

## CHAPTER THREE



Krishna in

# BHAGAVATAM

### BHAGAVATAM

Bhagavatam describes the life of Sri Krishna said in the tenth chapter of Bhagavata Purana. The Purana (all eighteen Puranas) is written by Sage Vyasa and is narrated by his son Shukadeva to Pareekshit, the grandson of Arjuna.

Balarama (Rama the strong), the elder brother of Sri Krishna is the eighth incarnation and Krishna (one who is dark in complexion), who is very popular, is the ninth incarnation of Lord Vishnu. They were born towards the end of Dwapara yuga to rid the world from the arrogant and unrighteous kings and asuras. (Krishna is the great expounder of the 'Song Celestial,' the *Bhagavad Gita*.)

Mother Earth burdened with sinners took refuge in Brahma in the form of a cow. Brahma in turn prayed to Lord Vishnu. In response to the prayers, Vishnu and Adishesha (another aspect of Vishnu; the serpent on which Vishnu rests) incarnated as Krishna and Balarama in the Yadu house, as the sons of Vasudeva & Devaki and all the devas incarnated as their kith and kin to aid them in their mission.

#### KRISHNA and BALARAMA'S BIRTH

Vasudeva was a Yadava prince and son of Shura who ruled Shurasena; and Devaki was the niece of King Ugrasena who ruled Mathura. They got married. Later, when Ugrasena's son Kamsa affectionately took the reins of the couple's chariot to drive them to the house of Vasudeva, a voice from the heavens said: "O foolish Kamsa, the eighth child of this very woman will slay you." Furious Kamsa seized Devaki by the hair and raised his sword to bring it down on her. But Vasudeva stopped him and asked him to spare Devaki's life with the promise to hand over all her children to Kamsa when they are born. Kamsa agreed and the procession moved on.

Vasudeva and Devaki reached home. Months rolled by. Devaki gave birth to her first child and as promised Vasudeva took it to Kamsa. But Kamsa gave the child back to Vasudeva thinking that only the eighth child of Devaki will cause his death. Meanwhile, Sage Narada visited Kamsa and said: "Don't you know that all of Devaki's children are to be the rays of Lord Vishnu? Be careful. In fact, all the inhabitants of Gokula with Nanda as



their head are all incarnations of devas to assist the Lord in getting rid of cruel oppressors from the earth."

Kamsa was alarmed. He did not want to take risk with Devaki's child. He rushed to Vasudeva's house and put the newborn child to death. He then put Vasudeva and Devaki in prison. He imprisoned his own father Ugrasena and began a rule of tyranny over the entire kingdom. Because of his oppressive rule, his subjects began to flee the kingdom to take shelter in neighboring kingdoms.

Meanwhile, six of Devaki's children were put to death by Kamsa. The seventh child was due. It was Adishesha who had entered her womb. As commanded by the Lord, Yogamaya (Vishnu's divine power) transferred the unborn seventh child to the womb of Rohini-Vasudeva's second wife at Gokul and then she entered the womb of Yashoda-the wife of Nanda, and awaited the Lord's descent. In due time, Rohini gave birth to a son who later came to be known as BALARAMA. Kamsa believed that Devaki had lost her seventh child.



Before long, Devaki found herself expecting her eighth child. On an auspicious day when it was midnight Devaki gave birth to baby Narayana in his real form. Vasudeva and Devaki worshipped him. As they were looking on, his divine form was lost and he became an ordinary child in their eyes. Vasudeva had been commanded by the Lord to take the newborn child and leave it in Gokula in the house of Nanda, the chief of the cowherds. He was to bring back the baby which had been born to Yashoda, the wife of Nanda.

Vasudeva placed the child in a basket. A miracle happened. The prison doors opened by itself and the guards were fast asleep and Vasudeva was able to carry the baby out. Gokula was on the other side of the river Yamuna and because of the heavy rain there was flooding. But as Vasudeva approached the river with the baby, the waters parted and Vasudeva was able to walk towards Gokul without any difficulty. Adishesha with his thousand hoods was protecting the child from the rain. As he came closer to Nanda's house he heard the cry of a newborn baby. Nanda's wife Yashoda had just given birth to a beautiful girl. The entire Gokula was asleep. He placed his baby boy, who later came to be known



as KRISHNA, next to Yashoda and carried the baby girl back to Mathura. The guards were still asleep and as soon as Vasudeva entered the prison the doors closed again and it looked as though nothing had happened.



Few minutes later the guards woke up when they heard the cry of a newborn child. They informed Kamsa and he soon came to see the baby. He wanted to kill the baby and lifted it and was about to throw the baby on the floor, when it rose into the sky and stood transformed as Yogamaya. She said to Kamsa that the person who will kill him was still alive and then she disappeared.

Regretting his actions, Kamsa released Vasudeva and Devaki from prison.

But his repentance was short lived. He sent his wicked asura friends-POOTANA, SHAKATA, TRINAVARTA to destroy all newborn babies. People who could not bear Kamsa's rule of tyranny fled to neighboring kingdoms.

#### AT GOKULA..

Meanwhile, at Gokul, Nanda was overjoyed at the birth of a son to him and celebrated it with due ceremony and gave generous gifts to his visitors. After few days, leaving Gokula in the hands of other cowherds called gopas, Nanda went to Mathura to pay his annual dues to Kamsa. Then he went to see Vasudeva. Vasudeva welcomed him with great affection and later advised Nanda to go back home early since many calamities were likely to descend on Gokula. So Nanda made his way home.

#### POOTANA

Pootana, a Rakshasi (female demon), sent by Kamsa, disguised herself as a beautiful lady and entered Nanda's house. Everyone was carried away by her beauty that they did not pay any attention to this stranger. She took the baby in her lap and fed him her own milk which was poisoned. The Lord knew about her and sucked her so hard that he extracted her life along with the milk. Before dying she assumed her original form and died. Nanda arrived just then from Mathura and he was taken aback at the scene which met his eyes. He realized what Vasudeva said had come true. People of Gokula were unable to explain how the child had managed to escape from the dreadful



woman. They offered prayers to Narayana for protecting the child.

#### SHAKATASURA

Nanda and Yashoda watched their son grow with delight. When he learnt to turn over on his belly, they celebrated the event at the banks of the Yamuna with song and



feasting. All the people of Gokula had gathered there. Seeing that the baby was tired after all the fuss, Yashoda fed him and made him sleep. Placing his cradle in the shade of a cart in which they had come to the river bank, she went back to

her guests. After a brief nap, Krishna woke up and began to cry. But Yashoda was too far and too busy to hear him. Louder and louder he cried and kicked the cart with his baby foot. There was a great noise and the people saw the cart had overturned and all the vessels in it were broken. The small boys who were playing nearby saw it and said that the little one kicked the cart. But no one believed them. Yashoda gathered the child in her arms thanking God that nothing had happened to her darling.

It was an asura by name Shakata, sent by Kamsa, who had entered the wheel of the cart with the intention of running away with the child and later, killing it. The Lord knew what he was up to and with the kick of his sacred foot he killed the asura and no one knew what had happened.

#### TRINAVARTA

A few days later, Yashoda was sitting with her son in her lap. All on a sudden she found that the child was very heavy. She placed him on the ground and was soon engrossed in household work. The baby was happily playing and gurgling on his own. Suddenly, the gentle breeze had turned into such a

terrible whirlwind that it swooped the baby off. It was Trinavarta, another evil asura friend of Kamsa, who had appeared in the guise of



a whirlwind to destroy the child. The entire Gokul was filled by dust and darkness. No one could see anything. When the whirlwind subsided Yashoda came running out to see her son but could not find him. Meanwhile, Trinavarta had carried the child far away, high in the sky. His aim was to rise as high as he could and then to dash the child to the

ground and thus kill it. The child, however, had become very heavy; he could neither lift it nor drop it on the ground. Now the Lord caught him by his throat that he choked and fell down dead. The people of Gokul watched the scene with open-eyed amazement. Once again the baby was rescued and restored to the anxious mother. No one knew what had happened. They thanked God for the child was safe.

#### THE NAMING OF THE CHILDREN

One day, Garga, the family priest of the Yadavas, visited Gokul at Vasudeva's bidding to name his children who were growing up there. After welcoming him with due respect Nanda requested Gargacharya to conduct the naming ceremony of his son and the son of Rohini (sister of Yashoda). Garga explained, "Being the royal priest of the Yadavas, if the news of my performing the ritual reaches Kamsa he will cause a lot of trouble to you and your child". So Nanda did not have any open celebrations and announcements. In absolute secrecy, the naming ceremony of the children took place in a cowshed. Garga said that Rohini's son will be pleasing everyone with his good qualities and hence named him Rama who will be called BALARAMA because of his prowess. Garga named Nanda's son as KRISHNA for his dusky complexion. He said that Krishna will bring pleasure and prosperity to Nanda and the entire Gokula. Garga blessed them and left Gokula and went his way to tell Vasudeva about the welfare of his children.

#### KRISHNA'S PRANKS

Balarama and Krishna were growing up fast. They could now run around all over the place. They became more and more naughty; in particular, Krishna was more mischievous; he would pull the tails of the calves and allow himself to be dragged along. Balarama, of course, gave his little brother a hand in everything he did.

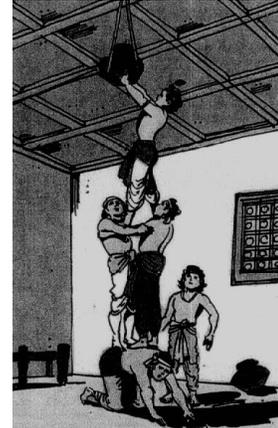


They began to play in Gokula with the children in the other houses. Soon enough Yashoda had to listen to the complaints about her son's mischief in the houses of the gopis (wives of the cowherds). It almost became a daily ritual to hear these complaints:

One gopi said: "Your son untied the calf and it had drunk all the milk of the cow and I found nothing for myself."

Another said: "He has hundred ways of stealing curds and butter from my house. He eats up some of it, gives some to his friends and the rest to the monkeys."

A third gopi said: "If I keep the butter pot beyond his reach he tries another trick. He sees the butter pot hanging from the roof. It is placed in a receptacle made up of rope. Krishna asks one of his friends to bend down while two other friends stand up on the back of that boy and finally he himself stands on top of them and makes a hole in the pot of milk or curds or butter. If I find him and scold him he just giggles and runs away."



All the while, Krishna would stand by his mother's side. Yashoda would turn towards her son with angry eyes. But one look at his tear-filled and wide-eyed innocent face would melt her heart. The gopis would also go back to their houses forgetting their anger and thinking all the while of the beautiful face of Krishna: of his sweet smile and his mischievous ways.

#### YASHODA SEES A VISION

One day, Krishna and Balarama were playing in the fields with their friends. Soon, Balarama and other boys came running home and said to Yashoda that Krishna had swallowed handfuls of mud. Yashoda rushed up to Krishna and asked him why he ate mud. Krishna shook his head and said:



"Mother, I did not eat mud. They are telling lies. Look into my mouth and see if there is any mud there." "Show me your mouth", said Yashoda. Krishna opened his mouth for his mother to see. She looked and what she saw there filled her with awe. Inside Krishna's mouth she saw the entire universe-sky, earth, and everything in the cosmos. And, strangely enough she saw the Gokula and there she saw herself looking inside the open mouth of her little son. But soon the Lord made her forget the whole incident.

#### THE TWIN TREES IN THE COURTYARD

Another day when all the maids were busy Yashoda herself started to churn the curds to make fresh butter for her Krishna. She was busy singing and working. Krishna who was hungry went near her and asked her to feed him. Placing him on her lap she began to feed him. While she was feeding Yashoda smelt the milk overflowing in the vessel which she had placed on the fire. Placing the child on the ground she rushed to the kitchen to save the milk. Krishna was very angry with her since she had not satisfied his hunger. He broke the mud-pot containing the curds, took a large

portion of the butter which had been formed there. With tears in his eyes he went to a safe corner to eat the stolen butter in peace.

When Yashoda came back she saw the broken pot. She began to look for Krishna to catch him. By now Krishna's hunger and anger had both gone. She found him in the courtyard standing on an upturned mortar happily sharing the butter with the monkeys. As soon as he saw Yashoda with a stick in her hand he ran away with his friends as though he was terribly afraid of the punishment in store for him. Yashoda was running after him to catch hold of him. Krishna saw his mother tired out by the chasing game he was bent on playing with her. He felt sorry for her and at last allowed himself to be caught by her firmly.

Holding him firmly in her hand she said: "I am going to punish you. See you if I do not beat you with this stick." Krishna looked scared and he clung to her as though in sheer fright. Her gentle heart melted. So she decided to tie him up to the mortar instead. Yashoda brought a piece of rope and placing Krishna by the side of the mortar she tried to tie him up. When she tried to knot the rope she found it was too short. She got another piece but it was also short by two inches. She kept on bringing rope after rope but no matter how many pieces she joined together, it always fell short by two inches. Looking at her and her tired face Krishna felt sorry for her and taking pity in her he allowed himself to be tied up. Having a sigh of relief Yashoda went inside the house to resume her duties saying: "I can have some peace now that you are tied up securely."

But she was mistaken. Slowly dragging the heavy mortar with him, he reached the front courtyard of the house. Krishna saw two Arjuna trees growing together like they were twins. Krishna managed to go in between them, but the mortar got stuck. When he tugged at the rope to pull himself free, both the trees were uprooted and fell to the ground with a crash. Out of the two fallen trees sprang two shining beings. They bowed before Krishna and sang hymns in his praise and then vanished from the earth. (These two heavenly beings, who were the sons of Kubera, the god of wealth, were drunk with pride and were at one time cursed by Narada, to whom they had shown disrespect. Narada had told them that they would



remain imprisoned in the arjuna trees till a time when Lord as Krishna would come and liberate them.)

When they heard the crash, people came running out to see what had happened. Some boys who had watched everything related the whole incident. But no one believed it. Soon Yashoda too came there and untied the rope binding Krishna.

#### THE FRUIT SELLER

One day a fruit-selling lady passed by Nanda's house. Krishna wanted to get some fruits for a fistful of grain in



exchange. But by the time he ran out to her all the grain fell through his fingers. The lady saw the spilt grain all along the trail and gave him some fruits from her basket. Krishna ran away happily with his fruit. Later, the fruit-seller found that her basket was filled with precious gems! She wondered about it but could not solve the riddle. She

was blessed by the Lord (who filled her basket with gems, without her knowledge, for giving him free fruits).

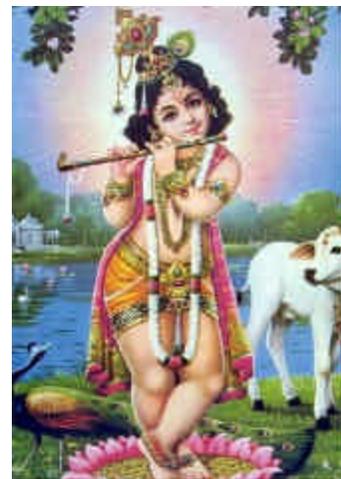
#### MOVING TO BRINDAVAN

When Krishna was about three years old, the gopas in Gokula held a council with Nanda at the head. The subject was the danger which had been assailing Krishna so often and so, the safety of their darling Krishna and other children became their main concern. According to the advice of Upananda, a wise and elderly man, Nanda and all the gopas agreed to abandon Gokula and move to a safer place called Brindavan which is at the foot of a small mountain Govardhana surrounded by the forest full of grass and river Yamuna flowing by.

After collecting their cattle, the people of Gokul loaded their carts with their belongings and started their journey. When they arrived at Brindavan the new settlers first built sheds for the cattle and soon settled down after building their own homes.

#### ADVENTURES IN BRINDAVAN

Balarama and Krishna liked the new place. They wished to explore the forest and took the calves to graze. While the calves graze the grass, they would play games with their friends. They played flutes and danced, adorned themselves with wild flowers and peacock feathers.

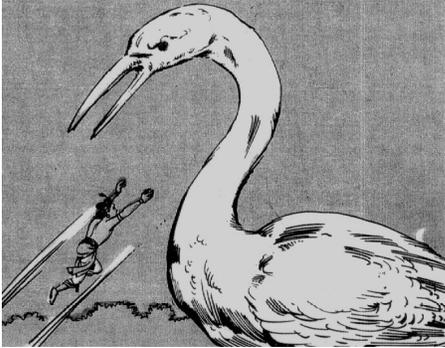


VATSA

One day, when they were herding their cattle, they saw a calf that was not one of theirs. Krishna stealthily approaching the calf from behind held its hind legs firmly twirled him around and threw it on top of a tree. It was a demon VATSA in disguise and fell down dead in his true form, crushing a number of trees under his weight.

BAKASURA

When they were a little older, Krishna and Balarama were allowed to take the older cattle to the forest to graze.



They would carry their morning meal with them, and roam all day with their friends, from forest to forest, with their herd. One day, when they took the cows to the banks of Yamuna to quench their thirst, they saw a huge crane. It pounced on Krishna and picked him up in its sharp beak. Even as Krishna's companions stared open-

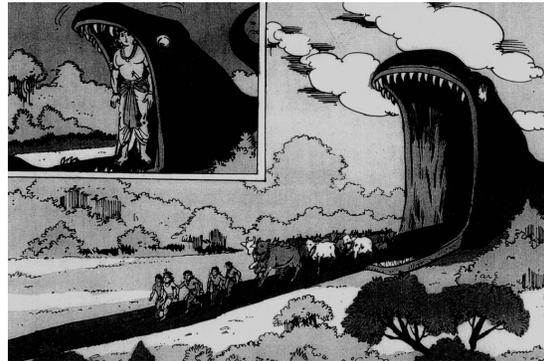
mouthed with shock, the creature swallowed Krishna at one gulp. The cowherds were terrified and fainted from shock. But as soon as Krishna reached down the mouth of the demon, the creature felt an unbearable heat inside his throat and quickly spewed out his victim. It was BAKASURA, a friend of Kamsa who came in disguise to kill Krishna. But Krishna sprang up, grabbed the creature, playfully tore it apart and put an end to him. When the cowherds regained consciousness, they were overjoyed to have their playmate back and hugged him affectionately.

AGHASURA

Another day, when the boys were playing, AGHASURA, the brother of Pootana and Bakasura assumed the form of an enormous serpent and came there to kill them. Like a huge mountain he spread himself keeping his cave-like mouth open. His lower lip rested on earth, while the upper reached up to the clouds. Like a red ribbon of a road, his tongue emerged from within. When the cowherds saw the creature in their path, they were amazed and started speculating about the nature of the huge monstrosity before them. Some said it was a colossal serpent, others said it was the goddess of Vrindavana, and yet others said it was just a geographical feature of the forest. Then they said, "So what if it is a serpent? If it dares to swallow us, our Krishna will slay him like he did Bakasura." So saying, they walked straight into the mouth of the serpent gleefully clapping their hands. Before Krishna's very eyes,

the cowherds and their cattle had gone inside the asura's mouth. Krishna thought, "How could they mistake this serpent for an illusion? I must save them now."

Aghasura was waiting for Krishna to enter his mouth so that he would swallow all of them at one gulp. Moments later, Krishna too stepped in. Once inside Aghasura's mouth, Krishna began to grow and grow and grow. Now Aghasura could not breathe. His throat was choked, his eyeballs bulged out, and soon his enormous body became lifeless. Krishna, the cowherds and the cattle stepped out unscathed from the dead demon's mouth.



#### DHENUKA

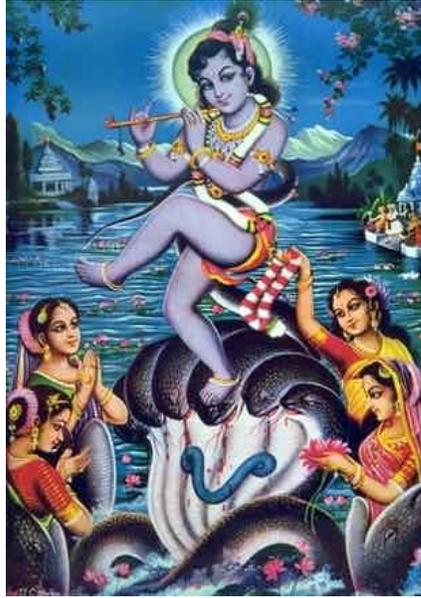
When Krishna and Balarama were six years old, they were allowed to go further deep into the forest with their cows. There was a palmgrove in which a wicked asura named DHENUKA lived in the guise of a donkey. So no one dared to go there and eat the fruit. But Balarama killed Dhenuka and helped the cowherd boys to venture fearlessly into the forest to eat the palm fruit and graze the cattle.



#### KALIYA

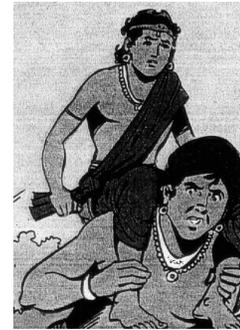
Balarama and Krishna were usually inseparable. One day, however, Krishna went with his other friends to graze the cows, leaving Balarama behind. Close by the bank of Yamuna was a lake called Madu. Its water was poisoned by a dread snake KALIYA who lived there. It was a hot summer day; unmindful of the warning, some boys led the cattle to the lake to quench their thirst. The cattle and the boys who drank the water collapsed on the river bank. Krishna could not bear to see this. Swiftly, he climbed up a tree and dived into the pond. Playfully he began to splash about in the water. Kaliya, the serpent with 101 heads, heard the sound, came to the surface of the water and saw Krishna. The angry Kaliya caught Krishna in his coils and tried to kill him. The cowherd boys were alarmed. Some of them rushed to tell Nanda. On hearing the news Nanda, Yashoda, Balarama and others hurried to the spot. Everyone was horrified except Balarama. Krishna then started to grow bigger and bigger till he got free from Kaliya's hold. But

the angry Kaliya spread his hoods fully, hissed and spat out venom on Krishna through his tongues. Krishna playfully avoided the attack of the serpent. Suddenly he leaped into the sky and landed right on the heads of the snake. With rhythmic steps, Krishna began to dance on Kaliya, nimbly stepping from one head to another. Kaliya was getting tired. He would try to lift one of his heads but quickly Krishna would jump on it. Blood oozed out from Kaliya's mouths; his end seemed to be near. Just then his wives and children appeared before Krishna, worshipped him and begged him to let Kaliya go. Krishna spared the life of Kaliya who later asked for his forgiveness. As commanded by Krishna, Kaliya left the Madu Lake with his family and went away to an island. The water of the lake became miraculously pure and clear. The cows and the boys had got up as though from a long sleep. Everyone rejoiced and thanked God that Krishna was safe.



#### PRALAMBHA

Another day, when Krishna, Balarama and their friends were grazing their cattle by the riverside, PRALAMBHA, the asura, came there in the guise of a cowherd. Krishna knew him and yet he allowed him to play with them. Krishna made a slight variation in the game that the boys had to split into two teams to play; the winning team had to carry the losing team at the end of the game; they were all thrilled. In one round of the game, Pralambha carried Balarama. He hurried to the target tree and ran further away with Balarama on his back with the intention of killing him. When he went far away from the other boys he assumed his asura form. Balarama with his fist hit Pralambha on his head. The blow was so strong the asura fell down dead. The boys had now reached the spot and were relieved to see Balarama safe and sound.



#### FOREST FIRE

Later, when they were playing games, their cows wandered away from them in search of fresh grass. After a while, the boys noticed their absence and started looking for them. By the time they rounded up all their cattle, the boys were tired. Just then, a forest fire broke out. The

flames spread rapidly and surrounded them. The children were panic-stricken and cried out: "Krishna! Balarama! Help! Please do something and protect us from the calamity." Krishna listened to the cries and said: "Please do not be afraid. Just close your eyes." The boys obeyed him. Krishna sucked all the fire towards him and swallowed it. He then led the boys to a tree. When the boys opened their eyes, they found themselves in the shade of the tree where they had been playing earlier in the day.



They went home and talked about the achievements of Balarama and Krishna. People of Brindavan thought that two divine beings had been born in the midst of their children. And the gopas and the gopikas (gopis) would wait every evening to see the beautiful vision of Krishna.

#### GENEROSITY

One day, when Krishna and his friends were grazing their cows on the slopes of the Govardhana hill, he said that people who give generously like trees, which live only for the good of others and not for themselves, are blessed.

#### GOVARDHANA

The rainy season was drawing near and in Vraja, people were preparing for a Yagna to worship Indra, the god of rain that gives life to all beings. But Krishna suggested in worshipping their cows that give them wealth, and the Govardhana Mountain that gives grass to their cows. People agreed and instead of worshipping Indra they worshipped the cows and the Mountain. Indra took it as an insult and decided to take revenge on the people of Vraja by creating a very heavy rain to wash away the whole village. People ran to Krishna for help. He came to the rescue by lifting the Govardhana Mountain and holding it in his hand as an umbrella, under which people with their cattle and belongings took shelter for seven days and seven nights, until the rain stopped. Then the people of Vraja came out and went back to their homes. Krishna replaced the hill. The people of Brindavan thanked him and once again marveled at the achievements of Krishna. Meanwhile, when Krishna was alone, Indra with all his pride vanished—approached Krishna and begged his pardon.



RESCUING NANDA FROM NETHERWORLD

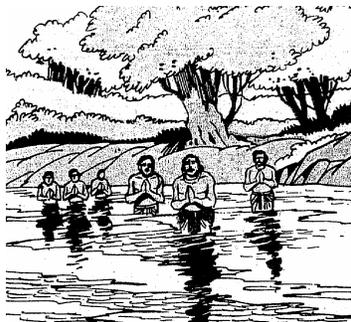
One morning, Nanda entered the waters of Yamuna to take bath. The sun had not yet risen and the time was said to belong to the asuras. An asura grabbed him and took him to the presence of Varuna, the lord of the waters. When the gopals (gopas) saw him disappear underwater, they cried out for Krishna who rushed to the spot, dived into the water, went to the netherworld and entered the palace of Varuna. Varuna fell at Krishna's feet; worshipped him and begged his pardon for the ignorant act of his servant who seized his father. Krishna then went back to the earth and to Brindavan with Nanda.

GOPAS SEES HIS INFINITE FORM

Nanda was amazed at the Bhakti (devotion) which Varuna showed to his son and related the events to his friends. They believed that Krishna is the lord of Lords and wondered if he will reveal to them his true self. Krishna learnt what was in their minds, and revealed to them his infinite form but soon came back to normal.

PYTHON

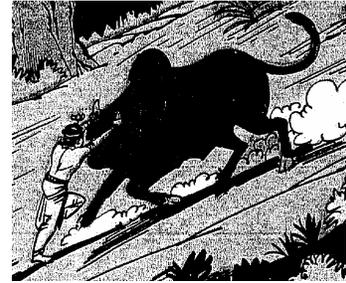
On a Shivaratri day, Krishna, Nanda and other cowherds visited Ambikavana, a forest nearby. After a holy dip in the river Sarasvati (that has joined Yamuna and Ganga near Prayag-present day Allahabad) they worshipped Lord Shiva. They fasted and slept in the riverbank that night. Suddenly a huge python pounced on the sleeping Nanda. He woke up in panic and shouted, "Krishna! Help me." Krishna went near and touched the snake with his feet. The python vanished. In its place stood a Vidhyadhara, a divine being called Sudarshana who was cursed to be a python by the rishis called Angirasas for his ill-thought about them out of his pride. Sudarshana worshipped Krishna and went back to his home Gandharvaloka.

SHANKHACHUDA

Once, there came a servant of Kubera (the god of wealth) by name Shankhachuda and carried away the gopis. They cried for help. The two brothers approached him with huge trees. Shankhachuda got frightened and ran for his life releasing the gopis. Leaving Balarama behind, Krishna chased him and with one blow from his hand, he hit the wicked one on the head. He died on the spot. Krishna took his crest-jewel and presented it to Balarama.

ARISHTA

An asura by name ARISHTA in the form of bull came to Brindavan to kill Krishna. But Krishna with all his might pulled out its sharp horns; attacked the bull with the horns and killed him.



Meanwhile, Sage Narada visited Kamsa and revealed him the truth that the eighth son of Devaki is still alive in Brindavan in the house of Nanda and all the asuras sent by him were killed by Krishna and his brother Balarama. Kamsa got furious. He put Vasudeva and Devaki in prison. He then sent the last of his asura friends KESHI and VYOMA to Vraja to kill the brothers.

KESHI

The demon Keshi assumed the form of a mighty horse and galloped into Vrindavana. Pawing the ground in fury, he neighed so loudly that the people trembled in fear. Keshi rushed at Krishna with his enormous mouth wide open as if he would devour the entire sky. Krishna gazed at him calmly with a smile. Effortlessly he thrust his left arm into the open mouth of the demon. His delicate hand now resembled a heated iron rod. At the touch of Krishna's hand Keshi's teeth began to fall. Then Krishna's arm began to swell inside the mouth of the demon. Larger and larger it grew, till it choked the demon's throat. The demon fell down dead.

VYOMA

A few days later after killing Keshi, Krishna was playing hide and seek with his friends on a hilltop. Some of them were as thieves, some as guards and some as sheep in the game. They were deeply engrossed in the game when Vyomasura appeared in the form of a cowherd. He joined in the game as one of the thieves. Pretending to play, he would take away the little boys who had become the sheep. One by one, he hid them in a cave near by, covering the mouth of the cave with a big rock. As the game progressed, the number of



players dwindled till there were only four or five cowherds left. Krishna had of course realized the truth. As soon as Vyomasura tried to take away another 'sheep', Krishna pounced on him, like a lion attacking a wolf. The demon assumed his true fearsome form. But as much as he struggled, Vyomasura could not free himself. Krishna caught him very hard and pinned him down to the ground. Having killed the demon, Krishna went forth to the cave where his companions had been hidden. Breaking the rock at the entrance, Krishna freed all the boys trapped inside.

#### KAMSA INVITING BROTHERS TO MATHURA

Kamsa now carefully planned to invite the brothers to Mathura and kill them in a wrestling match. He sent Akrura, a Yadava chief to Vraja to bring Krishna and Balarama to Mathura in the pretext of celebrating Dhanur-yagna (the bow-sacrifice). Akrura was a devotee of Krishna; he reached Brindavan and conveyed Kamsa's message as well as his intention of killing them; the brothers laughed. The next day, early morning, Krishna and Balarama left for Mathura with Akrura in the royal chariot. The gopis bid them farewell with heavy hearts. Nanda and the cowherds followed Akrura in their carts loaded with gifts for Kamsa.

#### AKRURA SEES THE VISION OF NARAYANA

They took a break at the banks of Yamuna. The brothers did their morning rites in the river and went back to the chariot and seated themselves. Akrura then went to do his rites when he was blessed by Krishna with the vision of Narayana reclining on Adishesha. Akrura saluted Krishna, the lord of Lords and drove the chariot ahead. They all reached Mathura. (Krishna was about fifteen years old then.)



#### AT MATHURA...

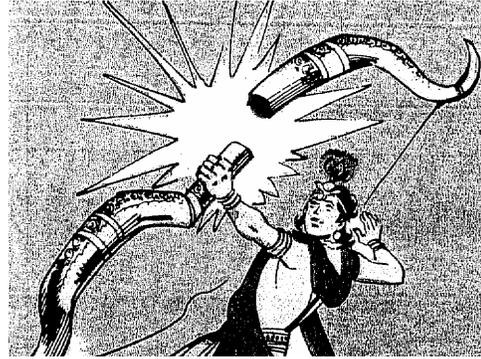
Akrura informed Kamsa that his mission was successful. Balarama and Krishna went to see the sights of the city with the cowherds. While they admired the city, people of Mathura admired them. Some women stopped the brothers and offered worship. Just then Krishna saw a washer man pass by. He took some silk clothes from him for all of them and got dressed. Then they came upon a weaver who gave them good-looking shawls. Krishna was pleased and blessed him with health and prosperity. Then, a flower man welcomed them and presented them a garland of finest flowers. Krishna blessed him too. Later, they saw a beautiful woman



called Trivakra with a hunchback. She was a maidservant of Kamsa who makes special sandal paste and ointments for him. She offered them to the brothers. Krishna was pleased and straightened her body.

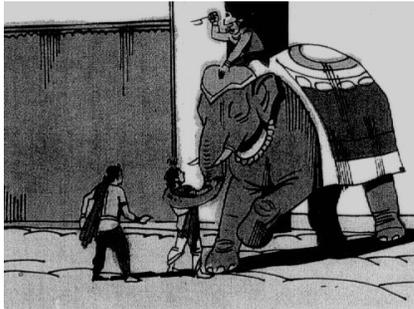
Krishna and his companions then reached the site of the sacrifice. They saw the large and

mighty bow studded with expensive jewels and guarded by soldiers. Ignoring their protests, Krishna reached for the bow, lifted it, strung it and split it into two. The soldiers surrounded him. Krishna and Balarama using the pieces of bow as weapons killed all the soldiers. Then they left the hall and roamed about. At sunset, they returned to their camp, had their meal and slept peacefully. Meanwhile, Kamsa heard about everything that had happened at the sacrificial site; he was worried.



#### THE END OF KAMSA

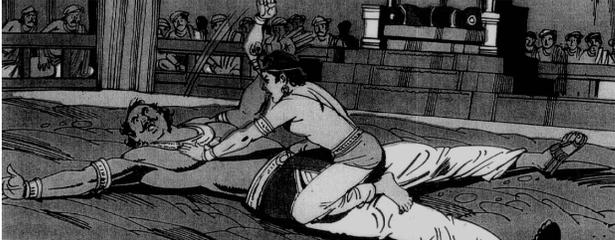
Next day, Kamsa inaugurated the festival of wrestling matches. The champions like Chanura and Mushtika arrived on the scene. When Krishna and Balarama arrived at the site, an elephant by name Kuvalayapeeda blocked the entrance. Krishna called out the Mahout (elephant keeper) to allow them to pass. But, as already told by Kamsa, the Mahout provoked the elephant to attack Krishna. The enraged elephant wrapped his trunk around Krishna. But he nimbly wriggled out of the elephant's hold,



and hid between its legs after giving it a good blow. For long, Krishna teased and taunted the elephant. Then with one hand he pulled at the trunk and floored him. Krishna then pulled out the tusks of the elephant and with them finished off both the elephant and its keeper. Then Krishna and Balarama entered the arena. Chanura and Mushtika challenged the boys. The fight began. Krishna soon put an end



to Chanura and Balarama that of Mushtika. Then came few more wrestlers: Koota, Shala and Toshala. Balarama killed Koota and Krishna that of Shala and Toshala. The five strong men of Kamsa—all lay dead. Kamsa could not bear to see this. He ordered his men to drive the brothers out of town, capture Nanda, take away the belongings of the cowherds, and kill Vasudeva and Ugrasena. Even as Kamsa was



issuing these orders, Krishna reached Kamsa on his throne, threw him down and killed him. Enraged by this, Kamsa's eight younger brothers rushed at Krishna and

Balarama. They were all killed by Balarama. Thereafter, Krishna and Balarama hurried to the prison to free Vasudeva and Devaki.

#### BROTHERS MEET FAMILY

Balarama and Krishna bowed respectfully before their parents and comforted them for their long separation from their own sons. Vasudeva clasped Krishna in a fond embrace.

The brothers also released their grandfather Ugrasena from prison and they placed him back on the throne. Krishna welcomed back all the subjects who had fled from Mathura in terror of Kamsa and restored to them their rightful properties and homes. People lived happily thereafter.

Some days passed. Krishna and Balarama requested Nanda to return to Vraja and comfort all their dear ones there. They said they would be coming there as soon as their work in Mathura was over. Nanda and the gopas bade them good-bye and returned to Vraja with heavy hearts.

#### BROTHERS' EDUCATION

Soon, at the request of Vasudeva, Gargacharya, the family priest of the Yadavas performed the Upanayana of Balarama and Krishna. Then the boys set out for Sage Sandipani's ashram in Avanti (modern Ujjaini) to go through their formal education in gurukula with the sage as their guru. They learnt the Vedas, Shastras, how to wield weapons and all the sixty-four arts and crafts in just sixty-four days. At the end of their training, they humbly addressed their guru and asked him what he would like from them as gurudakshina. Sandipani being aware of their extraordinary powers consulted his



wife and asked them to restore their lost son in the sea at Prabhasa (in Gujarat). The brothers immediately left for Prabhasa in their chariot. They sat on the seashore for a while, when the lord of the oceans appeared before them and said, Panchajana, an asura who dwells under the sea took the boy away. Krishna promptly dived into the ocean and killed the asura. But he could not find the boy. Then they went to Yama, the lord of death and asked him to restore their guru's son. Yama's servants brought the son of Sandipani. Krishna took him with them and came back to the earth to their guru's ashram. Sandipani and his wife overjoyed to see their son back. The sage blessed Krishna and Balarama. They took leave of the couple and their new companions in the gurukula and came back to Mathura.



Krishna then sent his message of love to the people of Vraja through his dear friend and a respectful minister Uddhava.

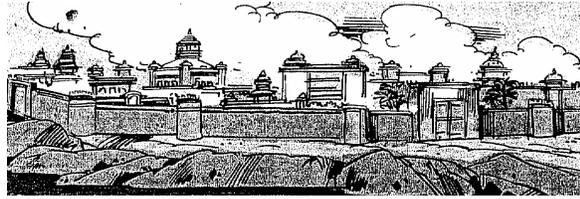
#### KNOWING PANDAVAS

Krishna and Balarama learnt about all their relations from their parents. Vasudeva had heard that his sister Kunti and her sons Pandavas were not treated well by the Kauravas in Hastinapur after she lost her husband. According to his father's wish, Krishna sent Akrura to Hastina to find out the state of affairs there. Akrura stayed there for sometime and saw that the Pandavas were being ill treated in many ways by their cousins. He gathered all the information he wanted, came back to Mathura and reported to Vasudeva, Krishna and Balarama.

#### RISE OF DWARAKA

Meanwhile, Kamsa's two queens Asti and Prapti went back to their father's house after the death of their husband and related to their father Jarasandha, the ruler of Magadha, how Kamsa had been killed by Krishna. Enraged Jarasandha collected a huge army and surrounded the city of Mathura on all sides to avenge the death of his son-in-law. That very moment, two chariots equipped with weapons and driven by able charioteers appeared from heavens. Krishna and Balarama ascended the chariots and with their small army destroyed the whole army of Jarasandha but let him go free. Jarasandha gathered another army and attacked Mathura again and again for seventeen times and seventeen times his army was destroyed. On the eighteenth occasion, just before Jarasandha reached Mathura, his ally and another king Kalayavana surrounded the city with his own army. Krishna

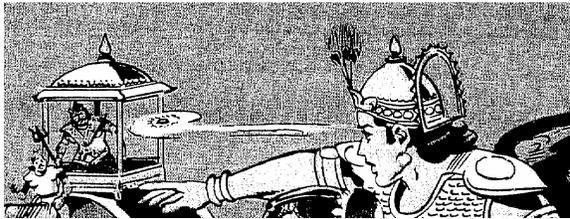
wanted his subjects to be safe. He, after consulting Balarama had a strong and invincible fortress city called Dwaraka built by the divine architect Vishvakarma in the sea in Gujarat. The devas sent many gifts for this new city. With the divine power, Krishna transferred his beloved subjects to the new city. (Krishna was about thirty years old when he established a kingdom in Dwaraka.)



Now Krishna and Balarama went to fight with Kalayavana. Soon, Kalayavana and his army were destroyed. On Krishna's bidding, the Yadava soldiers took all the precious objects from the defeated army to Dwaraka. Just then, Jarasandha approached Mathura for the eighteenth time. Krishna thought of a different plan. Krishna and Balarama pretended to flee and reached the top of a hill. Furious Jarasandha set fire to the mountain on all sides. The brothers jumped down the hill: from there, without being noticed by the enemy went safely to Dwaraka. Thinking that the brothers were destroyed Jarasandha returned to his kingdom in peace.

#### NARAKASURA

The devas were once harassed by Narakasura. They were so desperate that Indra came to Krishna and asked for his help. Krishna agreed to do so. He reached Pragjyotishapura, the capital city of Narakasura on his vehicle-Garuda.



Krishna easily broke into all the barriers that surrounded the city. Then he blew his conch-Panchajanya that woke up the demon Mura who slept under the water. The five-headed Mura with

his trident rushed at Krishna who destroyed it and finally killed Mura with his chakra. He also killed all the seven sons of Mura who attacked him and finally, Narakasura himself. Mother Earth approached Krishna with the earrings of Aditi (mother of devas) and the umbrella of Varuna that were stolen by Narakasura. Then Krishna went to Amaravati (in heaven) and returned the earrings of Aditi to Indra.

#### BANASURA

Aniruddha, the grandson of Krishna was held captive by Banasura, the son of Bali, who ruled Shonitapura guarded by Lord Shiva himself. Krishna and Balarama with their Yadava army marched towards Shonitapura and attacked the city on all sides. Lord Shiva came to fight for his devotee

(Banasura) and his son Subrahmanya had come with him. Krishna fought with Shiva and Pradyumna (Krishna's son) fought with Subrahmanya. Balarama took care of the rest of the army of Banasura. Krishna's Saranga bow was busy and so was Shiva's Pinaka. During the fight Shiva was made to sleep by the arrow, Jrumbhana-astra. Then Krishna attacked the asura and finally he took up his Sudarshana chakra and cut off Banasura's arms leaving only four out of one thousand. Humbled Banasura bowed Krishna and released Aniruddha. With his grandson, Krishna returned to Dwaraka where they received a joyous welcome.



#### YAMUNA

Once, Balarama visited Brindavan, prostrated before Nanda and Yashoda and spent two full months with them and with all his old friends. One day, he went to the banks of Yamuna and wished the river Yamuna to come to the spot where he was; but she did not. Furious Balarama lifted his weapon, the plough and tried to drag the river out of its course. Yamuna being shocked begged his pardon and prayed to him to spare her. The greathearted Balarama dropped his weapon and let her free. It is said, even now, there can be seen the groove which was caused by Balarama when he tried to change the course of Yamuna.

#### PAUNDRAKA

When Balarama was in Vraja, Krishna received a message from Paundraka, the king of Karusha and a friend of Narakasura that he was the true Vaasudeva and Krishna was an imposter who carries his insignia, so he wanted Krishna to give up or fight with him. Krishna told the messenger that he will not give up his disc and other insignia and in fact, he would use his disc to destroy the king and his foolish friends who mislead him into this self-deception. After the messenger left Krishna prepared to attack that fool Paundraka who was staying with his friend, the king of Kashi. Krishna led his army to Kashi. Paundraka who was dressed exactly like Krishna with a conch-shell, a disc, a mace and yellow garments came out to meet his challenge along with the king



of Kashi. In a matter of moments, Krishna with his chakra cut off Paundraka's head as well as the king of Kashi's head. The king of Kashi's head flew off and landed at the gates of his palace. Sudakshina, the prince of Kashi, was shocked at the sight. He wanted to avenge his father's death. He performed a yagna from which a fiend emerged and it rushed to Dwaraka. The people of Dwaraka were terrified. Krishna ordered his chakra to attack the fiend. The disc chased the fire fiend that entered Kashi and since Sudakshina had sent it, the fiend turned against him and burned him up. The chakra then went back to Lord Krishna.

#### DVIDVIDHA

Once, Balarama spent some time wandering in the forests on the hill Raivataka. It was near their country Anarta (modern Saurashtra in Gujarat). He met an ape Dvidvidha in the forest. Dvidvidha who was enraged by the slaying of Narakasura created a great havoc in the region of Anarta where Krishna lived. The same Dvidvidha caused trouble to Balarama there in the hill. Furious Balarama took his weapons, the plough and the pestle. When Dvidvidha tried to hit Balarama with an uprooted tree he hit him with his pestle. Then with immense fists Dvidvidha hit Balarama on his chest. Balarama dropped his weapons and hit him on the chin that put an end to Dvidvidha. People of Anarta rejoiced.



#### HASTINAPURA

Samba, the son of Krishna was held captive by the Kauravas in Hastinapura. Narada conveyed the news to Yadavas who were ready to attack the Kauravas with their army. But Balarama intervened and said he will go to Hastinapura and persuade them to free Samba so the fight in the family could be avoided. Balarama with some wise old men went to Hastinapur and gently requested the Kauravas to release Samba. But the Kauravas insulted Balarama and arrogantly walked away without even waiting for Balarama's reply. Balarama got furious. With his plough, he started to drag the whole city Hastinapura towards the river Ganga. The earth was shaking and Kauravas were panic-stricken. They



*hurriedly released Samba. With folded hands they approached Balarama, begged his pardon and pleaded with him to spare their city and people. Balarama spared their life and returned to Dwaraka with Samba. It is said that till today, the city of Hastinapura on its southern side is leaned towards the Ganga, evidence of Balarama's prowess.*

#### JARASANDHA

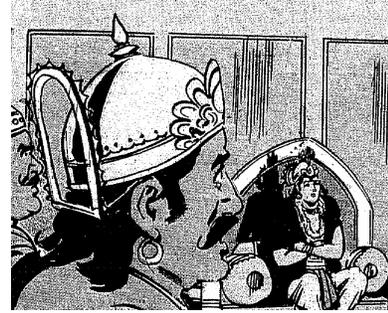
One day, Krishna received a message from the many kings, who were defeated and held captive by Jarasandha (Kamsa's father-in-law who attacked Mathura 18 times) in his capital city Girivraja, requesting Krishna to come and release them. At the same time, Narada arrived on the scene and said that Pandavas would like Krishna to be present at the Rajasuya Yagna they plan to perform. Krishna asked Uddhava what he should do now. To perform the yagna, the Pandavas had to gain supremacy over the entire land also defeating Jarasandha. So Uddhava suggested that Bhima (the Pandava) could defeat Jarasandha, when all the captive kings can be released and then the yagna can also be performed in the presence of Krishna. Krishna agreed to Uddhava's wise counsel. He sent the messenger back to the captive kings with the promise that they would soon be released. Then Krishna went to Indraprasta. The Pandavas, in consultation with Krishna, decided to perform Rajasuya Yajna. All the kings except Jarasandha had surrendered to their supremacy. So Krishna, Bhima and Arjuna (the Pandava) went to Girivraja in the guise of Brahmins and asked Jarasandha a duel with one of them as alms. Jarasandha agreed to fight with Bhima. After a long fight, Bhima, with the help of Krishna who knew that Jarasandha was given life by putting two halves of his body together, tore his body into two and won the fight. The captive kings were all released by Krishna. They praised him in gratitude and went back to their kingdoms.



#### RAJASUYA YAGNA and SHISHUPALA

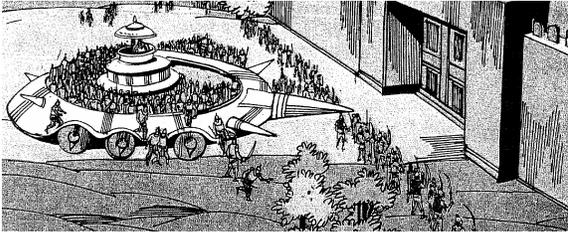
Krishna, Bhima and Arjuna returned victorious to Indraprasta. With Krishna's permission, Yudhishtira (the eldest of the Pandavas) began the preparations for the Yagna. All the sages, kings and people were invited to attend the yagna. Guided by learned priests, Yudhishtira performed all the requisite rituals of the Rajasuya Yagna. Then with his younger brother Sahadeva's proposal Yudhishtira offered his first worship to Lord Krishna.

Everyone was happy except Shishupala, the prince of Chedi. He hated Krishna and he was jealous of him. He insulted Krishna saying ill of him in front of everyone. Krishna was very calm but when Shishupala lunged at him Krishna released his chakra and cut off his head.



#### DWARAKA UNDER SIEGE

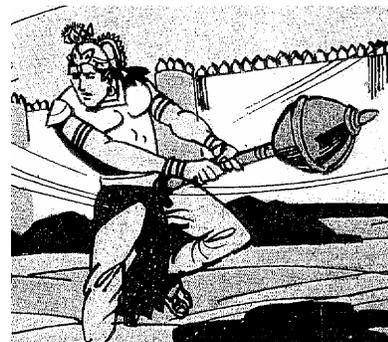
While Krishna and Balarama were staying at Indraprasta after the Rajasuya, Dwaraka was attacked by Salva, the friend of Shishupala and Jarasandha. He attacked Dwaraka to avenge the death of his friends. In the absence of Krishna, his brave son Pradyumna led the Yadava army and met Salva's army in a fierce battle. Salva had a vehicle, as a boon



from Lord Shiva to attack Yadavas that was able to travel anywhere-in air, water or on land. It could carry thousands of soldiers and Salva attacked Dwaraka seated on that vehicle. For

twenty-seven long days, the battle continued. When Krishna and Balarama returned from Indraprasta, they found their beloved city Dwaraka under siege. Leaving Balarama behind to guard the city and the citizens, Krishna hurried to the battlefield and fought with Salva. Krishna with his mace first shattered the Salva's vehicle to bits that fell into the ocean and finally released his chakra that killed Salva.

Dantavakra, now came to fight with Krishna to avenge the death of his cousin-brother Shishupala and his friends. He was also a cousin of Krishna as Shishupala was. He hit Krishna with his gada (mace). Unruffled by this sudden attack Krishna took up his own gada-Kaumodaki and with it, hit Dantavakra on his chest, killing him that very moment.



Now Viduratha, the brother of Dantavakra, came to the field but he too was soon killed by Krishna.

The long, long battle was at an end and the Yadavas entered the city in triumph.

#### SUDAMA

It was after this incident that Sudama, a poor Brahmin who became a close friend of Krishna in gurukula of

Sandipani, visited Krishna on the insistence of his wife. He took with him Krishna's favorite dish, Poha as a gift for Krishna. Krishna received Sudama with great affection and honored him. They recalled the many happy days they had spent together at childhood. Later, Krishna noticed the bundle that Sudama had brought for him; he snatched it from Sudama, opened it and ate a handful of rice dish with great enjoyment. The next morning Sudama took leave of Krishna and reached his village. He saw a palace standing in place of his old home. He could hardly recognize his wife who came out of the palace in fine clothes and ornaments to receive him. Sudama praised Lord Krishna for his benevolence and lived a happy and devout life.



#### KURUKSHETRA WAR



Krishna's cousins, the virtuous Pandavas were unlawfully deprived of their kingdom by their cousins, the arrogant Kauravas, and war broke out between them at Kurukshetra (in Haryana). With Krishna by their side, the Pandavas won the war in which all the Kauravas were exterminated. Krishna was about ninety years old at the time of this war. It was on this battlefield Krishna taught 'Bhagavad Gita' to Arjuna.

*When the Kurukshetra war was going on, Balarama went on a thirtha yatra (pilgrimage to holy rivers) and visited many rishis during which he killed an asura called Palvala who was disrupting the yagna performed by the rishis.*

Thus did Balarama and Krishna fulfill their purpose of incarnation ridding the world from the arrogant kings and the asuras. Krishna is said to have lived for one-hundred and twenty-five years and left the earth on February 18, 3102 BC when the present Kali Yuga (Iron Age) started. ■

## EKASLOKAM BHAGAVATAM



आदौ देवकिदेविगर्भजननं गोपीगृहे वर्धनं  
 मायापूतनजीवितापहरणं गोवर्धनोद्धारणम् ।  
 कंसच्छेदनकौरवादिहननं कुन्तीसुतापालनं  
 ह्येतद्भागवतं पुराणकथितं श्रीकृष्णलीलामृतम् ॥

*Aadau Devakidevi-garbha-jananam Gopee-grihe vardhanam  
 Maayaa-pootana-jeevi-taapa-haranam Govardhano-dhaaranam  
 Kamsachchedana-kauravaadi-hananam Kunteesutaa-paalanam  
 Hyetad-Bhaagavatam Purana-kadhitam Shreekrishna-leelamritam.*

### Meaning:

In the beginning, Krishna was born from Devaki's womb; he grew up in the house of Gopi-Yashoda. Then he slayed wicked Pootana, sanctified Govardhana Mountain. He slayed Kamsa, ended the Kauravas, took care of Kunti's sons. This is Bhagavatam; this is the nectar of the wonderful and pleasing acts of Krishna that is narrated in the Bhagavata Purana.