



The Advent of Lord Krishna

Dedicated to
His Divine Grace
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Six Chapters from the 10th Canto:

1: The Advent of Lord Kṛṣṇa: Introduction

2: Prayers by the Demigods for Lord Kṛṣṇa in the Womb

3: The Birth of Lord Kṛṣṇa

4: The Atrocities of King Kāṁsa

5: The Meeting of Nanda Mahārāja and Vasudeva

6: The Killing of the Demon Pūtanā

Six Chapters in Ten Parts

1. Earth's Distress
2. Narada Meets Kamsa
3. Devaki's Wedding
4. Instructions for Yogamaya
5. Prayers by the Demigods
6. The Birth of Lord Krishna
7. The Babies Exchanged
8. Kamsa and Yogamaya
9. Nanda Meets Vasudeva
10. Putana



Part One: Earth's Distress

King Pariksit said: “Śukadev, you’ve now described for me the moon-god and the sun-god and their splendid dynasties. The moon-god’s line, great sage, includes the Yadu family, the dynasty of Krishna. Would you speak about Him, please?”

Who wouldn't want to hear about these pastimes of the Lord? Just those, I think, bewildered, broken-hearted or so bored they choose to merge into the void, committing suicide, or spend their lives as butchers, selling gristle, flesh and hide.

Lord Krishna saved my grandfather, Arjuna, in the war. Lord Krishna saved my mother and allowed me to be born. Lord Krishna is the universe, yet lives within our hearts. I have so many questions about Krishna. Where to start?

Why did the Lord leave Vasudev and live in Nanda's home? Why did He kill King Kamsa and usurp Mathurā's throne, when Kamsa, after all, was Krishna's king and relative. And why did Krishna later shift to Dwārakā to live?

Lord Krishna has a form of endless bliss, I understand, yet He lived with His family like any common man. Did He live long in Dwārakā, an often-wedded groom? Why was His brother born out of another mother's womb?

O master, you know everything of Krishna, do you not? Please clarify these mysteries, and any I forgot. My vow to fast from food and drink will surely make me weak unless I drink the Krishna-nectar flowing as you speak.”

Śukadev: Your urge to hear of Krishna makes you best among all kings. Just as the touch of Gaṅgā water purifies all things, the person who inquires of Krishna cleans the atmosphere for he who gives the answers and for everyone who hears.

At one time Mother Earth was overburdened by the weight of armies ruled by godless kings who thrived on greed and hate. So Earth assumed the body of a cow in desperation and told the senior god, Brahmā, about her situation.

Brahmā, Śiva, and all the gods,
distressed by earth's report, at once
went off to Viṣṇu's world, their
ultimate resort. Arriving at the milk-
ocean whereon the Lord resides, they
worshiped Him with heartfelt hymns
until the Lord replied:

“I’ve been aware of Earth’s misfortune. Listen well to Me. Lord Krishna soon shall grace Earth’s famous Yadu dynasty. His older brother Balarām shall join the Lord as well, and all you gods, and all your wives, should do the same yourselves.

My power to bewilder, Yogamāyā,
who can cast a spell of deep illusion
over all who cross her path, shall also
join the entourage of Krishna when
He comes. Now go, prepare
yourselves for birth among the Yadu
sons.”



Part Two: Devaki's Wedding

Brahmā returned to his abode, and all the gods began establishing themselves as members of the Yadu clan. The capital of Yadu's kingdom, Mathurā by name, had flourished with its current king, the pious Ugrasen.

In honor of her marriage, Kamsa, son of Ugrasen, took up his sister Devakī's fine chariot and reins. With Vasudev, her husband, at her side, the royal maid prepared to ride with Kamsa in her wedding day parade.

Her dowry featured elephants with garlands made of gold. Four hundred soldiers riding golden chariots patrolled. Two hundred lovely bridesmaids, fifteen thousand jeweled steeds—with pride, all tried to please the bride and satisfy her needs.

Sweet music filled the air as Kamasa drove the bride and groom. Then, suddenly, an unembodied voice proclaimed his doom:

“You foolish Kamsa! Though today you serve this man and wife, the eighth child born to Devakī will someday take your life!”

The wicked Kamsa turned to Devakī with shock and dread. His sword in hand, he snatched her hair and roared,

“Off with her head!”

The tactful Vasudev saw this and, holding Kamsa's arm, addressed his angry in-law without showing his alarm:

“You are your family's pride, dear Kamsa. Heroes sing your praise. How could someone as great as you behave in such a way? To kill a girl—indeed, your sister—on her wedding day will surely stain your reputation. What will people say?”

Now think this through, great hero.
From the moment of your birth, your
body inexorably returns back into earth.
By one means or another, be it now or
decades hence, your death is surely
coming. It is simply common sense.

And when your body turns to dust,
your soul again acquires another
earthly body formed to suit your own
desires. As when you walk, you shift
your weight from back foot to the
fore, you'll change your body after
death and leave the one before.

As one asleep is certain that the life he dreams is real, the soul believes in everything his body does or feels. The fleeting, artificial body keeps the soul engaged while making him forget that he is living in a cage.

As wind distorts reflections of the moon upon a lake, illusion makes the spirit think, 'I'm flesh!'—a big mistake. Since sinful actions cause the soul to stay in this condition, why not consider carefully, and then make your decision.

Your younger sister Devakī is like your very child. She so deserves your loving shelter. Please be reconciled, for you are very merciful. Do not cut off her head, but give her love and treat her as a father would instead.”

Because of his demonic nature, Kamasa felt disdain about the tax for sinful acts that Vasudev explained. As Vasudev saw Kamasa pulling back his sister's head, he came up with another plan. Within himself he said:

“When circumstances threaten one's existence or one's wife, one must use any method to avoid the loss of life. Perhaps he will die first, so if I promise now to give my future sons to Kamsa, at least Devakī may live.”

The anxious Vasudev knew well what panic might invoke, so with respect, he smiled at Kamsa, cleared his throat and spoke:

“Great soul, why are you frightened by an unembodied voice? Your sister will not harm you, just, perhaps, her future boys. You have my word, dear brother: when your sister bears our sons, I promise to bring each to you to do what must be done.”

Although he was atrocious, when he heard these gentle words, cruel Kamsa put his sword away, completely reassured. He fully trusted Vasudev, whose character was such that Kamsa knew he'd keep his word, although he'd pledged so much.

When Devakī was freed by Kāṁsa, in due time she bore a shining baby boy whom any parent would adore. Her husband took the boy away, for though he loved his son, he would not lie to Kāṁsa, nor indeed, to anyone.

What pain is there for saintly souls devoted to the truth? What evil is off limits for the low and the uncouth? And what cannot be given up in service to the Lord by those who want to please Him and desire nothing more?

When Kamsa saw that Vasudev had brought the newborn child exactly as he promised, he examined him and smiled.

“Take back your son, dear Vasudev,”
said Kamsa with good cheer.

“The omen said your eighth child is
the one that I must fear.”



Part Three: Narada Meets Kamsa

Returning with his baby boy, wise Vasudev perceived that Kamsa was impulsive and could never be believed. Now, at that time, saint Nārada, the ever-roaming sage, decided to speed Krishna's birth by prompting Kamsa's rage.

Said Nārada to Kāṁsa,

“Sir, have you been made aware the gods are here as Yadus and surround you everywhere? Their presence in your neighborhood should lead you to assess that Viṣṇu will be coming soon to ease the earth's distress.”

The words of Nārada left Kāṁsa thoroughly provoked and made him tremble angrily. Again the mystic spoke:

“In your last life you also practiced wickedness and sin. Lord Viṣṇu killed you then and now, it seems, He will again.”

As Nārada departed, Kamsa fumed and set his mind.

“Just see,” he thought, “what happens when a man tries to be kind!”

He killed Devakī's baby and, along with Ugrasen, put her and Vasudev in jail and hailed his new domain.

Now Vasudev and Devakī could see the only hope would come as their eighth child as said in Kamsa's horoscope. Thus, suffering in prison after Kamsa killed their boy, each year they bore another child for Kamsa to destroy.

What crime is too outrageous for a person who intends to please his flesh while caring less for family or friends? He'll even kill to have a thrill or fill a selfish whim. King Kamasa ruled with terror, and the people bowed to him.



Part Four: Instructions for Yogamaya

As Kāṁsa gathered power he was nearly unopposed, for many other demons helped him terrorize his foes. He killed six sons of Devakī. The Yadus fled in fear, except for some who stayed and prayed for Krishna to appear.

Her seventh pregnancy brought Devakī both joy and gloom. She didn't know the Lord's expansion lived within her womb.

Lord Krishna, elsewhere, summoned
Yogamāyā to request that she protect
His devotees through these
clandestine steps:

“My brother Balarām waits in the womb of Devakī, but He will leave as soon as it has been prepared for Me. Take Balarām to Rohiṇī, co-wife of Devakī. King Nanda guards her during Vasudev's captivity.

King Nanda rules Gokula, that
enchanted rural land. Now enter
Yaśodā, his wife, and execute this plan:
reside within Queen Yaśodā throughout
her pregnancy. When Balarām has left
I'll fill the womb of Devakī.

First Balarām will take His birth and be Rohiṇī's son. His charm and strength shall be unmatched, delighting everyone. When Yaśodā delivers you, then I shall join the act, the eighth-born son of Devakī, My opulence intact.

O Yogamāyā, go ahead and execute these tasks. I bless you to bewilder all and finish what I've asked. Henceforward, using sacrifice and all that it requires, some people will entreat you to fulfill their sense desires.”

Obediently, Yogamāyā bowed before the Lord and left for Śrī Gokula.

Soon, exactly in accord with Krishna's order, Balarām departed Devakī and entered His new home within the womb of Rohiṇī.

When Devakī miscarried Balarām,
the people said,

“Since Kāṁsa kills her children, she
aborted it instead.”



Part Five:
Prayers by the
Demigods for
Lord Krishna
in the Womb.

At that time Krishna, God Himself, who vanquishes all fear, went in the mind of Vasudev and readied to appear.

While bearing Krishna, Vasudev appeared just like the sun, his glow so bright the shining light astonished everyone. When he placed Krishna in the mind of Devakī one day, her visage bloomed, a waxing moon in opulent display.

To bear the Lord while trapped in jail
by Kamsa's wicked plot made
Devakī seem like a fire kept within a
pot, or like a man enlightened, wise
and thoroughly refined who fails to
share his wisdom for the good of
humankind.

As Devakī grew jubilant, King
Kam̐sa grew concerned.

“This Viṣṇu killed me once,” he
thought, “and now He has returned to
kill me once again. Yet killing
Devakī today will only bring me
trouble in a different sort of way.

To kill a pregnant relative would cost me all respect. My opulence would vanish and my subjects would defect. My health and life and legacy would all die out as well. A wicked man is just a corpse descending into hell.”

Deliberating in this way, King Kamsa chose to wait to let the child be born and then administer its fate. While on his throne or in his bed, King Kamsa stayed absorbed in thoughts about his enemy, the all-pervading Lord.

At that time Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva, Nārada and Vyas and other gods and sages grew invisible and crossed the prison grounds till they found Devakī within her room. And then they sang the praises of Lord Krishna in her womb.

Demigods:

**“Lord Krishna, we’ve come
to fulfill Your command.
Your birth in this prison
is just what You planned.**

**You always stay true
to Your own perfect vow,
for who could prevent
anything You allow?**

**You're there when the
universe springs into place;
You're there when it all
disappears without trace.**

**You favor the person who's
honest like You
but never the hypocrite,
cheater or fool.**

**You fill the desires
of Your devotees
who conquer the ocean
of death and disease.**

**They use the safe boat of
Your soft lotus feet,
then leave it for others,
their journey complete.**

**And what of those
nondevotees who aspire
to lift themselves out of
this worldly quagmire?**

**Imagining they have been
freed, they perform
the same mundane actions
they meant to reform.**

**But if a devotee who
loves You falls prey
to mundane attraction,
he won't go away,**

**for You will protect him
so well, it is said
he'll fearlessly walk
on his enemies' heads.**

**Your lessons apply to
each time and each place.**

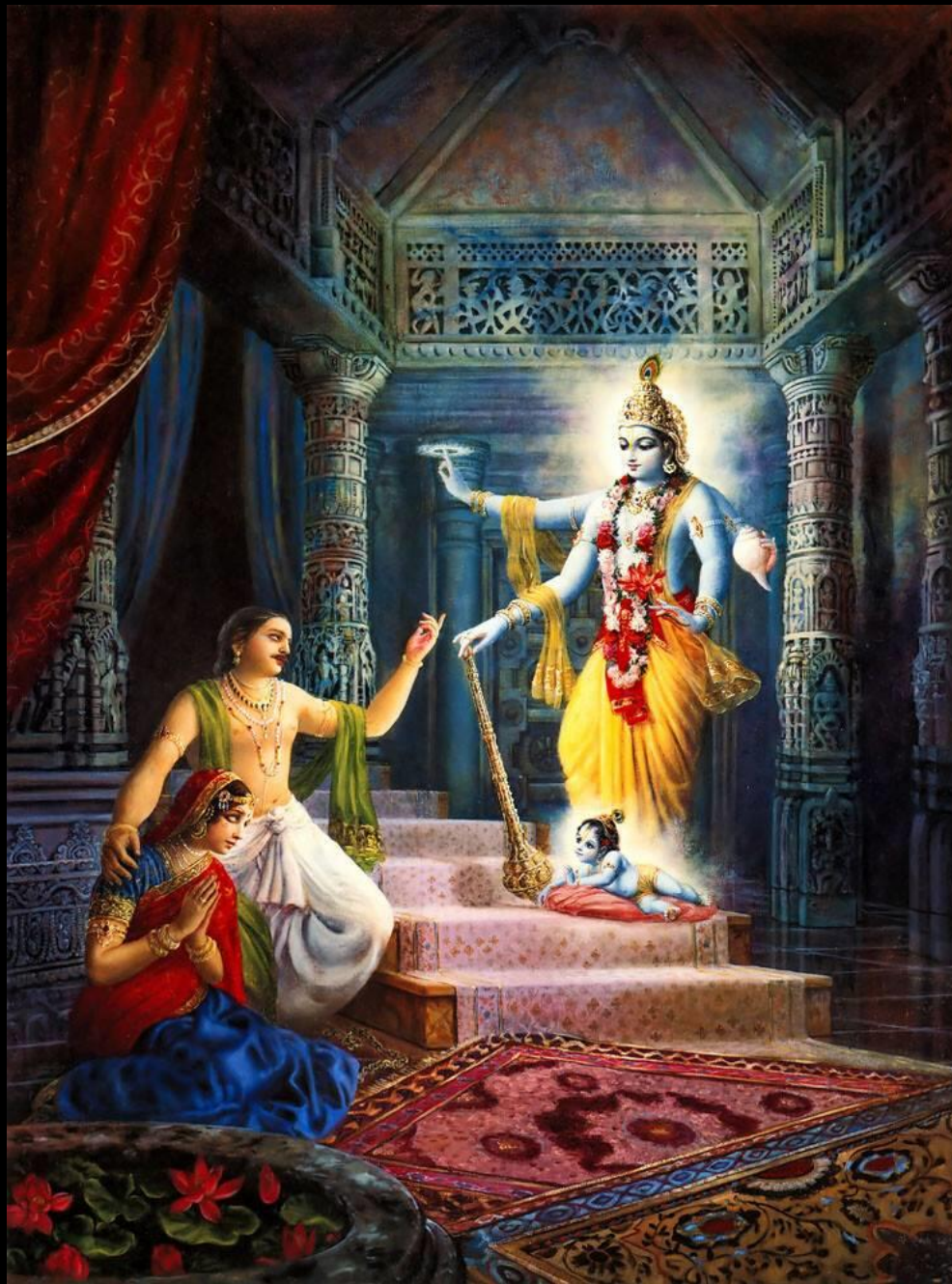
**You're equal to all,
every species and race.**

**You are the beginning
of all that is true.
Please care for us Lord;
we surrender to You.**

**O Devakī, by your good
fortune and ours,
Lord Krishna has come here
with all of His powers.**

**Your family is blessed now
that this has occurred.
You need not fear Kaṁsa;
his death is assured.”**

Thus having come to Devakī to eulogize and pray, the many gods and sages went invisibly away. Lord Krishna can do anything, so all of them were pleased to see Him be the child of His most faithful devotees.



Part Six: The Birth of Lord Krishna

One pleasant evening, earth seemed bathed in happiness and love. The sacred constellation Rohiṇī appeared above, with other stars and planets, twinkling in the cloudless sky. The universe itself seemed pleasing, still and satisfied.

The moonlit mother earth displayed her pastures, mines and towns. In fragrant trees, cuckoos and bees sang out their pleasing sounds. The rivers poured clear water into reservoirs and lakes where lotuses and lilies bloomed, appearing wide awake.

The *brāhmaṇs* rose before the dawn, took bath and set alight their sacrificial fires in accord with Vedic rites. Across the lakes and pastures, silky, fragrant breezes came. This pleased the *brāhmaṇs* tending fires but didn't spoil the flames.

The *brāhmaṇs*, who had suffered much from Kāṁsa and his men, began to feel tranquility pervade their hearts again.

The higher worlds resounded with the sounds of kettledrums as gods peered down at earth, expecting Krishna soon would come. While gods threw flowers, danced and sang in heavenly enclaves, assembling clouds made thundering sounds like gentle ocean waves.

Then Viṣṇu, He who dwells within
the hearts of you and me, appeared,
as if a full moon, from the heart of
Devakī. In His four hands, the child
held lotus, *chakra*, conch and club.
His bangled arms and jeweled ears
and gold helmet above

His scattered hair set off His yellow silks and blue-black skin. And there around His neck was hung the famed Kaustubha gem.

As Vasudev beheld the child, he thought his eyes had failed. How could the Lord, so nicely dressed, be born inside a jail? The father could not celebrate, though he was much inclined, so he gave out ten thousand cows within his joyous mind.

On seeing how the child's effulgence lit the dismal cell, the awestruck Vasudev felt peace, his worries all dispelled. He joined his palms and bowed his head and then, though it seemed strange, began, with wife and newborn son, the following exchange:

*(Vasudeva) “Primeval, transcendent,
ubiquitous Lord,
I see Your position
as never before.*

*You made the creation,
and yet, as its God,
You’re here as our son
by Your sweet façade.*

*Your powers create
everything that we see,
yet they are distinct
and complete potencies.*

*You too are distinct
from this world You have made,
yet my confused eyes
see You clearly today.*

*My Lord, You're adored
in the finest of rooms;
why come in a jail
through a prisoner's womb?
O Master of all, I can
safely presume:
since You have arrived,
cruel Kamasa is doomed."*

*(Devaki) “Dear almighty Lord,
now at last You have come
within Your creation,
as bright as the sun.
The Vedas exalt You
and all You arrange.
No one can divorce You
or force You to change.*

*The common man longs
for the heavenly skies
and freedom from illness,
old age and demise.
But when You appear,
death itself runs away,
and we all feel peaceful,
no longer afraid.*

*As Kamsa still persecutes
good people, please,
defeat all the fears
of sincere devotees
and cover this form,
much adored by the wise,
from envious, evil, material eyes.*

*Your four-handed form
doesn't fit in this world.
I should have a two-handed
boy or a girl.
No one will think Viṣṇu
could come from my womb.
Please change and I'll hide You.
The guards will come soon!"*

*(Baby Krishna) “My dear mother,
now please be blessed;
of chaste women,
you are the best.*

*Let Me now put your mind at rest.
Let your heart fill with happiness.*

*Long ago, in a former life,
you were still Vasudeva's wife.
Though Brahmā said to procreate,
you first sat down to meditate.*

*Both of you sat through
heat and cold,
hearts made perfect
by self-control.*

*I was pleased, so I asked you to
say what you wanted Me to do.*

*All you wanted, you said humbly,
was the boon of a son like Me.
Twice I came as your son back then.
Here, today, I have come again.*

*Had I come as a normal boy,
would your faith
have been unalloyed?
Still, I'm yours,
and since you love Me,
when you die, you will come to Me.”*

Lord Viṣṇu then fell silent, and before His parents' eyes, He changed from Viṣṇu to a child of normal shape and size. Reclining in His legendary, transcendental form, He showed Himself as baby Krishna, smiling, bright and warm.

Then Yogamāyā took her birth, just as Lord Krishna planned, across the river Yamunā, in Nanda's rural land. When Yaśodā, King Nanda's wife, gave birth that mystic night, exhausted from her labor, she slept on, her eyes shut tight.



Part Seven: The Babies Exchanged

By Yogamāyā's influence, the guards in Kamsa's jail, not hearing sounds of childbirth—not a whimper, sob or wail—fell fast asleep as well and could not see nor hear a sound, as all the gates swung open and their locks fell to the ground.

When thund'ring clouds let out their rain as gently as they could, a mystic serpent sheltered man and son with many hoods. As Vasudev, the huge white snake and babe of blackish blue snuck quickly past the sleeping guards, King Kamasa slept on, too.

The swirling river Yamunā, made deeper by the showers, came to a halt and made a path (by Yogamāyā's power). The river welcomed Vasudev, lest Krishna should be lost, just as the Indian Ocean once allowed Lord Rām to cross.

When Vasudev reached Nanda's house, where everybody slept, he found the room of Yaśodā and pondered his next step. In hopes that even Kāmsa would not kill a newborn daughter, he switched the babes and ran at once back through the swirling waters.

Back past the sleeping guards he slipped, through every open door. He chained himself and Devakī in shackles as before. He placed the girl by Devakī, who looked at her and smiled, while Yaśodā, asleep, knew not the gender of her child.



Part Eight: Kamsa and Yogamaya

By Yogamāyā's influence, the prison doors shut tight. The guards awoke and heard a newborn crying in the night. They ran to Kāṁsa shouting, "Devakī has had her child!"

As Kāṁsa leapt out of his bed, his scattered hair hung wild.

While rushing to the cell of Vasudev and his poor wife, King Kamsa thought, “Now cruel time has come to take my life!”

He burst into the prison cell, eyes wide in great alarm, and saw his helpless sister, baby daughter in her arms.

Cried Devakī,

“My brother! May good fortune fill your days! Great honor will attend you if you show this girl your grace. You’ve killed my seven children due to force of destiny, but kindly spare this harmless girl. She’ll be your gift to me!”

She clutched Yaśodā's child and wept, but Kāṁsa was unfazed. He snatched the girl from Devakī and gripped her tiny legs. Collapsing to his knees, he raised the girl above his head and braced himself to smash her on the floor till she was dead.

The child, however, slipped away and rose up in the air, where she changed to an eight-armed goddess. Kamasa gasped and stared. Bedecked in jewels, silks and blooms, as angels sang her praise, she held eight deadly weapons, such as trident, sword and mace.

The goddess Yogamāyā, who was soon to gather fame as Durgā, Devi, Kali and a host of other names, from avaricious people asking blessings of their choice, addressed the frightened Kāṁsa in a firm, impassioned voice:

“You foolish Kamsa! What will be the use of killing me when God Himself, Lord Krishna, is in fact your enemy? He’s taken birth already in a secret, distant place. Do not kill babies needlessly and add to your disgrace.”

To see this fearsome goddess and to hear her reprimand left Kamasa very humble, and he issued a command to free the blameless couple. Then he turned to them and said,

“Because of my most wicked sins, your seven sons are dead!

“Because of me, dear relatives, your pain has been immense. Now what will be my destiny for such a great offense? The unembodied voice we heard misled us all and lied, but I believed it anyway, and all your children died.”

Though Kamsa blamed himself,
poor Devakī felt no relief, so he
spoke some philosophy to try to
ease her grief.

“Your sons had their own karma,
which they’ve finished in this birth.
The body’s just an earthen doll that
soon returns to earth. The soul,
however, never dies, and those who
know this truth stay unattached to
worldly things and seek the Absolute.

Our family and social situations never last. I now see this quite clearly—though I haven't in the past.

Dear brother and dear sister, you are both as good as saints. I've treated you so terribly, yet you've shown such restraint.

“Can you forgive a heartless wretch,
so foolish and inept?”

With this King Kamsa fell before his
prisoners and wept.

When Devakī saw Kāṁsa so repentant and sincere, her anger at his sinful deeds completely disappeared. Then Vasudev, who saw that Krishna's plan was taking place, was also freed from anger and said this with poise and grace:

“O noble King, what you have said is perfectly correct. Due only to their ignorance do foolish men accept their bodies as themselves. As such, they simply think in terms of all that they possess today and all they long to earn.

The soul immersed in ignorance cannot be satisfied. When things go well he dances and when things go wrong, he cries. He always sees some problem or immediate reward, and never sees the all-controlling presence of the Lord.”

As all agreed upon these points of shared philosophy, King Kamsa took the chains off Vasudev and Devakī. Much pleased by this conclusion, Kamsa took his sister's leave and entered his own palace, his anxiety relieved.

The next day, though, King Kāṁsa called his ministers to see what they would think of goddess Yogamāyā's prophecy— that he who would kill Kāṁsa had been born, but somewhere else. The ministers, great demons all, discussed among themselves.

Emerging from their conference, their spokesman said, with pride,
“If this is true, King Kamsa, we must use infanticide. So let us kill each child who has been born ten days before and save your precious life, O King. Oh, yes. And what is more:

Demons

*The gods run in fear
at the sound of your bow.
Your arrows harass them
wherever they go.*

***Their weapons abandoned,
their fighting all through,
they either escape or
surrender to you.***

***Lord Viṣṇu finds yogīs and
hides in their hearts.
Lord Śiva takes off for
some forested parts.***

***Brahmā's meditating and
Indra's withdrawn;
The danger to you from
the gods is all gone.***

***And yet, like the
smoldering ashes of fire,
the gods may return to
obstruct your desire.***

***Destroy them this time and
your worries are through,
and we shall suggest what
your highness should do.***

***The powerful Viṣṇu must
first be controlled;
He only survives where
brahminical souls***

***perform sacrifices and
care for the cows.
Great King! Let's begin
persecuting them now."***

King Kamsa listened carefully to what the demons said and felt his pride returning as their statements filled his head. As humbleness and sorrow for his errors slipped away, he shouted, “Let the persecution start this very day!”

The mystic demons cheered the chance to plunder, kill and rape. They started to transform themselves to vicious, fearful shapes. They thought that killing Vaishnavas would save King Kamsa's head, not knowing that their own destruction waited just ahead.



Part Nine: Nanda Meets Vasudeva

Nearby in Śrī Gokula, where the cows and cowherds lived, the gentle Nanda Mahārāj was chief executive. Upon receiving word about his newborn baby boy, he bathed and dressed and gave out precious gifts in utter joy.

He gave two million cows, adorned with gems, to *brāhmaṇ* priests, along with hills of produce, golden cloth and lovely feasts. Such charity to *brāhmaṇs* made the kingdom purified. The *brāhmaṇs* chanted Vedic hymns, and all were satisfied.

Gokula's happy residents cleaned every nook and crag and decked the streets with mango leaves, perfumes, festoons and flags. They mixed up oil and turmeric to make a golden salve and used it, and some peacock plumes, to dress the cows and calves.

The cowherd men put on their jeweled turbans, coats and silks that proved enormous opulence exists in cows and milk. Their wives, the *gopīs*, all endowed with lovely hips and breasts, wore *kun̄ikum* and vermilion and were also nicely dressed.

The citizens, ecstatic at the news of Krishna's birth, brought gifts of gems and gold and other products of the earth. They blessed the heir apparent with fine oils and shouted out, "This child will rule our kingdom long and well, without a doubt!"

As drums and trumpets filled the air and festive spirits rose, the guests splashed milk and liquid ghee on one another's clothes. To satisfy Lord Viṣṇu through His servants, as required, King Nanda gave to all the guests the gifts they most desired.

Another wife of Vasudev, Rohiṇī, had remained within the care of Nanda while her husband was detained. She felt so pleased for Yaśodā she donned her nicest dress, and wandered through the gathering to welcome every guest.

The atmosphere in Nanda's home was naturally endowed with happiness and opulence derived from tending cows. But when Lord Krishna came within King Nanda's loving care, good fortune's goddess, Lakṣmī, also made her dwelling there.

Soon Nanda closed the festival, but he could not relax, for he was due in Mathurā to pay his yearly tax. When Vasudev, his stepbrother, learned Nanda had arrived, he went at once to tell him how his wife and he survived.

As Nanda greeted Vasudev, embracing him with love, he felt he had regained his life and thanked the stars above. The younger Vasudev showed his respects, and then began discreetly asking questions on the state of Krishna's plan.

“Dear Nanda, at your age you’d lost all hope of having sons. It surely is good fortune that your heir has finally come. Good fortune also granted me the chance to see you here, for in this world it’s often hard to see those you hold dear.

The river's current brings together floating sticks and leaves then spreads them quite indifferently by whirlpools, thrusts and heaves. So too, we come together due to bodily relation, then lose each other's company through time and complication.

How are Gokula's fertile lands, so blessed with grass and trees? How are the cows you raise so well? I hope there's no disease. How is my wife Rohiṇī, whom you kindly shelter there? Is Balarām, our son, still doing well within your care?"

“They’re fine,” said Nanda, “but that wicked Kamsa killed your boys. At least your daughter reached the gods and could not be destroyed. By destiny your children came and then were taken back. Dear friend, our fate rules everything. Take comfort in this fact.”

On hearing this, wise Vasudev could clearly understand that Nanda had no inkling of Lord Krishna's clever plan. He said, "You are so wise and kind. Now, since you've paid your tax, before some danger strikes Gokula, please, my friend, go back."

So Nanda hugged his stepbrother, and, thanking him again, prepared to go to Gokula with all the cowherd men. They yoked their bulls to bullock carts, as was their simple way, and drove from Mathurā back to the country right away.



Part Ten: Putana

While contemplating Vasudev and all that he had said, King Nanda journeyed home with an increasing sense of dread. Within his heart he offered God sincere and fervent prayers to save his son, and everyone, from danger and despair.

And danger was indeed upon Gokula at that time, from Pūtanā, a giant witch, adept at every crime. Her master, Kāṁsa, sent her to destroy the newly born, so through her power she assumed a human woman's form.

Her breasts were large and firm and seemed to overtax her waist. A fragrant garland dressed her hair, which framed her lovely face. She looked like goddess Lakṣmī with a twinkling in her eyes, enlivened by her husband, Viṣṇu. Such was her disguise.

Enchanted by her beauty, Yaśodā and Rohiṇī allowed the lovely visitor in Krishna's nursery. She smiled at Krishna tenderly and held Him to her chest, preparing Him to sit and suck her poison-covered breast.

Now, Pūtanā had murdered many children in her day. She looked at baby Krishna, but He looked the other way. And then she placed Him on her lap—a terrible mistake—as one might think he holds a rope while handling a snake.

So motherly was Pūtanā, with wicked heart beneath, that she was like a deadly sword within a silken sheath. She pushed her breast in Krishna's mouth. Aware of all her sins, He sucked the poison—and her life—so she'd not kill again.

The demon screamed out, “Leave me! Leave me! Suck my breast no more,” but as she thrashed, Lord Krishna sucked her harder than before. So forceful was her screaming that, through heaven, earth and space, both men and gods thought hurricanes were surely taking place.

She dashed out of the nursery with Krishna at her breast and tried to flee the village in her terminal distress. Her human cover vanished with her final shrieking sound, and when she fell she shook the earth a dozen miles around.

The cowherd women ran to see who made the awful screams and found a giant, ugly corpse, like something from a dream.

“The demon’s mouth hung open, showing teeth the size of plows, while eye sockets like deep, dark wells appeared beneath her brow.

Her nostrils were like gaping caves, her thighs like riverbanks. Her stomach was as spacious as a public bathing tank. Her giant arms and legs appeared like bridges in the sky.”
On seeing this, the women were upset and terrified.

The hideous and evil Pūtanā lay dead and still, yet something moved upon her breasts, which seemed as large as hills. The *gopīs*, looking carefully, saw Krishna crawling there, and like an ordinary child, He played without a care.

The *gopīs* cried in happiness and kissed the baby's brow. At once they held some rituals with products from the cow designed to save the baby from what dangers might remain. And then they sang this ancient song, comprised of Viṣṇu's names:

Gopīs

*“May Ajā, He who is unborn,
guard the legs of Krishna;
May Maṇimān, almighty
Lord, guard the knees of
Krishna;*

***May Yajña, Lord of sacrifice,
guard the thighs of Krishna;
O Viṣṇu, Lord of everything,
please protect this baby.***

*May Hayagrīva, horse divine,
guard the front of Krishna;
May Keshava, He of fine hair,
guard the heart of Krishna;*

***Acyuta, You who cannot fail,
guard the waist of Krishna;
O Viṣṇu, Lord of everything,
please protect this baby.***

***May Íśa, He who is complete,
guard the chest of Krishna;
May Vivasvān, god of the
sun, guard the neck of
Krishna;***

***May Viṣṇu, shelter of us all,
guard the arms of Krishna;
O Viṣṇu, Lord of everything,
please protect this baby.***

***May Urukram of giant steps
guard the face of Krishna;
May Īśvara, who has control,
guard the head of Krishna;***

***May Srī Hari, who holds a
club, guard the back of
Krishna;
O Viṣṇu, Lord of everything,
please protect this baby.***

*May Madhuhā,
the demon's death,
guard the right of Krishna;*

*May Ajana,
who holds a sword,
guard the left of Krishna;*

***May Haladhara,
who holds a plow,
guard the rest of Krishna.
O Viṣṇu,
Lord of everything, please
protect this baby.***

***May Hriṣīkesh,
the self-controlled, guard
young Krishna's senses;
May Viṣṇu,
Lord of Śvetadvīp,
guard the heart of Krishna;***

***Yogeśvara, yogī supreme,
guard the mind of Krishna;
O Viṣṇu, Lord of everything,
please protect this baby.***

***O Cakrī, holder of the disk,
guard before Śrī Krishna;
O Urugāya, using Your conch,
guard around Śrī Krishna;***

*Upendra,
You of mighty deeds,
guard above Śrī Krishna;
Garuḍa,
eagle-feathered friend,
guard below Śrī Krishna.*

***May Govinda,
who pleases all, guard Him
when He's playing.
May Mādhava, the life of all,
guard Him when He's
sleeping.***

***May Vaikuṅṭha, the
undisturbed, guard Him when
He's walking.***

***May Nārāyaṇ, husband of
wealth, guard Him when He's
sitting.***

***The evil witches such as this
who attack our babies,
the ghosts and
creatures of the night
who can make us crazy,***

***the hostile stars who make us
live as we do not wish to,
are vanquished, frightened
and repelled by these names
of Viṣṇu.”***

The *gopīs* finished singing and were pleased to see the child appearing safe and happy, all the danger reconciled. As Krishna drank His mother's milk, the cowherd men arrived. When Nanda saw the giant corpse he said, in great surprise,

“My friends! We simple cowherd men could not see any threat, but Vasudev advised us to take care. He was correct! He must be blessed with mystic skills and paranormal gifts to understand the threat at hand from demons such as this.”

Now Vasudev, a *kṣatriya*, well-versed in politics anticipated Kamsa's mood and all his dirty tricks. King Nanda, on the other hand, a simple *vaiśya* squire, could not conceive how Vasudev had known what would transpire.

The cowherd men brought axes and cut up Pūtanā's frame. They reasoned, "Snakes are burned at death, and she deserves the same."

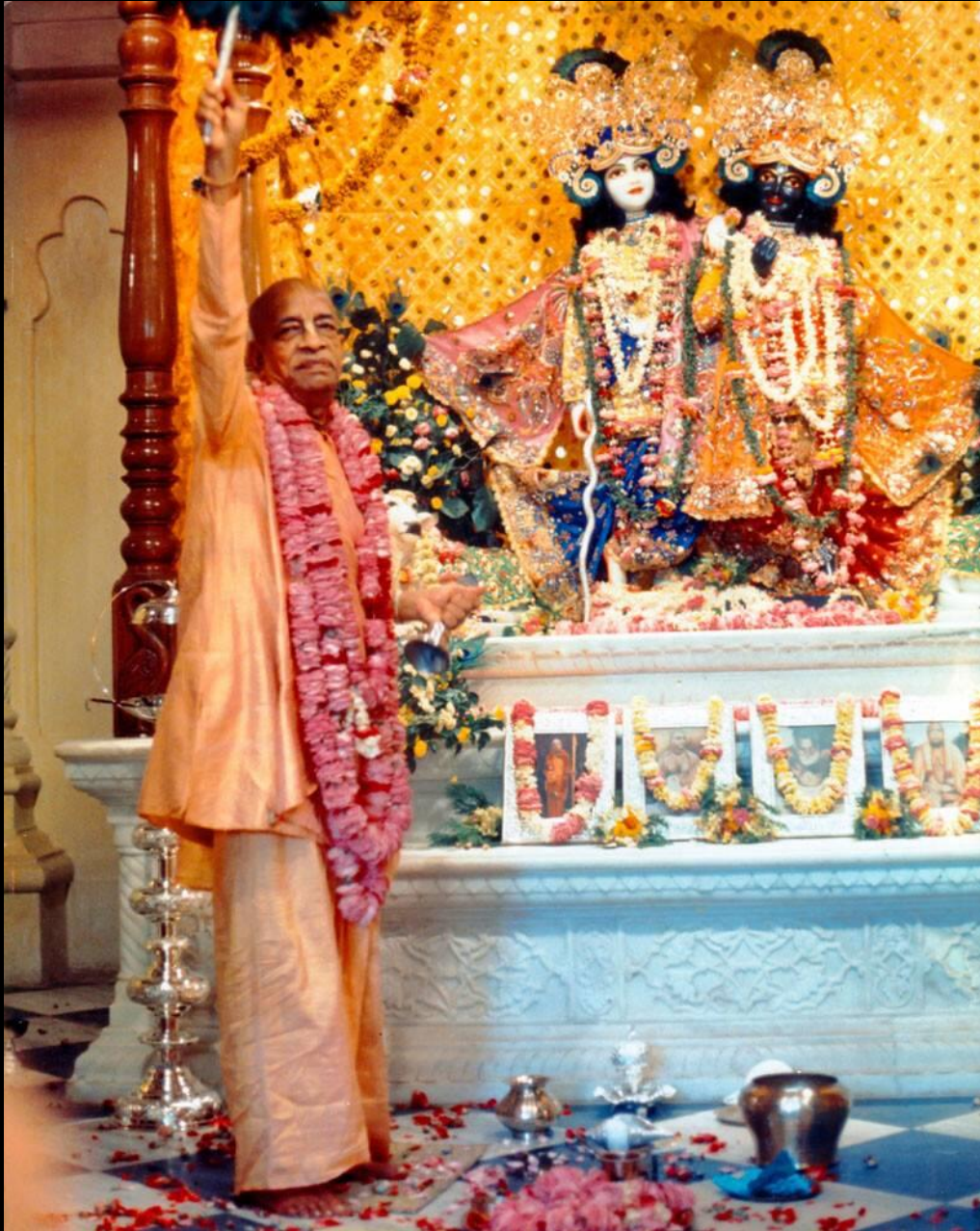
By suckling Krishna, Pūtanā had served Him, in a sense, and thus her burning body smelled as sweet as frankincense.

How powerful is Krishna's service!
Even with her faults, this Pūtanā was
blessed at death and gained a good
result. If demons who serve Krishna
accidentally are restored, then what
to speak of devotees, so pleased to
serve the Lord.

The fragrant smoke from Pūtanā infused Gokula's air, attracting distant village folks to see the strange affair.

“How could a child have killed this awful witch,” the people said. The simple Nanda, meanwhile, held his son and smelled His head.

To hear accounts of Pūtanā and Krishna, as have you, with fondness and devotion and assurance they are true, attracts one to Lord Krishna's endless pastimes, leading soon to sweet, ecstatic love of God—the highest human boon.



*Srila Prabhupada
Ky Jaya!*

*Sri Krishna
Janmastami Ky
Jaya!*