

## Chapter 28. The Enchanting Story: Divine Incarnations

Sage Suka began his momentous message to the King.

“*Maharaja*, the great tree that the *Bhagavatha* is truly inspires reverential awe. Incorporated in it is every conceivable source of auspiciousness and joy. The Lord, Sri Narayana, is the seed from which it has sprouted. The sprout is Brahman. The trunk of the tree is Narada. Vyasa constitutes the branches. Its sweet fruit is the nectarine story of Krishna. The earnest souls that yearn for that nectar and pine plaintively until they secure the fruit and imbibe its essence, regardless of bodily comfort or the passage of the years —such are real saints and *yogis*.

“O, ye ascetics and sages! This day, I am relating to you that *Bhagavatha* scripture (sastra), that enchanting story of Krishna. Treasure it in your memory and save yourself from delusion and grief. You have already listened to recitals of all scriptures. You have also mastered all spiritual practices. But you haven’t known the greatest of them all. I shall now give you the sacred name of Krishna and the sweetness that is flowing from it. It is the sweetest name one can conceive. When it falls on the ear, the heart is filled with joy; when you recall the name to memory, a stream of love springs from the heart. The *Bhagavatha* inspires and promotes deep devotion to Lord Krishna.

### The Bhagavatha transmutes the devotee into Divinity

“The Universal Absolute, the Birthless Formless, Unmanifest, Infinite took on limitations of name and form and concretised Itself as Incarnations (*Avatars*) on many occasions and manifested countless instances of divine intercession and grace. Through these, as well as through the characteristics assumed and the ideas propagated, God saved mankind from downfall. Those who sing the story of this glory, those who listen eagerly to the recital, those who imbibe and digest the lessons conveyed, these are the real devotees. These are the *Bhagavathas* —those who follow the path laid down in the *Bhagavatha*. *Bhagavatha* binds devotion (*bhakthi*) with *Bhagavan*; that is to say, the story fills you with God and transmutes you into divinity.

“God incarnates not merely for the destruction of the wicked; that is just an excuse, one of the obvious reasons. Really speaking, God incarnates for the sake of faithful devotees (*bhaktas*). The cow has milk primarily as sustenance for its calf. But it is used by man for maintaining his health and efficiency. So too, God incarnates primarily for the sustenance of the faithful, the devoted, the virtuous, and the good. But even the faithless and the bad use the chance for their own purpose. Therefore, in the *Bhagavatha*, stories of such wicked persons intervene amidst the accounts of the glory and grace of God.

This doesn’t make the *Bhagavatha* any less holy. When the sweet juice has been squeezed out of the sugar-cane, the bagasse is left over and discarded. When the sweetness of divine majesty has been tasted, the bagasse can well be thrown out. The cane has both bagasse and sugar; it cannot be only sugar. So too, devotees have to be amidst the faithless; there cannot be one without the other.

“God has no bondage to time and space. For Him, all beings are the same. He is the master of the living and the nonliving. At the conclusion of every aeon, the process of involution is completed in the deluge; then, evolution starts again and, as Brahma, He creates beings again. He enlightens everyone with a spark of his own glory and, as Vishnu, fosters every one of them on the path of fulfillment. As Siva, He concludes the process by the

destruction of all.

“Thus, you can see that there is no limit to His might, no end to His potency. There can be no boundaries to His achievements. He incarnates in countless ways. He comes as an incarnation of a fragment (*kala*) or a part of His; He comes as an inner inspirer for some definite purpose. He comes to close an epoch and inaugurate another (*Yuga-avatar*). The narrative of these incarnations is the *Bhagavatha*.

### **Only the story of a Yuga-avatar is worth perusal**

“The One Divine Principle works through three forms, as Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, in order to manipulate and complete the process of becoming a being, called creation (*srishti*). The three are fundamentally of the same essence. There is no higher or lower; all three are equally divine. Associated with creation, He is Brahma; with protection, Vishnu; with dissolution, Siva.

When He comes down assuming special form on special occasions for a specific purpose, He is known as *Avatar*. In fact, Manu and Prajapathi and other such are divine persons entrusted by Brahma with the mission of peopling the world. Everything happens in consonance with the divine Will. So we can assert that the saints, sages, ascetics, and men both good and bad are all *Avatars* of the Vishnu entity. *Avatars* are as countless as living beings, for each is born as a consequence of divine Will. But the story of the *Yuga-avatar* alone is worth perusal, for the advent is to restore *dharma* and moral life. The story of all the rest is but a story of distress and despair.

### **The mystery of creation: one body becomes two**

“Brahma deputed Manu to go to Earth and create living beings on it. Devi, the feminine principle, eluded him and took the Earth into the nether regions. Brahma then had to seek help from Vishnu (Hari), who assumed the form of a boar and brought the Earth from the nether regions and placed it among the waters. Later, the Earth was so incensed at the atrocities of Emperor Vena that she kept all the seeds sown within herself and didn’t allow them to sprout. So, all beings were afflicted with the agony of hunger. Earth became a medley of hills and valleys, with nothing green on it. Then the Lord assumed the form of Prithu, who leveled the surface and added fertility to the soil, induced the growth of agriculture, and promoted the welfare of mankind. He fostered the Earth like his own child, so the Earth is called *prithvi*. Prithu is said to have built the first cities upon the earth.

“That is to say, it was the Lord’s Will that it should be done so. This is the Will that is being worked out. The Lord originated the *Vedas* for the preservation of man through the practice of morals and spiritual exercises. The *Vedas* contain names that will liberate beings and rules and regulations that will guide. When the evil-minded (*asuras*) threatened to steal the *Vedas*, they hid themselves in the waters, so the Lord assumed the form of a fish to recover them. He saved the Seven Sages and Manu from the same waters. This is why it is said that the Lord incarnated as a fish.

“O, ye ascetics! O, King Parikshith! Doubts may arise in your minds when you hear the story of creation and the early history of man on earth. The processes of the divine Will are mysterious wonders. They can’t be grasped by the faculties with which you measure earthly events. Often, they may strike you as devoid of any basis, but the Lord never involves Himself in any deed without proper cause. His will need not be explicable; it is its own prompter. Everything, everywhere, is due to His Will.

“To initiate creation, there must be some attraction that will act as the urge. So, Brahma had to become two

in body and activity. The one body was transformed into two. Therefore, where formerly there was one will two appeared, one that attracted and the other that was drawn toward creation, the feminine and the masculine. Since the one attracted in a hundred distinct ways it was called Hundred-faceted (Satha-rupa) and beloved of Brahma (*Brahma-priya*). The other was named Manu. These two gained renown in the first stage of creation. Satha-rupa and Manu were the first progenitors.”