

“Those who love this son of yours, this Krishna, will not be troubled by enemies, just as asuras who are devoted to Narayana are not troubled because of their asuric birth. Please take very good care of Krishna, your son, who will be performing great things for the good of all of you.”

After blessing all of them Garga left them and went his way to tell Vasudeva and Devaki all about the happenings at Gokula and about the welfare of the children.

Rama and Krishna were growing up like the moon during the days of waxing. They were now able to crawl on their fours and the silver anklets which they were wearing would make sweet music wherever they went. Soon they were able to toddle and it was the eternal delight of their mothers and the women of Gokula to watch them taking hesitant steps and fall down and cry as though they were hurt.

They would wander into the streets and covering themselves with mud they would come home and stand with their eyes wide open, as though they were afraid of their mothers and their scolding. The mothers would gather them in their arms and with the dust and mud soiling their silken dresses they would hug their children. The children would smile and their teeth which had just begun to appear would charm all of them like the thin silver of the moon which is seen in the sky. The gopis would forget their daily tasks: so absorbed would they be with the antics of the two children in Nanda's house.

They grew up enough to run around all over the place. They began to play in Gokula with the children in the other houses. For hours on end they would be missing and Yashoda with Rohini would begin to worry. So passed the days of their early childhood.

KRISHNA'S PRANKS

Krishna was old enough to begin his pranks! It was his eternal delight to tease the gopis. Yashoda had to listen often to the complaints about her son's mischief in the houses of the gopis. It became almost a daily ritual: this string of complaints about Krishna.

One of them told her: “Your son has become mischievous beyond words. One day, it was time for me to milk the cow. I went there and what do I find? Your son has untied the calf and it had

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drunk all the milk and I found nothing for myself. When I saw him standing by I scolded him. He just laughed at me." Another gopi said: "Your son has become proficient in the art of stealing. He has a hundred ways of stealing curds and butter from my house. He eats up some of it and the rest, he gives to the monkeys which are waiting on the trees. He then breaks the pots. His mischief is too much."

A third gopi said: "He comes to my house looking for curds and butter and milk. Sometimes he does not find them. Then he hurts the children by pinching them and runs away after making them cry."

Yet another complaint was: "We are bent on our household tasks. We cannot always sit on guard over the butter pot. So we keep it in a dark room and even that, in a dark corner. Your son does not care how dark the room is. The jewels he wears are like lamps and he finds out where the pot is placed and steals all of it if we are not there."

"If I keep it beyond his reach," said another gopi, "he tries another trick. He sees the butter pot hanging from the roof. It is placed in a receptacle made up of rope. Krishna first places the tripod I use for churning the butter. On that he places the mortar and on that he makes one of his friends stand. He gets up on the back of this boy and makes a hole in the pot of milk or curds or butter. If I come there and find him out I shout, 'Krishna, I have caught you today. You are stealing from my house.' He is undaunted. He makes faces at me and says: 'I am the owner of this house and you are the thief.'"

"I had just cleaned up", said another. "I had cleaned up the place. Krishna came and he asked for butter. I did not give him any butter and he became very angry with me. When I was busy with other things he brought all sorts of muck from outside, from the street and he brought dirty water and he poured it inside the house. He strewed the entire house with the dirt he had brought with him."

All the while, Krishna would stand by his mother's side. One gopi, enraged at the look on his face said: "Look at him! He looks as though he is the most innocent of all children and yet, Yashoda, the pranks of your son are really and truly too many for us to bear them. Punish him." Yashoda would turn towards her son with angry eyes. But looking at his tear-filled eyes and his lips trembling as though with fear and his eyebrows drawn together as though in anticipation of pain, she would not have the heart to scold him. 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 innocent eyes: of his sweet smile and his mischievous ways.

YASHODA SEES A VISION

One day, the children were all playing in the courtyard in front of the house and Yashoda was inside busy with some task pertaining to the household. Suddenly Balarama rushed to her and said: "Mother! Mother! Krishna is eating mud by handfuls." She looked at him as though she did not believe it but the other boys who had come with Balarama nodded their heads and said: "Yes, mother. We saw with our eyes Krishna eating mud." Yashoda rushed up to Krishna and caught hold of him with her left hand and with her right hand raised as though to strike him she said: "Is there no end to your mischief? Why did you eat mud? I am going to punish you today."

Krishna shook his head and said: "Of course I did not eat mud. I never eat mud. I hate mud. I hate to eat such stuff." Yashoda said: "But these boys saw you eating mud. This Balarama, your brother saw you and they told me you ate mud."

"Mother", Krishna said. "They are all telling a lie. Try and check if they are speaking the truth. Look into my mouth and see if there is any mud there."

"Show me your mouth," said Yashoda and the Lord of lords, Narayana who had assumed a human form for the welfare of mankind, Krishna, opened his mouth for his mother to see. She looked and what she saw there filled her with awe!

Inside the sweet mouth of her son Yashoda saw the entire Universe. Moving objects and immovable things. She saw the heavens and the eight quarters: the mountains and islands and all the seven oceans which surrounded this earth: she saw the seven islands which comprised this earth. She saw the lord of the winds and she saw the celestial world, the abode of the devas where she discerned the great Agni by name Vadava and she saw the moon and the stars: the five elements, fire, earth, water, air and ether, wherein is placed the earth. She saw the gods who presided over the senses and the indriyas themselves in their glowing forms. She saw the mind, the Mahat-tattva, the Tanmatras: the three gunas, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. She could perceive the balance of the three gunas which goes by the name Prakriti. She saw it all.

When the Paramatma and the Jivatma are one with each other then there is no disturbance in the equilibrium of the three gunas. But

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when the Jivatma moves away from the other there is an imbalance in the state of equilibrium which had been holding them so far and there is a movement in the state of the gunas. This is because Kala becomes one of the factors. When the time has come the Svabhava of the Jivatma causes the involvement of the atman in the world and the manifestation of the world itself is a result of this imbalance: this throb in the state of the static gunas. Yashoda saw all this and she saw the birth of the Universe. And, strange sight! She saw the Gokula and there she saw herself looking inside the open mouth of her little son.

She looked around her and there was no one and she asked herself: "Can this be a dream?" And she told herself again and again: "No, it is not a dream. I am wide awake. This is indeed the Maya of lord Narayana. If it is so, then everyone must have seen this. Is it an illusion-born image like the image of myself which I see in the mirror? But then, how can my son Krishna also be seen by me in this picture? How can one see the mirror also, in the picture caused by reflection in the mirror? Is it then, some power possessed by my child?" So she speculated with wonderment writ on her face. She then said: "I salute that state which is beyond the comprehension of the mind, of action and of words. It is the basis, the essential factor of this Universe. This entire world and other worlds shine with life and glory because of this state which is the cause of action: of movement: of life. This Universe unfolds itself because of the movement in the state: and I salute that state. The Lord has caused in me the Maya which makes me think that I am an entity by name Yashoda: that I have a husband, Nanda: that this is my son: that I am the queen of Gokula: that I am the mistress of all the people in Gokula. My Maya is now apparent to me and I prostrate before the Lord who is the cause of all this Maya."

When he saw his mother in this condition Krishna brought to bear on her the great Vishnumaya which goes by the name Putrasneha: meaning love for one's child. Yashoda at once forgot all the words which she had spoken till then all the realisation of the Truth, of the Brahman, left her. She shook herself as if from a trance and once again she was caught up in the web of Maya. She did not even remember what had happened. It was like a dream which is entirely forgotten.

The absolute Truth, the Paramatma who is called INDRA to those who perform the yagas by name RIK, YAJUS and SAMA: (the Karma-Kanda is comprised of these rites): who is called the BRAHMAN by the Upanishads: (Vedanta, the ultimate knowledge of the Vedas is called the Upanishads): who is called by the name

PURUSHA by the SANKHYA philosophers: who is called the PARAMATMA by the YOGIs: that Paramatma was, to Yashoda, her son and a mischievous son who had to be punished off and on for his pranks! Who had a long string of thefts to his credit!

King Parikshit, who was listening to the story intently said: "What an amount of Punya the Nandas must have accumulated to have the great good fortune of calling HIM their child! Devaki and Vasudeva did not have the luck. Gods like Brahma do but sing the praises of the Lord. They are not as fortunate as these cowherd couple who had HIM all for themselves. Yashoda, the most fortunate of women whose breasts fed the Lord Narayana! Tell me, my lord, how did it happen that Narayana chose these two to receive this great honour?"

Shuka said: "The Vasu by name DRONA and his wife DHARA had been asked by Brahma to be born on the earth during the time when Narayana had promised to be born. They had asked him for a boon. They said: "We will be born on the earth and will be beset with the qualities of the earth and the taints which are earthly. Please grant us the boon that we should have absolute bhakti towards Narayana which is the only way to cross the sea of pain which is another name for life on the earth."

"So be it," said Brahma. Drona was born as Nanda and his wife, Dhara as Yashoda.

YASHODA TIES UP KRISHNA

It was one of the usual days in Gokula. Yashoda found that her maids were busy with other tasks and so she thought that she would herself churn the curds for butter. She went to the vessel containing curds and began to churn it. While she was at her task Krishna came to her. He was hungry and he wanted to be fed. He looked at his mother who was looking beautiful. Unaccustomed as she was to work which others did for her usually, Yashoda looked tired. Her face was like a lotus touched with rain drops. Her hands had bangles on them which tinkled as she churned. Her hair was all coming loose and the string of Malati flowers she was wearing was trying to fall off. Her earrings tossed to and fro and her silken dress was whirling along with the movement of her hands and arms. Krishna went near her and