



## Mystic Insight into The Divine Leela of Lord Krishna

Excerpts from *Mysticism of Srimad Bhagavatam* by  
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**L**ord Krishna is called *Leela Purushottama*, the personification of the sportive aspect of God, the Divinity whose life expresses the boundless power and bliss of the Supreme Self. In Krishna's personality that bliss of *Brahman* surges like the mighty waves of an ocean tossed by hurricane winds. There is no limit to what it will do.

## Mother Yashoda Ties Up the Naughty Butter Thief

As a child in the village of Gokula, Krishna was a constant delight to all the *gopis* (cowherd-esses) and *gopas* (cowherds) of the village. In those days, however, it was his Divine naughtiness that stole their hearts—as well as their butter! In that village of cowherds and cowherd-esses, tending to the cows and churning butter from their milk was the primary occupation. Krishna's primary occupation was to get that butter by hook or by crook and eat it up.

Whenever He came to know that freshly churned butter was available in the home of some gopi, Krishna would take His brother, Balarama, and some other cowherd boys and stealthily enter that place. If the butter was placed in a vessel that was hanging high up from the roof, the boys would climb on each other's shoulders until they could reach that vessel. If they couldn't get the butter out in any other way, they would break the vessel so that the butter would come pouring down.

The village *gopis* came to Yashoda again and again, complaining against Krishna. However, behind all those complaints there was a sentiment of great joy. The *gopis* delighted in seeing Krishna no matter what He did, and even when they came complaining against Him, their complaining was really a pretext to see Krishna again in His home.

One day, Yashoda directed her maid-servants to do various works in her home while she herself began to churn butter. At that time, Krishna moved towards her and climbed up on her lap seeking His mother's milk. With great delight, Yashoda stopped churning and began to nurse Krishna, gently smiling as she looked at the face of the child. Then suddenly the mother remembered she had placed a ves-

sel full of milk on the fire. Quickly she put the child down and rushed to take care of that boiling milk.

Irritated by the abrupt interruption of His tender communion with Yashoda, Krishna found a stone nearby and hurled it against an earthen pot that contained yogurt. When Yashoda returned she found the pot broken and the yogurt spilled. She looked around and saw Krishna standing upon an upturned mortar, eating butter that had been prepared the previous day. He was also playfully throwing butter to some monkeys who had entered their home—as monkeys commonly do in India.

Seeing the great mess Krishna had created, Yashoda stealthily came up behind Him with a little stick in her hand to teach Him a lesson. When Krishna saw His mother coming towards Him, He jumped off the mortar and began to run. Not to be outwitted, Yashoda took up the chase and ran after Him.

After a breathless chase, Yashoda was finally able to catch hold of Krishna. Knowing that He had done something wrong, the child started weeping and rubbed His eyes with His tiny hands, smearing the black unguent that had been applied to His lids. When Yashoda saw that her child was terribly frightened, compassion welled up in her heart and she threw away the stick. However, she was determined to teach Him a lesson. So she picked up a little piece of rope and started tying Him with it to hold Him in one place.

To her surprise that rope fell short by two inches. So she found another piece of rope and joined it to the first. Again the rope was too short by two inches. Yashoda then gathered up all the little ropes that were around and joined them together, but each time she tried to tie Him, there was never enough length. Seeing Krishna swelling up in that fashion so that He couldn't be tied, the other *gopis* around all began to smile.

When Krishna saw how hard His mother was trying to bind Him and how, in doing her

best in this project, she had become extremely tired and full of perspiration, He stopped His naughtiness and finally allowed Himself to be tied up by Yashoda and bound to a nearby mortar—a heavy wooden block used in villages for husking wheat, rice and other grains.



To better understand the profound meaning of the apparent naughtiness of Lord Krishna as a stealer of butter, we must look more deeply at the nature of human feelings. For the vast majority of people, feeling is full of impurities. Trying to fulfill the urge to love and be loved, countless feelings arise in the heart and individual souls move on from one embodiment to another, encountering so many illusions and frustrations. Only when feeling is purified does the soul discover God as the object and source of supreme love.

When feeling is not yet pure, people do turn to God—but generally for various specific reasons and objectives. When one is in trouble, they turn to God to get them out of trouble. When one wants wealth, they turn to God for the correct numbers to win the lottery. When one is confused about solving a problem, they turn to God for the solution. However, when things are settled, God is forgotten. Obviously, that type of turning to God is very limited.



Impure feeling, figuratively speaking, is like unchurned milk. Through intensive practice of spiritual discipline, meditation, prayer, and selfless service, that milk of human feeling is churned until pure, Divine feeling—the butter—emerges.

Divine feeling does not arise in a person easily or just by accident. Your whole personality must undergo a tremendous change. There must be great discipline and a highly advanced level of integration. Then only true yearning for God emerges in your heart.

When one begins to experience the need for God without any reason or rhyme, a need as spontaneous as a mother's need to love her child, then that is the beginning of true devotion. When you are yearning for God without any limited objective, but as an expression of purest love, you have given rise to butter within your heart.

The moment butter or purified feeling emerges within one's heart, God stealthily enters your heart to steal it. Wherever it is, He will come, and you will experience His Divine Presence in a thrilling fashion. Krishna—the *makham chor*, or butter thief—is chief among thieves. Even if you keep your feelings enclosed in a vault, Krishna knows how to open it.

The imagery of Yashoda running after Krishna and then eventually being able to catch Him and tie Him up presents a beautiful mystic symbolism for an aspirant. The project of every spiritual seeker is to capture God within his heart. God is always there, but, due to ignorance, you are unable to experience His Presence. You must become aware of Him, capture Him by your conscious experience. This is not an ordinary task. The immensity of this project must be well understood.

Like Yashoda, as an aspirant you must put forth all your effort in capturing God, in bringing God to your heart. Although every rope of devotional feeling that you have—every effort that you make—seems to fall short, do not cease your efforts. When you have done your best and



used, figuratively speaking, every piece of rope available to you, Krishna by His grace will allow Himself to be captured. When love in a human heart reaches that state of purity—when it becomes free of egoism, attachment, hatred—you are able to tie up God by His waist and He cannot run away.

By allowing Himself to be caught, Krishna reveals the fact that although He is beyond this world, although He is infinity and eternity, it is by Divine feeling that He can be captured. Such is the miraculous potentiality in every human heart.

Yashoda experiences the joy of catching Krishna, and thereby she excels the greatest of personalities in this world. She excels intellectually advanced philosophers, scholars who have dry knowledge of Vedanta, people who practice lots of austerities and are endowed with many psychic powers. Love of God excels all. You may have many attainments, but if you have not churned the butter of Divine love and devotion, Krishna will not enter your heart. You will not have the unique thrill of communion with God.

## Uprooting the Twin Arjuna Trees

While Yashoda was away taking care of her household duties, Krishna remained tied to the mortar. Looking around, His eyes fell upon two nearby Arjuna trees.

Krishna knew that two spirits were in bondage in the form of those twin trees. In more ancient times, those spirits, Nalakubera and Manigriva, were sons of Kubera, the god of treasure. One day in the Himalayan Mountains by the banks of the Mandakini River, they were drunk and sporting with young women when Sage Narada passed by. The women felt ashamed of their behavior and showed respect to Narada, but the two brothers remained completely in a state

of disrespectful intoxication. Seeing this, and desirous of correcting their errors for their ultimate good, Narada cursed them: “Having attained the wonderful position of being the sons of Kubera, you have become vain and conceited, intoxicated by your youthful charm, living only for pleasure. Because you have acted like senseless trees, may you both become trees.”

When Nalakubera and Manigriva heard the words of Narada they begged for mercy. Narada told them: “This all will turn out to be in your favor. In the future, after a hundred celestial years have passed, Krishna will incarnate and He will bring release for you both.”

Thus, as Krishna gazed at the Arjuna trees, He thought to Himself: “Now this is my opportunity to please my devotee, Narada, and release the twin spirits who are in bondage in the form of those twin trees.” So Krishna dragged the mortar by His immense strength, passing between the twin trees in such a way that both trees were completely uprooted. They fell with a great crashing sound that caused the earth to shake. Then, from within the trees the two spirits emerged, offering prayers to Krishna.

Krishna, who still appeared as a little child tied to the mortar, said: “You both had become conceited, blinded because of your prosperity. By the curse of Narada you have been freed of that pride. So, Narada ultimately has caused great good for you. Now go to your homes and be devoted to me. You have attained the highest goal, devotion to God.”

When the *gopis* and *gopas* near Krishna’s home heard the crashing sound of the falling trees, they rushed to see what had happened. There they saw Krishna safe and sound, still tied to the mortar, and the trees uprooted. They could not figure out how this amazing event had happened. There were children nearby who told the people that it was Krishna who had broken the trees. Further, they related how out of the trees two luminous figures had appeared and how they had conversed with Krishna and then flew to heaven.

The grownups thought that the words of these children were merely the product of a wild imagination. They could not believe how three year old Krishna helplessly tied to a mortar could have brought about the destruction of two giant trees, so they simply ignored what the children were saying. However, overjoyed that Krishna was safe, Nanda rushed towards the boy and released Him from the ropes that bound Him to the mortar.



Mystically, the twin sons of Kubera, whose spirits were locked into the Arjuna trees, represent mental energy that is wasted or confined by *raga* and *dwesha*—attachment and hatred. In the state of bondage, you love and hate things selectively. You love things that please you or hate things that displease you according to your fancy.

In the commotion of swinging between *raga* and *dwesha*, one does not hear the voice of intellect. When the energies behind the desire to have joy and eliminate suffering have been mishandled, the spirit in a human being becomes cramped like those spirits reborn as the twin Arjuna trees, and the unfoldment of the soul is restricted.

Under the sway of *raga* and *dwesha*, one also ignores *satsanga*, or the association with the wise that puts an end to the cycle of birth and death and leads to true happiness. Narada is the embodiment of *satsanga*. When *satsanga* is ignored, and Liberation is not the goal of life, a person merely “grows like corn and dies like corn” as Kathopanishad says. The soul enters into a process of repeated embodiments, incarnating again and again in vain pursuit of illusory pleasures.

However, when your devotion and faith in God become rock-like, when they become as solid as Yashoda’s mortar, and you have tied Krishna to that mortar of faith within your heart, a miracle occurs. *Raga* and *dwesha* are uprooted and the spiritual energy that has been locked up by attachment and hatred is released. That en-

ergy is the giver of immense force. If you have channeled that energy, it will give you the treasure of immortality, Self-realization.

Every negative quality in a human being is like electrical energy that has been short-circuited. Short-circuited energy creates terrible problems. The moment you set it right, the energy flows in a positive and effective way.

When uprooted, *raga* assumes its spiritual form and you become increasingly attached to God, the source of all happiness, the object of infinite love. You develop cosmic consciousness, and love all beings and objects as manifestations of God. Similarly, when *dwesha* is uprooted, the urge to negate is sublimated. You understand that the world is illusory, that all names and forms are constantly changing. Thereby you develop dispassion. You negate or “hate” the whole world-process itself, not just a few things. As a result, you outstep the world. That type of sublimated *raga* and *dwesha* does not bind the soul; it liberates. This is represented in the story by the emergence of the transformed and luminous twin spirits, offering prayers of adoration and surrender to Krishna.

