

## **Advanced Course in Performance Traditions of the Mahabharata in Tamil Nadu- 2**

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**Lecture 13**

### **THE BIRTH OF KRISHNA [48 MINUTES]**

“All the sayings of Dharma are with a view to nurturing, cherishing, providing more amply, endowing more richly, prospering, increasing, enhancing, and all living beings: securing their well being. Therefore, whatever has the characteristic of bringing that about that is Dharma. This is certain.”  
Bhishma in Shanti Parva

The Bhagavata Puranam is not a part of the Mahabharata, but is a separate text altogether. The birth of Krishna and his feats as a child are extremely popular and in every Mahabharata festival of Tamil Nadu a day is devoted to the birth and the childhood stories of Krishna. In some festivals the childhood stories of Krishna could be enacted in a Koothu called ‘Jalagiridai’ which could inaugurate the theatre cycle which otherwise would usually start with the Swayamvaram of Draupadi. According to tradition, the Bhagavatha Purana was first narrated to King Parikshit, the great grandson of Arjuna.

King Parikshit had been cursed to die of snake bite within seven days and to protect himself, he had barricaded himself in the middle of a ocean where he thought that no snake would be able to reach him. For seven days he listened to the Bhagavatha Purana at the end of which the snake King Takshaka breached his palace and killed him. His son Janamejaya wanted to avenge his father’s death and took a vow to kill all snakes in his aborted Sarpa Yagna. Again, according to tradition, the Mahabharata was first narrated on earth to King Janamejaya for him to understand the ways of Karma. Sanskrit scholars however date the the Bhagavatha Puranam as being a ninth to eleventh century text.

The story of King Parikshit getting cursed again begins with an image of the king going out on a hunt.

One day when King Parikshit went on a hunt. He saw a Rishi called Sameehan or Shamika deep in Tapas.

The thirsty King asked the Sage whether he could get some water, but as the Rishi was deep in Dhyana he did not hear the question. The King felt insulted by the Rishi ignoring him and in irritation put a dead snake lying nearby around the Rishi’s neck. A little later the Rishi’s

son, Sage Shringi returned to the ashram. Angered by the insult done to his father, Shringi cursed that whoever had placed the dead snake on his father's neck would die bitten by the snake King Takshaka in seven days.

When Rishi Sameehan heard of the curse given by his son he felt saddened as King Parikshit was a great King. So the troubled Rishi asked messengers to inform Parikshit of the curse placed on him. King Parikshit built a fortified palace in the middle of the ocean and barricaded himself inside thinking that no snake could reach him in his fortified palace. Parikshit listened to Bhagavata Purana for seven days.

It seems a golden lemon fruit was found by his soldiers floating on the ocean. Parikshit saw this and wondered at the magical fruit. He asked for it to be brought to him. When Parikshit took the fruit to check its smell, the snake King Takshaka leapt out as a tiny snake and bit him.

At the end of Dwapara Yuga the entire world was in a troubled state with men being driven to performing unspeakable acts of violence on their fellow men.

The Goddess Earth and the other Devas unable to withstand the violence being perpetrated appealed to Vishnu for help. The goddess of Earth, Bhumadevi was unable to bear both the burden of the people and the atrocities they were doing on the earth and asked for Vishnu's help to reduce the burden on her. When he saw the Devas and Bhumi Devi's plight, the divine Vishnu decided to act. He questioned why the Devas and Bhumi Devi were flustered? They said they were unable to tolerate the violence on earth. When he heard their appeal that the world was becoming a terrible place to live in, Vishnu responded. He reassured Bhumi Devi and the Devas that at the end of Dwapara Yuga he would be incarnated as Gopala in Gokula and promised that he would ensure that the burden on earth was reduced. Vishnu promised that he would be born an earth at the end of the Dwapara Yuga to the daughter of King Ugrasena, Devaki.

The righteous and virtuous Ugrasena also had a son called Kamsa, who was known for his cruelty. Kamsa, a despot, hated good people and he was always surrounded by a coterie of even more vicious people. Kamsa hated the sight of good people and was always surrounded by his wicked friends. People could not perform any austerities in his Kingdom and all the people went to his father King Ugrasena to complain. They wanted Ugrasena to control his son. So one day the good King called his son to his court and tried to give him good advice. He told his son Kamsa, that nobody born in their dynasty had ever erred in this fashion.

When Ugrasena questioned the cruel path Kamsa was following, an angry Kamsa imprisoned his own father. The paradox of Kamsa according to the storyteller was that while he was cruel person to everybody, including his father he was a devoted brother to his beautiful sister Devaki.

The narrative of Kamsa begins with his search for a suitable husband for his sister Devaki. Kamsa wondered where he could find a suitable husband compatible to the beauty and intelligence of his beloved sister, Devaki. Kamsa searched the entire world for a bridegroom. At that time a person said that Kamsa had the right man in his own Kingdom and was unnecessarily searching the world. Kamsa asked him to explain. The man said that Vasudeva was the correct husband for his sister. Looking at all the King's available, Kamsa thought that Vasudeva would be the ideal husband for Devaki and invited him over to Mathura.

Vasudeva, who was already married to Rohini is forced to marry Devaki out of fear of Kamsa. Vasudeva and Devaki are married to each other on a auspicious day. Kamsa asked the newly wed Vasudeva and Devaki to sit in a chariot because of his affection for his sister Kamsa himself drove the chariot around Mathura. Usually the newly wed couple would circumambulate the sacred fire, go around the temple and the city immediately after the marriage. The reason for this practice is because the world revolves towards the left on its own axis, the couple, to declare that they two are aligned with the earth, replicate the movement of the earth.

When a proud Kamsa is driving his sister and his brother-in-law Vasudeva around Mathura, a voice rings from the sky. Oh Kamsa! You fool Kamsa! When Kamsa heard his name being called out disrespectfully, he rose in anger. He asked as to who had the guts to utter his name disrespectfully? The bodyless oracular voice replied saying it was the voice of the heavens. The voice said that the sister whom Kamsa was extremely fond of and who he was personally driving across the city will lead to his death as the eighth son born to her was destined to kill him. The moment Kamsa heard that the son of the sister whom he loved would kill him the Rakshasa nature in him surfaced. He pulled his sister by her hair and threw her to the ground. Kicking his sister he drew his sword to kill her

Vasudeva came to his wife's rescue and stopped him. Vasudeva saves Devaki from Kamsa by promising to hand over their children as and when they are born for Kamsa to kill. He says that only if the children lived would they be able to kill Kamsa. Now he says that Kamsa can kill them as soon as they are born. Kamsa agrees to this proposal of Vasudeva and when Devaki delivers their first child. Vasudeva hands over the child to Kamsa as he had promised. Kamsa accepted the child in his hands as strong as iron. But seeing the frail child in his iron arms, even Kamsa's heart relented. He laughed at Vasudeva asking him as to whether this

was the child that was going to kill him. He asked Vasudeva to raise the child. Again another child was born, again another child was born. Again another child was born, again another child was born! I repeated again five times, so totally six children were born. Do you know where the six children were raised? They were raised in the palace of Kamsa! Just as Kamsa was affectionate towards his sister, he was even more affectionate with his nephews born to his sister.

In the Bhagavatha Puranam as narrated by Mani Vaasagan, one day the mischief maker, Sage Narada visited Kamsa. He said that Kamsa's fame had spread all across the world. Kamsa was pleased by this and Narada asked him as to who the children he was playing with were? Kamsa replied that they were his sister's children, his nephews. Narada asked Kamsa that he had heard that Kamsa would be killed by the son of his sister. Kamsa replied that an oracular voice had predicted that. Narada said, what the oracular voice predicted will surely happen and wanted to know as to why Kamsa was letting the children live? Kamsa laughed and said that only the eighth son was supposed to be the cause of his death! The six children born to Devaki and Vasudeva were actually six Gandharvas who were cursed to be born on earth by Brahma. Their period of the curse of living on earth was over and Narada reaches Kamsa's palace to release them from their earthly bondage.

Narada told Kamsa that this is where he was making a mistake. In a street if you see from one end, the house closest to you will look like the first house, while the house at the other end will look like the last house. But if you go to the other end and look, then the same last house will look like the first house, while the earlier first house would look like the last house. If you count from the son born first, the son born last would look like the eighth son. But If you count from the last born son, then the first born son would be the eighth and if you alter the placement of the children every child will look like the eighth son!

Narada mocked him by asking whether Kamsa could be certain about which child would actually kill him? Only after Narada says this, does Kamsa kill his six nephews to whom he was previously a very fond and doting uncle. Kamsa draws his sword and runs towards his nephews to kill them, the children run screaming to their mother that their uncle was trying to kill them. Kamsa slaughtered the six children right before their mother's eyes, ruthlessly.

Now it is time for Adishesha and Vishnu to be incarnated on earth. Here the storytellers again invoke the Ramayana in their narrative. Vishnu and Adishesha were previously incarnated as Rama and Lakshmana in the Ramayana. Lakshmana was an absolutely devoted younger brother who did not sleep for fourteen years to stand guard over his elder brother. A visibly moved Rama had declared that in his next birth he would be born as Lakshmana's younger brother to serve him like Lakshmana had served him in their own Vanavaasam. So Vishnu

requested Adishesha to be born on earth as Vasudeva and Rohini's son Balarama while he will arrive later as Devaki and Vasudeva's son Krishna. The incarnation of Adishesha took its residence in Devaki's womb. Vishnu realised that if the foetus remained in Devaki's womb it would be in danger, he transferred the growing foetus from Devaki's womb to Vasudeva's first wife Rohini's womb

He asked his sister Yogamaya to take up residence in Nandagopala's wife, Yashoda's womb in Ayarpadi or Gokula. I will be born in Mathura and be taken to Ayarpadi (Gokula) in the night and you will be brought from Gokula to Mathura. He asks Yogamaya to cheat Kamsa and escape from his hands. He said that people of the earth would worship her as Durga, Bhadrakali, Vijaya, Vaishnavi, Kumudha, Chandika and Krishna

Yogamaya took residence in Yashoda's womb and Vishnu's incarnation took residence in Devaki's womb. Now Devaki was pregnant for the eighth time. When Kamsa heard this news, he became alert. He realised that this was the child meant to kill him. He ensured that the child would not escape by putting both Devaki and Vasudeva in fetters and jailed them.

The jailed Vasudeva and Devaki invoke Vishnu and keep chanting his numerous names. They are waiting eagerly for the incarnation of Vishnu to happen. Finally in the month of Avani (August - September), in the waning phase of the moon in the thithi of Ashtami in the star Rohini, he was born at midnight in the jail.

As the storyteller is describing the birth of Krishna and as to how Vasudeva switched the babies in Gokulam and Mathura. A cradle will be set up in the festival village for the child Krishna. The festival village now becomes Gokula the foster village of Krishna. Childless couples will be invited by the storyteller to rock the cradle so that they could also conceive a child that year.

On the eighth day of the waning moon, when the Sun was in the Rasi Simha, and star Rohini Krishna was born carrying his weapons the Conch or Sankha and the Discus or Chakra, and the red eyed Vishnu was incarnated on earth. The child is born with four arms; Vishnu is incarnated with his Conch, Chakrayudham and his weapons. The exultant couple rejoice at the birth of Vishnu and also are afraid as to how they can save the child from Kamsa. Immediately, the fetters on the legs and hands of the couple disappear, and all the guards fall into a magic sleep.

The child dispells the fears of Vasudeva and Devaki by saying when Vasudeva touches him two of his four arms will disappear and he will look like an ordinary child. He asks Vasudeva to take him to Ayarpadi (Gokula) and bring back the child born in Gokula to put in his place. Then he says he will take care of Kamsa later, then Vasudeva touched the child and two of the four arms disappeared.

Now Vasudeva took the child in a basket and walked out of the jail. Because of Vishnu's Maya everyone was fast asleep and the doors of the jail opened automatically. When Vasudeva came out of the palace carrying the child, it started raining torrentially. The multi-headed snake Adishesha became the umbrella protecting the child from the rains.

Vasudeva sees the flooded Yamuna River and wonders how he was going to cross it. The moment he had this thought, Yamuna River parted making way for Vasudeva and the child to cross safely. Vasudeva crossed the river with the child and entered Gokula where also everybody was deep asleep. The doors of the palace open magically. In the palace he notices that Yashoda has given birth to a girl.

As Vasudeva returns with the child Yogamaya, all the prison doors again shut. The manacles on Vasudeva's arms and legs are again in place. The child that was born in Gokula, did not cry there, it did not even cry on the way, but started wailing once Vasudeva placed it in the cradle. All the jail doors magically closed themselves and the manacles on Devaki and Vasudeva again re-appeared. The child now wailed loudly, which reaches Kamsa's ears and he comes running to Devaki's jail. Kamsa sees that all the guards in the jail are fast asleep and he kicks them awake. He ran inside and lifted the new born child. He asks the child by saying "Narayana did you think I would spare you because you are born as a girl?"

Devaki ran and fell at her brothers feet, pleading with him to spare the girl child. An angry Kamsa says that it does not matter as to what the gender of the child was. He says that the child was supposed to be the cause of his death and he would kill the child immediately.

He took the child out carrying by its legs and waggled the child in the sky. So he threw the child up in the sky and placed his sword on the child's decending path. He thought the child would land on the sword and be cut into two pieces. But the child did not fall but stood mid air in the sky! With eight arms and burning eyes she assumes a frightening form. She says "Oh Kamsa! did you think you can kill me?" She says that her elder brother who was going to kill Kamsa and his friends was born in the palace, and is right now growing in Gokula. She dares Kamsa to kill her elder brother. Issuing this warning Yogamaya disappears.

All the women in the Gokula village are drawn towards the divine child Krishna, not really understanding why they were drawn to this particular child. Yashoda has to forcibly evict all the women, so that her child can get some sleep. If this particular child sleeps, the entire world would go to sleep (meaning - the world will end) So he pretended to go to sleep and Yashoda drove all the woman away and closed the doors on them.

Suddenly a woman came knocking at the door. Yashoda saw a beautiful woman standing outside her door. With musical anklets dangling on her feet and extremely attractive to look at but she was actually a Rakshasi called Boothaki (Putana) one of the demons sent by Kamsa to kill Krishna

She has come to give poisoned milk to the infant Krishna. She feeds Krishna milk, grasping Putana's brawny arms with his hands was Krishna drinking her milk with his pearl like mouth? Did he only drink her milk? With her milk he also drank her heart beat, her nerves and also her life. Putana screamed in fear, the entire village heard the scream of Putana and rushed into Krishna's room.

They were shocked to see a dead gigantic ogress and infant Krishna with milk drops on his lips. As she died, she assumed her true form of a gigantic ogress. As she was huge, the villagers cut her body into parts and cremated her. From her funeral pyre, a heavenly light rose up to the sky. All gazed in wonder at this sight. Even though she had fed him poisoned milk, the divine Krishna gave her Moksha as she had fed him. Kamsa sends numerous Asura's like Boothagi or Putana, Keshi, Arishtasura, Arishtanemi, Aghasura etc to kill the infant Krishna but this child Krishna kills all these demons.

The childhood stories of Krishna are extremely popular, and images from the childhood of Krishna can be seen in all Vaishnava temples and a few Vaishnava homes. Surprisingly, other than the iconic image, of Krishna giving a discourse of the Gita to Arjuna on the battlefield there are hardly any images of the adult Krishna. Most of the images in the popular domain are of Krishna in his childhood. Here the storytellers again invoked the Ramayana, saying that only Krishna, keeps repeating right from his birth that he is the supreme godhead, unlike Rama in the Ramayana, who never declares his divinity.

One day the child Krishna ate a fistful of mud. His brother Balarama thought that this was a right moment to get his mischievous younger brother punished and called upon their mother to complain. Yashoda came out running with a stick in hand to beat Krishna. The moment he saw his mother coming, Krishna quietly covered his mouth with his hands.

When Yashoda asked whether he was eating mud, Krishna innocently denied it. An exasperated Yashoda asked him to open his mouth so that she could see for herself. Krishna keeps refusing to open his mouth against all his mother's entreaties. Finally when Yashoda raises the stick in her hand to beat Krishna, he opened his mouth. In his mouth Yashoda sees Bhu loka or the entire earth, Bhuvan loka, Svar loka, Tapan loka, Mahar loka

Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Rasatala, Talatala, Mahatala. He is showing all the fourteen worlds including Patala or the nether world, non-living entities, the outer space, all the directions and their lords, mountains, islands, oceans, the wind, mountains, islands, oceans, the wind, fire, the Sun, Moon, the stars, the rivers, water, light, air, sky. She sees all living entities, Gandharvas Siddhas, Yogis, and even Gokula, with Yashoda raising her hands to hit Krishna in his mouth

Everyday the mischief that Krishna plays keeps increasing. Krishna would always be accompanied by a lot of boys. All the residents of Gokula were Yadavas. Every morning the menfolk would go to the gardens on work and the women folk would leave on business to other villages to sell milk, curds, butter and ghee. Because of fear of cats destroying their hard labour the women folk would have their curd, milk and butter placed in pots suspended in the ceiling away from any cats reach.

Krishna and his friends would go to all the locked houses and Krishna would magically unlock the doors.

Once they enter the house Krishna would make the sturdiest boy stand below and make a human ladder to reach the butter and ghee suspended in the ceiling. Climbing this human ladder Krishna would try to reach the butter pots but still it would be out of his reach, as they were really little boys. With the help of a stick Krishna would break the pots splattering the curd milk and butter all over the house. Krishna would drink the dripping butter and curd and distribute it among his friends and leave the house locked as it was before. When the women folk returned they would find all the pots broken but the house is locked as it was when they left.

Krishna's pranks leading a bunch of urchins to steal butter from various houses is again a very popular narrative. On Janmashtami, the birth nakshatra of Krishna, this event is celebrated as a festival across many villages in the country. A huge pot will be placed high in the sky and there will be a competition as to which band of young men would be able to break this pot

Mani Vaasagan, the storyteller, gave a philosophical interpretation of why Krishna was known as a butter thief. He said that Krishna would only steal butter from the houses of his devotees and explains the reason why.

In that village lived a man with huge moustaches, with the moustache on each side being half a foot long. He was also a body builder with a huge physique. When he learned that Krishna was stealing butter from all houses he decided to catch Krishna in the act and punish him. Krishna heard about this and decided to play with the body builder. The same night he went to the body builder's house. The wrestler had locked his door and gone to sleep for the night. At Krishna's touch the door unlocked. The body of Krishna glowed in the dark. With the light emanating from his body he could see the sleeping body builder and his two wives.

One wife was sleeping on his left and another was sleeping on his right. Krishna silently went and sat by the head rest of the huge wrestler. He twisted the right side moustache and tied it to the hair plaits of his wife on the right side. He then took the other half and tied it to the hair plaits of his wife sleeping on the left. Finishing his act of mischief Krishna silently went outside and shouted that the hirsute man's cows were running away. The wrestler woke up suddenly in alarm and grimaced in pain as his moustache was tied to his wives hair plaits. The wrestler complained that his wives were pulling his moustache and the wives complained that he was pulling the hair. They realised that the moustache and their hair plaits were tied up together.

When the man tried to untie his moustache, his hands got stuck to the moustache and he was unable to untie it. One wife tried to untie it herself and even her hands got stuck in the hair and the same thing happened to the other wife. The wrestler was embarrassed at this, as it was about to dawn and if people saw him in this state they would definitely laugh. The man gently pushed the door open with his foot and in the faint morning light he saw a toothless old man passing that way. He requested the old man for help; the old man must have been 90 or 95 years old. The toothless old man when he saw what had happened he laughed his head off in amusement.

The humiliated man asked the old man to laugh if he so wanted, but first asked him to untie his moustache. When he tried to untie even his hands got stuck. The wrestler wondered as to who could have done this mischief and he thought that it could be probably Krishna as everyone believed that he had magical powers. It is at that time he invokes the divine Krishna in supplication. The moment he is invoked the divine Krishna appeared and he gently rebuked the wrestler by asking him whether it was any of his business as to at whose house Krishna stole butter from? And he mocked him by saying that he had heard that the wrestler had promised to punish him and dares him to even try lifting his hand. The wrestler

surrendered and pleaded with Krishna to untie him. Krishna just waved his hand and the man was untied. Krishna would not go to anybody's house. He would only go to the houses of his true devotees.

Krishna stealing butter is a philosophical parable. If our hearts are as pure as clarified butter, the divinity will steal our hearts and that will only happen when we manage to rid ourselves of our worldly attachments. You can mix any amount of water in milk, but no one will notice it. When you boil milk and later ferment it you will get curds to which you can add any amount of water. When you churn curd, you will get butter. Can anyone dilute butter by adding water? Impossible! That is why when our hearts are like milk or curd the divinity would not appear. But when our hearts are as pure as butter Krishna would definitely come to steal our hearts.

In the storytelling/singing sessions, the storytellers resort to diverse range of resources from the popular film songs of the writer Kannadasan, to the poetry of Subramania Bharathiyar to village folk tales intermixed with high philosophy. That attempt is always to ground these diverse sources in a form, accessible to the life experience of each individual member of the audience. Krishna would be born in the celebrating village as would Dharmaraja, Draupadi, Karna, and all the figures from the Epic. And each birth of their heroes is celebrated as a birth in one's own village. By grounding the Mahabharata in the everyday lived realities of the audience's lives. The Mahabharata again does not become a narrative of war fought elsewhere but becomes a narrative of the here and now. As the performance unfolds, the narratives will start resonating with the wars that each member of the audience was facing in their own lives again specific to each individuals experience of the world.

He will bring us fruits to eat, and as we are about to eat it he will seize it from our hands. When we plead and say please give it back to us, he will yield and return after biting it

One woman complained to Yashoda that as there was lot of work at home she was working hard to finish it before my mother in law chided me.

I was working hard to finish it before my mother in law chided me. Your son came suddenly and wanted to play, I tried refusing but with his endearing smile he pleaded with me to just play one game. Unable to refuse I accepted to play a game and asked him as to what game he wanted to play. He said hide and seek and I went to tie up his eyes, but he refused wanting me to search for him first with my eyes tied.

Do you know what your imp did then? “Come, let us play”, he would call. When we say have household chores, No, he won’t listen, but drag us to play. When I am still playing he will disappear and tattle on us out at home. Yashoda your son then ran to my mother in law and rat on me to her by saying that rather than doing the household work, I was shirking my duties by playing with children. He seems to have taken up as his duty to create trouble between my mother in law and me.

Another woman complained that she did not know where Krishna learned to play the flute but when he played all of them would be mesmerised by his music. When one day we were immersed in his music and forgot about ourselves, you know what he did?

He will bring the flute and play nectar like music. Like ones drunk on toddy we will listen, eyes closed, mouth gaping. Kannan is the eternal prankster, on the streets, damsels face constant disorder.-

Yashoda neither could believe all these complaints nor could she ignore them, because there would always be two Krishna’s - one a Krishna who would keep following her around the house and another Krishna would be roaming the streets with his friends playing pranks on everybody.

The winter month of Margazhi arrived and all the young women fasting to get good husbands would go early morning to river Yamuna and knowing that there would be no men around, would remove their clothes to bathe in the river. Their fasting was in the hope that they would get good handsome husbands.

After all the girls finish their bath and go to the shore they are surprised that none of their clothes were there, where they had placed them. Not finding a single saree on the shore all the girls are scared because it would soon be dawn when other people would come to the shore and not knowing what to do they stood shivering neck deep in water. At that moment they all heard the music of the flute. They wondered where the sound was coming from. When they looked up to the source of the music, they found all their clothes hanging on different branches of the trees on the shore. Then they found out that all this was the handiwork of Krishna and they pleaded with him to return their clothes. Your son refused to return our clothes when we asked him.

He said he would only return our clothes if all of us came out of the water with our hands raised above our heads in surrender. When we asked him as women how we could step out of the river in our state of undress, he told us that we had all entered the water leaving your

clothes behind. When we replied that there was no one there when we entered the water, but now he was there. Insolently he asked us, as to who told you that he was not there when they went into the water? When we asked where he was he said that he was the earth, he was the tree, he was the plant, he was the creeper and he was everywhere and everything.

Atheists who do not understand the philosophy behind the story mock his divinity by questioning his act of stealing bathing women's clothes. This story is narrated to underline that women who are on a holy fast should have no consciousness of their own physical body.

One of the most popular images from Krishna's childhood at Gokula is of him playing the flute. The moment the Gopikas hear Krishna playing the flute, they're mesmerized and drawn towards the music. Again this image hinges around the word desire. The initial attraction towards Krishna for the Gopikas is sensual but when he suddenly disappears this attraction becomes spiritual. In Vaishnava Bhakti tradition, only the supreme godhead is masculine and the rest of the world is feminine. And Krishna, as he keeps repeating is everyone and everything he is the tree, he is a plant, he is a creeper, he is a wind and finally all that exists.

The Gopikas long for the Krishna whom they see on the outside and when he disappears, they realize the Krishna within themselves. The idea of 'Prapatti' or absolute surrender is central to this imagination and Krishna rejects both, Gnanamaargam the path of knowledge or the path of austerities, Siddhi to reach him

One of the recurring images from the Bhagavatha Puranam is of the tussle between Krishna and the King of the Devas, Indra. Reconciliation is achieved between them after the incident of Govardhana Giri. There was a hill called Govardhana Giri. The Yadavas were celebrating a festival honouring Indra near the hill. Krishna asked them as to why they were celebrating a festival honouring Indra? They said that Indra was the God of the rains, and only when it rained could agriculture flourish, and only when agriculture flourished could their cattle get fodder and only when the cattle got fodder they would yield more milk making them prosper in their business. That's why they said they were honouring Indra. The job of providing rains was given to Indra only by Krishna or Narayana. Krishna asked the Yadavas to celebrate the same festival honouring Narayana instead of Indra. So when the Yadavas changed the festivals honoured deity from Indra to Narayana, Indra was angered.

Indra created torrential rains and Balarama uprooted the hill Govardhana while Krishna held the mountain up as an umbrella to shield the Yadavas from the pouring rains. Indra, tired after raining incessantly for seven days, came down to earth and fell on Krishna's feet in surrender.

Krishna forgave Indra and suggested that a festival be held honouring Indra. That is the reason, the day before the harvest festival Pongal we celebrate Bhogi honouring Indra. Bhogi is another name of Indra and the festival we celebrate is to honour him.

In the Pallava rendition of this image at Mamallapuram there are two Krishnas. One is the King Krishna holding up the Govardhana Giri hill in his little finger. The other is a flautist nonchalantly playing the flute seated on top of a tree. The entire image is structured around the figure of an ascetic, a calm, tranquil milkman silently milking his cow, oblivious to the high drama happening all around him.

Krishna then kills the other Asuras sent by Kamsa to kill him and now the time has finally come to kill Kamsa himself. Narada again is the facilitator for this to happen. It is at this point that the sage Narada visits Kamsa asking him as to why he had as yet not killed Krishna who was specifically born to kill him? Kamsa asked him as to what he should do? Narada asked Kamsa to invite Krishna to Mathura and finish his story there. So Kamsa performs a Yaga called "Dhanur Velvi". An invitation is sent to Krishna to participate in the Yagam and Krishna and Balarama come to Mathura.

All the Yadavas bid tearful farewells to Krishna asking him not to go. Krishna says though he was originally born in Mathura, he grew up in Gokula and promises that he will definitely return home and asks them not to worry.

As Krishna enters Mathura a maddened elephant called Kuvalayapida was made to attack Krishna. The elephant was also given an iron weapon to kill Krishna. As Krishna enters the elephant comes charging at him twirling the iron weapon. Krishna wrestled with the elephant like a lion faced by a maddened elephant, he jumped on its back, struck it on its head killing it. The elephant crumbled and fell like a mountain. Krishna pulled the tusks of the elephant and took it with him. Krishna kept one tusk giving Balarama the other and together they entered Kamsa's palace. Two wrestlers called Kanuran and Mustikan now come to fight Krishna. Balarama and Krishna kill the wrestlers with the tusks of the elephant. They enter the court of Kamsa who is seated like a gigantic mountain of flesh on his throne.

An angry Kamsa charges to attack Krishna. A furious battle happens between Kamsa and Krishna. At first they wrestle with each other. It was a fearsome battle to watch. Krishna like a lion charging at a maddened elephant, he broke Kamsa's head shattering it into pieces. Kamsa fell down to the ground like a crumbling mountain.

After killing Kamsa, Krishna crowns his grandfather Ugrasena as the King of Mathura. The storytellers would narrate as to who Kamsa really was when they narrate the killing of Sishupala in Dharmaraja's Rajasuya Yagam. Most storytellers would wind up their narration of the Bhagavatha Puranam with the killing of Kamsa