that palace. So he hid it tightly under the armpit and said, "I have nothing, great one. Dear friend, what can I give you? There is nothing that I can offer you. I have not brought anything." "No, no, you must be having something. Let me search. Let me see." Sri Krishna pulled out the little rag. Naturally it broke; it was a piece of old cloth. And there was a gold plate that lay there on which was poured the so-called handful. Tradition goes that the poor handful of beaten rice multiplied itself into a little mountainous heap overflowing the large plate of gold. It was not a handful, certainly. The last is the first, and the humblest is the greatest. The handful of stuff becomes a delicious fragrant offering, overflowing on that large plate placed before all there. Now, the Lord eagerly took a mouthful of it and ate it in almost an ecstasy of the joy of taste. "How nice; how tasty! How, beautiful; how grand!" And he took another handful and put it into his mouth. And when he was about to take a third handful, the queen Rukmini is reported to have held his hand and prevented him from attempting to eat it, for reasons she alone knew. Devotees tell us of this marvel. With

one handful the blessings of the entire earth were bestowed on the guest. With the second handful, final liberation was assured. Rukmini could not understand what was the intention of taking the third morsel, when the earth and heaven were already offered with the two morsels. "Do you want me also to go as a servant? Enough of it." And she stopped him from taking the third morsel. But the poor man had no guts to speak the purpose for which he had come. He was in consternation, that is all. He was flabbergasted. How could he speak, wretched that he looked in that atmosphere? He uttered nothing, though he was treated with such a wonderful hospitality and kindness. He was made to relax and rest on the beautifully laid cot. But, with all this graciousness of the host, the guest was not offered any thing. He was not even asked the purpose for which he had come, or whether he needed anything. "Do you want anything from me?" This Sri Krishna never uttered, nor did the old man say anything about his needs, though he had really taken all this pain on himself to request for some economic aid, on persistent pressure from his wife. The night passed. In the morning he was permitted to leave with the same love and kindness.

"I came all the way from my hut, my little cottage. What for is this my painful trekking? What am I going to tell my lady in the house? She expects me to bring her some wealth from Dwaraka. I had already told her that I had no wish to go and beg from Krishna. How could I, myself, ask anything? I thought he would understand my condition, he being so great. Probably he felt that I should not be bothered with wealth, the sorrow of all people. It is a bondage. It is a harassment. It is a suffering. In his great wisdom he must have known that it is not good for me to have these anxieties. I told the lady that I should not go spreading out my palms before my friend. God is great and He knows my state of affairs, which is to be worked out well. I thank my destiny. I go back with empty hands. I have received nothing, and I was not even asked if I had need of anything, though I was treated with the prince's love and affection as an honoured guest. Yes, he was considerate to me. Poverty is a blessing. The rich have their load of sorrow. Yes, I am blessed. I go." Once again, he walks back the terrible distance in the-heat of Saurashtra and Rajasthan, to reach Ujjain, his abode. He was staying in Avanti, so was today's Ujjain called then. Having covered the journey back, he was trying to find the location of his residence, which he could not visualise. In the place of the old broken cottage, he saw radiance, magnificence, gorgeous decorations a shining palace, angel-like people waiting for his arrival. He thought he was mistaken, that he had by chance entered the capital of a king, and his house lay in some other direction. When he was passing by, he enquired of a boy, "Could you tell me what is the direction in which lies the hut of that old man, Sudama?" The boy pointed out, "There it is," indicating the palatial structure. A very well-dressed, celestially happy woman comes and greets him. "Mother, where is the house of the old man, Sudama? I seem to have missed my way." "You do not recognise me? Am I not your beloved consort? Overnight this has been bequeathed to us by some miracle." In the place of that little hut, there was heavenly grandeur.

Anyone who has a mind to think will be able to understand what all this meant. The blessing which Sri Krishna bestowed upon the poor man was a secret communication, not publicly announced. But the purpose was fulfilled. God does everything in the manner in which it has to be done, and he does things in the exact and precise way as required, and not in any other way. Everything is done at the proper time, at the correct hour, in the most proper manner. Often it appears that God has many other ways than

what we have in our minds. He is not always the bestower of material wealth, though in this instance of Sudama, we have the revelation that God showers on devotees material prosperity also; indeed, infinite prosperity. God can, on the other hand, rend a person to extreme poverty and the worst torment. "*Yasyaham anugrihnamī tasya vittam haramyaham*" "Whenever I bestow my grace upon a person, I absolve him of all material possessions, the centres of his pleasure." The greater the love that God has for his devotees, the less seem to be the material amenities available to that devotee. The more one moves towards God, the more also one moves away from the world! The securities of life which are materially construed are not necessarily the ways in which God thinks what is right. There seems to be some other way altogether, in which he can consider the welfare of people. God is truth, pure reality, and, therefore, whatever the world has we can have in God, also; yet, God is more than the world, and, perhaps, he is not the world at all.