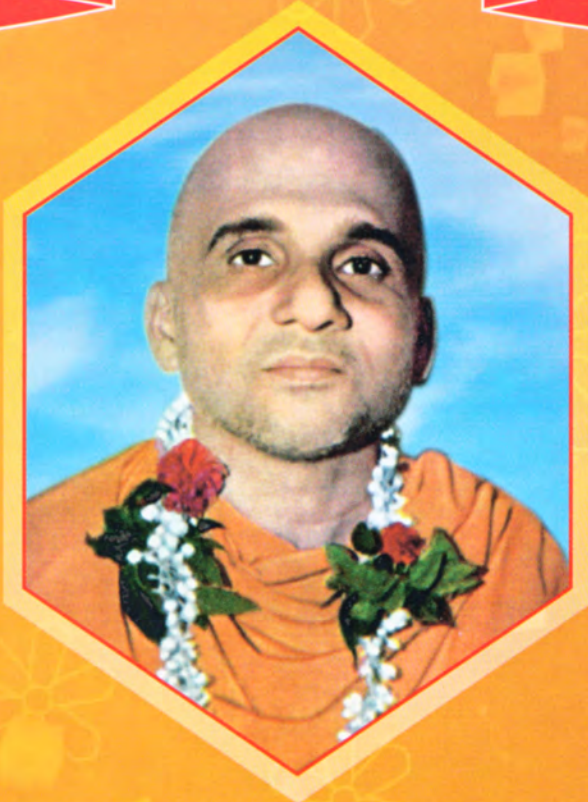




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CENTENARY SERIES

2022



THE PATH TO GOD-REALISATION

Part - 1

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

**THE PATH TO
GOD-REALISATION
PART 1
PREPARING FOR THE
PRACTICE OF YOGA**

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA



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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The 25th of April 2022 marks the auspicious occasion of the Birth Centenary of Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj. To commemorate this sacred occasion, the Headquarters Ashram has decided to bring out booklets comprising the illuminating discourses of Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj for free distribution.

Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj arrived at the holy abode of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj in 1944, and remained here until his Mahasamadhi in November 2001. Swamiji Maharaj was a master of practically every system of Indian thought and Western philosophy. "Many Sankaras are rolled into one Krishnananda," said Sri Gurudev.

Over the years, Swami Maharaj gave many profound and insightful discourses during Sunday night Satsanga, and on holy occasions such as Sri Gurudev's birthday, Sri Krishna Janmasthanami, Mahasivaratri, etc., and also during Sadhana Week and Yoga Vedanta Courses conducted by the Yoga

Vedanta Forest Academy of the Ashram. Sri Swami Maharaj always spoke extempore, spontaneously, without any preparation, and every discourse was fresh, unique, and divinely inspired. The audience was bathed in that stupendous unfathomable energy that radiated from Swamiji Maharaj during these discourses.

We are immensely happy to bring out some of Sri Swamiji Maharaj's discourses in booklet form as our worshipful offering at his holy feet on the blessed occasion of his Birth Centenary. The present booklet, **'The Path to God-realisation: Part 1'**, consists of the first discourse of a three-part series given during Sadhana Week in July 1990, as well as a discourse given on the holy occasion of Sri Krishna Janmashtami.

May the abundant blessings of the Almighty Lord, Sadgurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj be upon all.

—The Divine Life Society

PREPARING FOR THE PRACTICE OF YOGA

In our perceptions of the world of persons and things, there is a continuous negation of the indivisibility of the Self taking place. This is so because of the fact that perceptions are based on a divided consciousness. There has to be a division between the subjective side and the objective side, between the perceiver and the perceived, in order that there may be perception at all.

This dichotomy between the location of the seer and the seen precisely contradicts indivisible nature of the Self. Thus, we may say that we are perpetually negating the existence of the Self in everything that we do and in everything that we see, cognise, or perceive through our sense organs.

The moment the Self is negated, the consequence thereof follows automatically: The character of non-Self inundates us. At once we become other than what we are. We become fear-struck from every side because of the fact that we have lost our Self. The greatest fear is the loss of one's own Self,

and that fear is perpetually on our head like the sword of Damocles because of the fact that there is a continuous negation of the Self taking place in our perceptions through the sense organs.

It is, therefore, no wonder that we are unhappy throughout our life. We have fears from all sides—*tapa*, as we call it; *adhyatmika*, *adhibhautika*, *adhidaivika tapa* harass us. We also have fear that our own psychophysical constitution may fall ill, or it may even die. That is a fear that we have in regard to our own self. We also have fear of the people around us; very little can be said about their behaviour because it is very whimsical, conditioned by changing factors and circumstances of life. Above all, there is fear of nature, whose wish and will are not known to us even a little. From every side there is insecurity, as it were, and so there is not a moment of peace for anyone in the world.

There are two kinds of perceptions, which may be designated as general perception and abnormal perception. We see things in two ways: mostly in a general fashion, but sometimes in an abnormal fashion. We see one another—for instance, in the audience of this hall—and this perception of people around us and things in general may be regarded as a normal perception because our emotions are

not involved in a perception of this kind. If we see anybody sitting here, our feelings are not affected; the emotions are not stirred. We do not have a problem with merely seeing somebody sitting in front of us. But if a perception disturbs our feelings either by attraction or repulsion—if our feelings are stimulated in a positive way or a negative way—then that perception cannot be regarded as normal. That is a different school of thought, called abnormal psychology.

If we can see a thing, can be conscious of its existence but not be emotionally disturbed about it, we may consider it as general perception; but if any perception disturbs our feelings, this is certainly not a normal perception. It is not normal because we seem to be dualistically involved in the knowledge of the existence of some person or thing in front of us, and not indivisibly involved or, more properly, normally involved. Very rarely do we get disturbed in this manner. If we have a fear from some source, there is an emotional disturbance. If we dislike a thing because of certain natures characterising that particular object, our emotions are disturbed. Or, if we like a thing immensely, then also emotions well up to the surface of our consciousness. People can shed tears, either from intense joy or intense sorrow;

that is the indication of stimulation taking place inside.

All this, briefly stated about the nature of our perception of things, indicates finally that none of our perceptions are commensurate with what we may call spiritual perception. The perception of the world is not spiritual, as is usually the case in our day-to-day life. It is so because the character of Selfhood cannot be recognised in any object, in spite of the fact that every object has a Self of its own.

In the same way as in every pool of water, multiple though the pools be, the same sun is reflected, the Universal Self is reflected in every individual person as the Self of that particular person or thing. Therefore, everyone has a Self—not a self, the very Self Itself. Yet, in perceptions, the Self is not recognised. Neither can you see my Self, nor can I see your Self. You see me as a personality seated here, and I also do the same thing in regard to you. If this is the way in which the world goes on, world experience cannot be regarded as spiritual experience. Therefore, we call life in the world as *samsara*, which means an aberration from the nature of Selfhood. A deviation from truth is called *samsara*. We move away from the centre of

our personality, away from the root of the Self, to that which is other than Itself.

You may ask me, “Is there anything other than the Self?” There is certainly nothing other than the Self. Then what is the meaning of the deviation of consciousness from the Self to the not-Self? The not-Self actually is not a person or a thing. It is the manner in which consciousness adapts itself to persons and things outside. Your judgment of values is what will determine the spirituality or the unspirituality of things. The things in the world are neither spiritual nor unspiritual; they just are as they ought to be. But perceptions differ on account of the non-recognition of the Selfhood, or the character of subjectivity in things.

When I look at you, I see you as an object outside—a person who is not me—and that is the whole point. Here is a person who is not me, and how will I deal with that person who is not me? If it is not me, I cannot deal with that person in the way I deal with myself, so immediately there is a conflict arising between the seer and the seen. The not-me is the whole problem. When we say ‘mine’ or ‘not mine’, we make a distinction in our value judgment.

I mentioned that in our perceptions there are two modalities, the general and the abnormal, and

we are prone to both these types of perception every day. Unless we are free from them, we cannot actually even commence the practice of yoga.

Towards the end of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad there is an occasion where Prajapati gives instruction to three types of individuals: the divine, the undivine, and the human. The human character is a mix-up of both the divine and the undivine. We do not always behave like gods; it is very clear. Nor do we always behave like Rakshasas, or demons. Though it is possible for us to sometimes behave like gods—that character also is present in us, potentially—often we can behave like demons also. It depends upon the circumstances that are around us. The way in which we react to circumstances makes us either gods, demons or humans. A human is one who sees the same nature as their own personality in other personalities. A demon is one who sees worse things in others and better things in one's own self. A god is one who sees divinity in all things.

The celestials in heaven are said to be specially characterised by the quality of enjoyment. Persons who do good deeds in this world are said to go to heaven, where Indra rules—the blessed region of immense felicity and perpetual delight. The gods are said to be prone to excessive enjoyment, the

demons are said to be prone to excessive cruelty, and human beings are said to be prone to excessive greed, possessiveness. “Let me have this, let me have that, let me have more and more of everything.” This is the nature of the human being.

So Prajapati, the great creator, gave three instructions to three types of individuals: gods, demons, and human beings. He called the gods.

They said, “Please instruct us.”

He said, “*Da*. Do you understand what I say?”

“Yes Master, we understand.”

“What did you understand?”

“By the word ‘*da*’ you meant ‘*damyata*, be self-restrained’ because we are excessively prone to enjoyments of the senses. So you told us ‘*da, damyata*, be self-restrained’.”

Then he called the demons. “Give us instructions, Master,” they said.

He told them, “*Da*. Do you understand what I say?”

“Yes, we understand.”

“What do you understand?”

“*Dayadhvam*. You said ‘Be compassionate to others’ because we are cruel in our nature. The ‘*da*’ that you uttered to us means ‘Be compassionate and merciful to others’. We understand your instructions.”

He called the human beings and told them, “*Da*. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” they said.

“What do you understand?”

“You told us *datta*—‘Give in charity’—because we are greedy people.”

The same ‘*da*’ was interpreted by each of the three according to their own predisposition of sense enjoyment, cruelty or greed.

Now, human beings are a cross-section of the higher and the lower worlds. We are said to be a microcosm, a *pindanda* as it is called, a small universe. Everything that we find in the universe is found in a human being also. Though we are predominantly greedy, it does not mean that we do not go to extremes of enjoyment and cruelty. A human being can be excessively indulgent in the sense organs, and he can be very cruel, very merciless. He can be a tyrant, and he can be intensely possessive. He would like to swallow the whole world.

Therefore, in the practice of yoga, which is actually the endeavour on our part to recognise the ultimate nature of Reality, these impediments which are psychological, ethical, moral and behavioural have to be taken care of. When there is a turmoil of the feelings inside, intense distraction taking

place in our mind for some reason or the other—we are either hungry or angry, or whatever it is—that would not be the time for sitting for the practice of yoga meditation.

When we are in a mood of meditation, we should not have any kind of impending occupation in the near future—for the next hour or two, at least. Suppose in fifteen minutes we have to catch a railway train. That is not the time to sit and deeply concentrate on this objective of our life because part of the mind will be thinking of reaching the train station on time. Or, if we have got some other occupation, something intensely engaging our attention, that should be taken care of first.

When there are many knots on a rope, one over the other, that we wish to untie, we do not start first with the innermost, but with the outermost. The uppermost knot has to be untied, and then the next one, etc. The cause cannot be handled first. The effect has to be handled first.

If we have any abnormal reactions in our behaviour in regard to the world outside, they have to be considered very, very cautiously at the outset. Most people cannot recognise that there is anything abnormal about themselves. They think they are all very normal persons, and the abnormalities are

in other people only. This requires instruction and direct teaching from a spiritual Master who can see what kind of person the disciple is.

The idea is that any kind of abnormality of behaviour, whether psychologically or ethically, will prevent the general perception of things. We cannot see things as they are. We always see things as they are not. If we see any person, we see some defect in that person. We do not see entire goodness, because of the peculiarity of the abnormal way in which our mind is operating. The well-known dicta of the principles of *yama—ahimsa, satya, asteya, brahmacharya, aparigraha*—may be considered as the first principles of ethical and moral practice, which is an endeavour on our part to restrain ourselves in various ways.

The instinct to harm, to subjugate, to cause injury to or exploit others, even to be sadistic, is something that is not always absent in human nature. Though we do not behave in a cruel and impertinent manner with people and things outside, that there is the possibility in us to behave in such a manner is also to be considered. We may not be angry, but are we capable of being angry and behaving in a manner which is contrary to the spiritual perception of things? Anger is not actually a mood that we

manifest outwardly; it is an intention to harm somebody else.

Sometimes a mother gets angry with her little child. That is not real anger, because her intention is not to harm the child. Intention is the deciding factor in the character of our behaviour. If we judge a person, we have to judge from the intention that is behind the action, and not merely the action. Outward actions do not always indicate what kind of actions the person has performed, rightly or wrongly. If we unintentionally do some good to others, it cannot be regarded as a good action. The good deed has to be done intentionally. As it is generally said, if we become violent with a person and push him into a huge reservoir of honey, we cannot say that we have given him honey. Our intention was something else.

Hence, we have to judge our intentions before we take recourse to the practice of yoga—our intentions in regard to our own selves, our intentions in regard to people outside, and also our intention in practicing yoga. What is it that we are expecting from God? If there is any mistake in our calculation of these issues, either in regard to ourselves or to people outside, or in regard to our concept of the Ultimate Reality—even if we make a mistake in our

concept of Reality—there would not be the requisite success in the practice.

We have peculiar traits in us which are common to every human being. Firstly, there is the capacity to harm. This is very important, a matter which we have to underline again and again. Have we the capacity to harm, or can we say it will never happen?

There was a great saint, a very good-natured and humble soul. Someone who had a peculiar idiosyncrasy in the mind instigated a prank against him. He told a youngster, “Let us test this person and see what kind of saint he is. When he returns from taking a bath in the river, spit on him. Let us see what he says.”

This youngster, who was paid to do it, sat there watching the saint, and spat on him after he came from bathing. The saint went back to the river and took another bath, changed his clothes, and came up. When he came, the boy spat a second time. A second time the saint went to the river, took a bath and came. A third time the boy spat on him. This went on, they say, a hundred times. A hundred times the boy spat, and a hundred times the saint went to the river, took a bath and came.

Fear entered the heart of this boy. He thought, “There is something mysterious about this person,

because no human being will behave like this! He has not uttered one word against me. He has not shown any sign of anger or dislike towards me. He did not say, 'Hey! What are you doing to me?' He just coolly went and took another bath."

That is the capacity not to react in a harmful manner, or an incapacity to harm anybody. The saint was not merely not angry; he demonstrated that he was not even capable of getting angry. The potentiality itself was rooted out. If the potentiality to anger, the potentiality to possessiveness and the potentiality to sense indulgence have gone, we are clean indeed. The world has to obey our wishes and orders.

This principle of *ahimsa* actually indicates not merely your outward behaviour, but your psychological constitution itself. What is your attitude towards other people? What do you think of them? Do you feel that everybody is bad, wretched, stupid? Or do you have a rational outlook of things? Do you behold things with the reason and judgment of universal values, or do you have an inborn trait of condemning everything that you perceive? If this trait has gone, you are an *ahimsa-vadin* indeed.

That you have not done harm is not enough. You should not be even capable of doing harm—not

because you are physically incapable or that you lack strength. Having strength to do harm, you will not do it. If a person has immense power but does not misuse it, he is a great individual. If you do not use power because you do not have it, there is no great virtue in it. You have intense authority, great power and capacity in you, but you are not misguided by its operation. Such is the principle of *ahimsa*, which is an inward character in us—a manifestation of the soul itself in some way, we should say.

Never be deceptive in your behaviour in regard to others, because deception is another way of exploitation. *Satya vachana* is not merely the words that we speak, because we may speak a truth and yet be intentionally misleading that person. Our outward behaviour is not the ethical mandate required; it is the internal intention that is insisted upon again and again.

The other trait in us is the desire to have more and more things for ourselves, to have as much as possible and, if possible, to have all things. We would like to be the king of the whole Earth. The possessive character in human nature forgets the fact that all things shall leave a person one day or the other. It is intellectually, rationally, educationally, and culturally—let alone spiritually—bad to be too

greedy and possessive in one's nature. And never be demanding. If something comes, wonderful. Be happy that something has come. But if nothing comes, "Well, if it doesn't come, all right. We shall get along even in that condition."

These are the principles of *yama*, which means to say, self-restraint. The art of self-restraint, which is practically the whole of yoga, right from the beginning to the end, is constituted of a systematic extrication of consciousness from its connection with the layers of involvement in its perceptions—to repeat, general as well as abnormal.

It is not at all good to be emotionally disturbed, of course, in our perceptions of things. That is very clear. We should not be too much desirous or resentful in our behaviour, but that is not enough. There is something more expected of us. It is not enough if we are merely a good person. We have to be a spiritual person, because goodness is generally counterbalanced by badness. The extent of goodness in us will be measured by the extent of badness that is existing outside in the world, but spirituality transcends the ordinarily known ethical concepts of goodness and badness.

The spiritual nature in us is achieved by the introduction of the nature of the Self. Spirituality

is the character of the Self, which is introduced to our life through the various levels of our personal involvement. There are various degrees of involvement of the human personality, and in all these levels we should seek the presence of the Self and extricate consciousness from its externally conceived involvement.

One of the levels which is preposterously hard upon us every day is the love of things that are related to ourselves—land, property, money, relation, etc. This love of things normally gets diminished in old age on account of the inability to have access to these facilities. But inability should not be the cause of our abandonment of these facilities. We should have the ability to have every kind of facility, and we should be minimal in our requirements in spite of that.

These things are well said, but difficult to practice. The difficulty arises on account of a subtle feeling in us that the Self is away from us, that God is not near us. There is a tremendous spatial distance and durational disparity between us and God-consciousness. When we are many a time told in the scriptures that we have to take hundreds of births in order to be blessed with even an aspiration for God, we are likely to identify this difficulty with

the duration of the time process involved in our endeavours and the distance between ourselves and the nature of Reality. We always think that God is in the future, that we shall attain God tomorrow. Whether it is tomorrow or after a hundred years, it is a kind of futurity that we attribute to God: "I shall attain perfection some day or the other." This concept of 'some day or the other' is also a concept of the future, which is also the concept of time. Neither God nor Self, whatever we call it, is involved in time.

Therefore, spiritual achievement is not a future possibility. It is a present imperative. It is what is generally called 'here and now'. If we are able to convince ourselves that this achievement can be possible just now on account of the absence of past and future consciousness in the Selfhood of things, we may feel a sense of satisfaction. The satisfaction diminishes on account of the distance that appears to be there between ourselves and the ideal before us: "I do not know how far this ideal is, and how much time it will take for me to reach it."

"It is very near to those whose aspiration is very intense," says the great teacher of yoga, Patanjali. *Tīvrasaṁvegānām āsannaḥ* (Y.S. 1.21). The Sanskrit word *samvega* used in this aphorism is untranslatable into any other language. It is not merely intensity

of practice; it is an ardent exuberance of the impossibility of existing without it. 'Ardour' is the nearest English word for *samvega*. A tremendous rush of feeling in the direction of the ideal that we wish to achieve is *samvega*, which has to be very intense.

The ardour has to be like a rush, like a tremendously speeding movement, and that has to be intensified. According to the interpretation of this sutra, we are told that *samvega* is to be intensely intense; threefold intensity or ninefold intensity is required in us. This means to say there should not be any other desire in us which can be compared to this intensity of our longing for it. It is as if we are drinking milk and honey even by the very thought of the possibility of such an achievement. Do you not feel happy when you are assured that you are going to be granted a great blessing? Something, some windfall is suddenly there in front of you—an unexpected joy. What do you feel at that time? You feel an ardour, a *samvega*, to grab it and possess it, and make it your own.

Such a feeling is not easily generated in us on account of the usual difficulty of feeling that the ideal is distant in space and time. And, much more than that, there is a peculiar feeling in us that we

do not know what we will get at all, finally. We say God-realisation is very good; we will become immortal, we will be deathless, we will have all peace. But if we probe deeply and put a question to our own self, "What will actually happen to me when the Self is realised?" we will not have a real answer to it.

Many a time we may place ourselves in the presence of God, as some devotees conceive God to be. These are ideas which are not very clear. Does immortality mean being seated in the presence of God for a long time, just as you are seated in front of me and me in front of you? Is it looking at God perpetually that is called immortality? If you think of it, you will find, "No, this is not a satisfying position."

What finally will happen to you? What exactly is the gain that will accrue to you after the realisation of the Self? What about all these wonders and beauties and grandeurs of the world? Where do they go? You may raise a question: "You have already told us they have to be rejected. This wondrous creation which is so beautiful and enchanting before us, you say we should reject. What else are you going to give us in place of this renunciation? We are told that we will realise the Self. What good is this? I am already

aware of myself in some way, and I may be aware of it more intensely. Is this all you are giving me after I have thrown away the whole world of beauties and grandeurs?”

Though you may not raise such questions intellectually, the peculiar feeling, which has an argument of its own, will raise doubts of this fantastic nature and tell you to be cautious because you are going to lose something. All the wonderful things that you are considering as endearing in this world will go in one instant, and you will enter into the lion's den of an unknown reality about which you have been talking so much, and which the scriptures glorify. You cannot understand what it is.

These doubts will not arise in your mind just now. They will gradually arise when you advance in the practice of yoga, when the mind and the nature outside begin to feel that this person really means business. If you merely sit for meditation for a few minutes, nobody is bothered about it. It is said that gods will put obstacles in meditation, but no god will put obstacles before you. They know that this meditation is going to bring nothing, so nature will not trouble you. Nothing will happen; everything will look fine. But be serious about it, and see the reactions taking place. The reactions that are likely

to take place from your own self, from the world outside and from nature in general, from which we have to guard ourselves, are described in very picturesque detail in one of the sutras of Patanjali.

Thus, the practice of yoga, which is the art of the realisation of God, or the Universal Self, is, on the one hand, a direct endeavour to concentrate the mind on a well-conceived ideal which is called *abhyasa*; simultaneously on the other hand, it is a negation of anything which may intrude into this consciousness of the concentration on the Universal Ideal. With these two phases of our practice, known as *abhyasa* and *vairagya*, we should go ahead, driving the chariot of our personality to the abode of God Almighty.

LORD SRI KRISHNA, THE MAJESTY OF THE ALMIGHTY

Narayana and Nara, the great sages who are said to be performing eternal penance in the holy shrine of Badrikashrama (modern Badrinath), and who are the representations of Vishnu's presence on Earth, are regarded to have taken birth as Krishna and Arjuna, respectively, for the redemption of the world from sin and evil. Krishna, who is considered to be the Purna-Avatara (full incarnation) of Vishnu or, according to some, of the Universal Narayana who transcends even Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, revealed himself in Mathura as the child of Vasudeva and Devaki. We need not go into details of the miraculous and dramatic events of his early life in Vrindavana, such as the spontaneous opening of the gates of the prison where Vasudeva and Devaki were confined; the ebbing of the River Yamuna when Vasudeva tried to cross it with the child Krishna; the destruction of Putana and other Asuras such as Sakata, Trinavarta, Vatsa, Dhenuka, Baka, Agha, Pralamba, Kesi, Chanura and Kamsa

at the hands of the boy Krishna; the release of the sons of Kubera from their curse, due to which they were born as trees; Krishna's self-multiplication as thousands of cows, calves and cowherds in place of the real ones that were lost; the subjugation of the serpent Kaliya; the swallowing of the forest fire; the lifting of the Govardhana mountain and the humiliation of Indra; the bringing back of the dead sons of Sandipani; and several other incidents of this nature which revealed the divinity of Krishna even at an early age.

The most intriguing and significant incident in the early life of Krishna is what has been called the Rasalila, or his love-dance with the Gopis of Vrindavana. Commentators have tried to interpret the romantic seeking of Krishna by the Gopis and his response to their search in a dalliance that surpasses understanding as the eternal quest of objects for the Universal Subject which is present in every one of them as their Atman, the seeking of the individual for the Absolute in an ecstasy of feeling that the intellect cannot measure or estimate, a rapture of love for God in which all rationality is hushed, and the divine reaction from the Supreme Atman in a revelation of multiple immanence or universal Self-manifestation, a state of spiritual

superconsciousness in which one forgets one's own personality and becomes conscious only of God's existence everywhere in an emotion of love which bursts the bubble of individuality, which, indeed, was the condition of the Gopis. There was nothing of the human lust or physical passion in the immortal dance of Rasa, especially when the age of Krishna was only of a small boy who could not be expected to excite carnality in the minds of mature women in such large numbers. Another interpretation regards this incident as an occasion when Krishna, though he was a small boy to physical perception, appeared as a charming young hero in the eyes of every Gopi, with every one of whom he was individually present by a multitudinousness of form which he assumed in the majesty of the power of his yoga. To a doubt expressed by Parikshit on this question, Sage Suka gives an adequate answer. The Lord, Suka replies, appeared in human form to shower his grace on those who came in contact with him and to create devotion in those who listen to the greatness of his deeds and of his life. It is strange that the husbands of the Gopis never missed their wives, having had them, by the power of the Lord, always by their sides, even when the Rasa dance was going on. How, then, can human judgment of values be applicable

here? Further, Suka prescribes a study of the Rasa chapters of the Bhagavata as a remedy for lust and a means to acquire self-control and mastery over all desires.

While the early life of Krishna stimulates the tenderness of divine devotion and love for a spiritual union with God through *madhurya bhakti*, or romantic aspiration, and a silent melting of oneself in Krishna's sweetness, his later life opens an entirely new chapter in the book of human evolution, and stirs in one's mind *aisvarya bhakti*, or devotion by an irresistible attraction for the glory of his power and knowledge.

Krishna closes his sportful life as a child and an adolescent with the destruction of Kamsa, and suddenly assumes a stern outlook of life and turns his attention to the work of freeing the world from all sources of wickedness. The first serious opponent whom Krishna had to meet was Jarasandha, king of Magadha, a worshipper of Rudra and a menace to all good and *sattvika* natures. He attacked Mathura repeatedly and, after being harassed several times, Krishna and his elder brother Balarama determined to rout his forces, sparing his life alone to allow him opportunities for collecting larger forces, which were destined to be uprooted. It was here that

Krishna assumed the weapons of Vishnu, which all descended from the heavens, together with a celestial chariot which he rode in war.

With a view to the fulfilment of future purposes politically manoeuvred by him as the world's greatest statesman and spiritually ordained as the world's greatest yogin, Krishna got constructed a mighty and gorgeous fortress at Dvaraka, on the western ocean, from where he began to rule the fortunes of people. The first question that arose in his mind was to enquire into the fate of the Pandava brothers, with which errand he sent Akrura to Hastinapura. His first meeting with the Pandavas was during the marriage of Draupadi in the palace of Drupada. After the marriage, Krishna offered them costly presents as a mark of respect. When Yudhishthira expressed his desire to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice, Krishna pointed out a great obstacle to it in Jarasandha and cleverly arranged to get rid of the latter through a private deal with Bhima. The occasion of the Rajasuya sacrifice of Yudhishthira also became the scene of the death of Sisupala, whose head Krishna severed with his discus, Sudarsana. This event is the theme of a famous poem of that name by the poet Magha, and the incident may be regarded as the background of the bigger and more complicated

scenes of the Mahabharata war. In the celebration of this sacrifice Krishna is said to have allotted the more honourable duties to other kings and reserved for himself the humbler service of washing the feet of the guests who came for the function, and of removing the remains after the banquet served by Yudhishtira to all those who attended the sacrifice. It is here again that the divinity of Krishna was publicly announced by Bhishma, to which Sisupala took exception and with insolent words challenged Krishna for battle.

Krishna met the Pandavas now and then even while they were in exile, encouraging them with comforting words and a promise of help to vanquish their foes and regain the kingdom. The incidents of Krishna's miraculous help to Draupadi in the form of unending clothes in the court of the Kauravas, and his sudden appearance before her in the forest and demanding from her a little food, by the acceptance of which he filled the stomachs of sage Durvasa and his large following of disciples, are too well-known to need any description. On the completion of the period of exile by the Pandavas, Krishna arranged for a conference in the court of Virata to decide the question of taking up arms against the Kauravas. As a measure of intelligent statesmanship, Krishna,

however, agreed to go for a mission of peace with the Kauravas, though he knew well that the mission was not going to serve its purpose. As he himself expressed in his talk with Yudhishtira, it was more a diplomatic move than a step that was really necessary or meaningful. Sanjaya's description of Krishna to King Dhritarashtra in his court is again a public proclamation of the divinity of Krishna. Krishna revealed his powers to the apprehensive Yudhishtira when he said that if the Kauravas attempted to do him any harm when he went to them for peace, he would not wait for the war to destroy them, but burn them down single-handedly, and relieve the burden of Yudhishtira. The mission of Krishna to the court of Dhritarashtra, his famous speech in the assembly, and the stunning cosmic form which he showed before the Kauravas mark a wondrous scene in the great drama.

The next scene is the delivery of the gospel of the Bhagavadgita at the commencement of the war. His going for Bhishma with the Chakra; his hypnotisation of the Kaurava forces by his gaze; the confusion he caused in the minds of the opposing army by making everyone in the battlefield look like Krishna and Arjuna; his dexterous moves which assisted Arjuna in vanquishing the Samsaptakas;

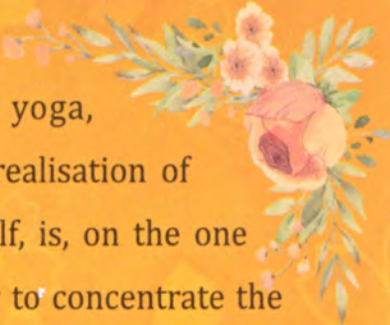
his intelligence which destroyed the invincible Bhagadatta; his yogic power which worked in overcoming Jayadratha; his clever stratagem, again, which foiled the Sakti of Kama while simultaneously getting rid of the demoniacal Ghatotkacha; the way in which he saved the Pandavas from the Narayana-Astra of Asvatthama and invoked the help of Rudra himself in the war for the victory of dharma in the cause of the Pandavas; the power which he exercised in vanquishing Kama's weapons sent against Arjuna and in the saving of the latter from being burnt while his chariot itself was reduced to ashes by the *astras* of Bhishma and Drona; his common sense in the event of the killing of Duryodhana; the mysterious instructions of his which saved the Pandavas from being destroyed by the icy hands of Asvatthama; his succour of the child in the womb of Uttara; and his great understanding which saved Bhima from being crushed at the embrace of Dhritarashtra are all highly interesting and instructive episodes described in the Mahabharata.

Krishna showed his cosmic form four times in his life—firstly to his mother Yasoda, secondly in the court of the Kauravas, thirdly to Arjuna on the eve of the war, and fourthly to sage Uttanka. The prayers offered by Kunti and Bhishma to Krishna,

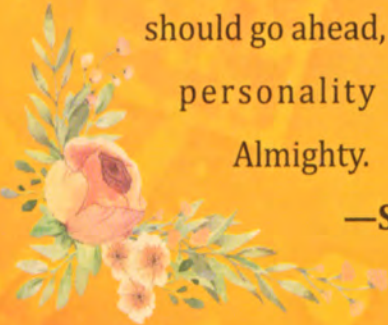
as recorded in the Bhagavata and the Mahabharata, are magnificent not merely as forms of literary force, but also as specimens of the glorification of God in his Avatara as Krishna.

There are many other incidents in the personal life of Krishna that are mentioned in the Harivamsa, Vishnu Purana and Bhagavata, which inspire one spiritually and provide a stimulating reading of the biography of one who demonstrated to the world the character of all-round perfection. The birth of Krishna is celebrated on the eighth day of the dark half of the month of Bhadrapada (August-September) every year.

The purpose of the Krishna-Avatara was not only to destroy unrighteousness but also to reveal to the world the glory and greatness of God. In the well-adjusted integral conduct of the life of Krishna is manifest the majesty of the Almighty.



The practice of yoga, which is the art of the realisation of God, or the Universal Self, is, on the one hand, a direct endeavour to concentrate the mind on a well-conceived ideal which is called *abhyasa*; simultaneously on the other hand, it is a negation of anything which may intrude into this consciousness of the concentration on the Universal Ideal. With these two phases of our practice, known as *abhyasa* and *vairagya*, we should go ahead, driving the chariot of our personality to the abode of God Almighty.



—SWAMI KRISHNANANDA



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