

Lights on Krishna-Balarama Tattwa In Conversation with Sree Sree Maa

Lord Balarama always intrigued me. Spiritual literature conceptualizes him as the first direct manifestation of universal God consciousness, Lord Krishna. He has been associated with various divine and human forms including Shesha, Ananta (Great Serpents of Maha-Vishnu), Lakshmana (younger brother of Lord Rama), Balarama or Baladeva (elder brother of Sri Krishna), Ramanujacharya (the leading light of the Vishistadvaita school of thought), Nityananda Prabhu (the beloved companion of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu), etc. In spiritual ontology, Lord Balarama of Goloka is identified as the original spiritual master or Adi Sadguru. During a discussion with Sree Sree Maa, I raised the topic of Balarama-tattwa and requested her to enlighten me. Observing my fairly confused understanding, Sree Sree Maa patiently elucidated:-

“The supreme personality emerges from the great void as the seed of eternal divine consciousness and root of all cause. The first rays of the primordial life force (mahaprana) mingle into the shadows of Parabrahman’s pristine form as he rises from the uncharted depths of the unmanifest as ‘Krishna’ - the dark-complexioned one, with an all-embracing power of attraction (karshan shakti) that draws everything inwards, into him, for absolute union. Krishna’s ‘will to attract’ (or eshana swabhav) is his alter ego - the ‘light-complexioned one’ - revered in many ways including ‘Balarama’, ‘Shesha’ and ‘Shankarshan’.

The lord’s all-pervading aakarshan shakti (attractive force) personifies into the divine

form of Shankarshan - the dazzlingly transparent, fully enlightened, expressed dual equivalent (sham) of the supreme attractor (karshana), as the eternal Sadguru - Paramatma’s own light - that carries one and all into the divine lap of Parabrahman. As ‘Shesha’ he expresses himself in innumerable forms of the same eshana swabhav of Krishna, each self-natured to seek full and complete reunion. Each such atom of divine consciousness is an atma-jyoti (soul-light),



resident in every being as the fully linked spark of the Sadguru constantly engaged in yoga or union with the supreme. The conglomeration of this infinite multitude of infinitesimal divine consciousness sparks is depicted as the million-hooded Shesha over the head of the Virat

Purusha. ‘Balarama’ is the unlimited strength (bala) of the supreme soul (Rama), or atma-shakti, that remains steadfast in the divine play (raman) with the dynamic life force (Roma) evolving out of adya shakti. He is worshipped as Shukla Yaju - the Fair Lord.

Lord Shankarshan, as karshan shakti, strikes and churns the adhara (vessel), attracting it towards self-realization. That is why Balarama is depicted holding a ploughshare in his hand, tilling the field (kshetra) of the adhara through the will power of Krishna. Together they form the dipole of self-realization and eternal fulfillment. While Balarama as paramatma – the still state of unified prana – remains the overlord of the kshetra, Krishna - the eternal divine consciousness manifesting as the life or jeevan of an embodied soul (jiva) – is incessantly engaged inwards, maintaining the thread of

supreme union, through steadfast uninterrupted natural kriya. This fully introspective state of prana, engrossed in continuous, undistracted ajapa kriya is the 'Krishna-presence' within every jiva and is worshipped as Krishna Yaju.

Through the will of Krishna-Balarama, the first transformation of the primordial nature (mahat-tattwa) of the unified consciousness of the Supreme Being translated into the realms of Goloka – eternal divine creation in its purest expressed form. It contains all creation in its subtle, pre-manifested, fully-realized form. Here resides in full bloom Sri Krishna-Sree Radha with their companions as well as Lord Balarama with his consort, the adya-shakti natured Devi Revati. Both Krishna and Balarama are engaged in their own rapturous divine Raas Leelas - constant blissful union of infinite emotive forms. This is the germinating place of all that is manifested in the rest of creation. Every form, tattwa, force, emotion, feeling, relationship – eternal or temporal is caused, seeded and sustained from here.

Sri Krishna's work is never complete without the presence of Lord Baladeva. That is why his personified presence is requested by the Bhagwan Sri Krishna for many earthly leelas. Other than being ever-present (with Sri Rama) as his younger sibling Lakshmana in Treta-Yuga and his elder brother (Balarama) in Dwapara Yuga, Lord Baladeva appeared in Kali Yuga as Prabhu Nityananda (with Chaitanya Mahaprabhu) and Sri Charandas Babaji (with Prabhu Jagatbandhu). Another special incarnation when Lord Shankarshan came alone as a world teacher to spread the divine message of Lord Krishna was as Sri Ramanuja (meaning the younger brother or anuja of Rama, that is Lakshmana). All Sadguru's are effectively avatars of Balarama."



Sri Ramanujacharya

She stopped and I interjected. "Can you tell us a little more about how Lord Balarama as Sri Ramanuja (originally named Lakshmana) spread the message of Sri Krishna? We know that he propounded the Vishistadvaita philosophy and was the third and most important acharya of the Sri Sampradaya originally propounded by Nathamuni and Yamunacharya. Is there something more to it?" I queried.

Sree Sree Maa calmly explained, "You must take an integral view of things to get a proper understanding of God's leela. During Dwapara Yuga, Lord Krishna's message of eternal divine truth has been enshrined in two thematic forms - the Vrindavan Leela in the Srimad Bhagwatam and the Kurukshetra Leela in the Bhagwat Gita. These divine works of the supreme Lord pronounced in his Krishna avatar did not end there and has been continued in a variety of ways during Kali Yuga. An

observant follower of great philosophical movements will see how the apparently different philosophies were in essence elaborations and living elucidations of the enunciations of the Gita and the Bhagwat. For example, you are aware of the profound Vedantic and Vaishanava theories propounded by great personalities like Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Nimbarkacharya, Madhvacharya, Vallabhacharya, etc. While Sri Ramanuja is considered a direct embodiment of Sri Baladeva, all the acharyas, being anointed Sadgurus, are in a sense Balarama-natured. Several commentaries have been written on their similarities and differences, but you should try to see deeper to understand how they represent the evolving stages of the same truth from the point of view of both ascent in sadhana and supramental descent of the divine consciousness. Kali Yuga has been the

cauldron of a detailed demonstration of what was seeded by the Krishna avatar in Dwapara. Look deeper into the steps of what was essentially presented by each world teacher I mentioned earlier. Look at Sri Yukteswar Giri's chart for the time period of Kali Yuga and link them up. Tell me what you can decipher. I shall be with you in your thoughts."

Sree Sree Maa stopped. From the way she ended, I realized that there was something to be unearthed in what she had said, which while obvious to her, would be a revelation for me. My research began as I scanned the Yuga-cycle time chart presented by Sri Yukteswar in his book Kaivalya Darshan or the Holy Science, which he was asked to write by Mahavatar Babaji Maharaj. I then quickly skimmed through the life histories and philosophical principles of the great acharyas that Sree Sree Maa mentioned. I tried to link these with the principles of sadhana and divine worship as enunciated in the Gita and other texts. A couple of weeks later I returned to Sree Sree Maa saying, "Will you hear what I seem to have assimilated?" "Go ahead", said she, "I am waiting to hear from you." I started.

"In the descending cycle, when Dwapara Yuga gave way to Kali Yuga, the great avatar, Gautama Buddha, appeared. The timing matches with what Sri Yukteswar indicates in his chart. The great Sakyamuni re-established the foundations of self-enquiry and self-realization, enunciated the fundamental reasons for sorrow and demonstrated by his life and teachings the path to be traversed from bondage to salvation and perfection. He re-established the Sankhya and Yogic traditions of ancient thought of earlier Yugas - the firm foundations on which the road to freedom begins. Others walked on that stage one by one to elaborate the steps of sadhana with their realized philosophical expositions, demonstrated it their lives and created a generation of earnest seekers, many of whom attained truth.

Adi Shankaracharya presented to the world the first fundamental level that a sadhaka has to attain – realization of the supreme divine as the ultimate reality. It is important to understand his Advaitic pronouncement of 'Brahman satya jagat mithya' as the foundation for moving towards 'freedom through union'. Sri Ramakrishna used to remind every aspirant in his inimitable style of expressing profound spiritual truths in simple language by saying, 'First reach the goal-post of God without considering anything else worthwhile. Then look at his creation clutching onto God. You will see that all creation is also God.' It is therefore quite apt that a Shiva-avatar in the form of Adi Shankaracharya descended to point out to the fundamental truth – the self is Brahman and only Brahman exists everywhere - realization of which is the first stable station in the spiritual journey, namely ascent to Shiva-hood by transcending the kutastha chaitanya or individual consciousness. From the point of view of supramental descent, it talks about the first stage where only Krishna-consciousness exists.

Sri Ramanuja followed and through the Vishistadvaita philosophy presented the logical next step in self-realization – assimilating one's self with the universal consciousness (Brahman chaitanya) to realize what Sri Bishnupada Siddhanta Thakur, while elaborating on Sri Ramakrishna's words in this context, referred to as – 'Brahman satya jagat Bhagwan'. In a sense Sri Ramanuja explained how creation began to evolve from the absolute singularity into the Krishna-Balarama dual. Now I can appreciate why Sri Ramanuja descended to expound this great truth because, from what you said earlier, being an avatar of Balarama, he holds the sceptre of this realization of the first manifestation of Parampurush Sri Krishna.

Sri Nimbarkacharya came to expound the subsequent stage in universal realization — the confluence of duality and non-duality through his Dwaitadvaita philosophy, which was a

theistic view of the Bhedabheda philosophy of Bhaskaracharya and Yadavprakash.. It is through this that one transcends Param Shivahood and the gateways to the divine leela of Goloka open for the yoga of bhakti to be performed on the foundations of supreme union. The evolution of creation into the Radha-Krishna-Balarama-Revati-Gopi-Gopini world of Goloka where duality exists in harmony with unity is what Sri Nimbarkacharya elucidated upon.

The eternal divine trio of Radha-Krishna-Balarama while retaining their original states multiplied into innumerable sparks of encapsulated individual consciousness. It is in this context that the next level of sadhana, especially for the individual, through bhakti yoga, was presented by Sri Madhvacharya through his concept of 'Tattwa-vada' or Philosophy of Reality popularly known as the Dvaita school of thought. Standing on the firm shoulders of earlier Vedantic realizations he presented the foundations of bhakti through worship of the eternal divine form of the supreme personality as the fulfillment of individual life of every unit of consciousness. This set the basis for divine supramental descent of the supreme personality into the hearts and minds of the transformed liberated individual.

In the subsequently following stage, the duality of the bhakta becomes purified to an unalloyed non-dual existence fully immersed in the supreme personality, through either sajujya or sarupya depending on the nature of the created individual. This form of pure Vedantic bhakti was subsequently expounded by Sri Vallabhacharya through the Shuddhadvaita (purified advaita) school of thought. The only way for such realization is divine grace or kripa for these are pathless realms. That is why Sri Vallabhacharya's school of thought is aptly called Pushti-marg through brahmasambandh or path of grace that will bring an individual back to their

original state in God's own domain of Goloka.

This completes the cycle of sadhana with the ascent of the individual and descent of the supreme divine as expounded in the Bhagwat Gita and Srimad Bhagwat. It is therefore natural that, at this appropriate juncture, the supreme personality himself took human form again – aptly in the peak of Kali Yuga's darkest phase - as Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, to demonstrate the finality of God's leela madhurya principles enshrined as the 'achintya-vedaved bhava' (inconceivable divine harmony of unity and diversity) philosophy presented by the great scholars of the Gaudiya school. Some of the stages that I mentioned above are explained in a unique way during the wonderful dialogue between Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Raya Ramananda as presented in the classic treatise Chaitanya Charitamrita.”

I stopped and concluded by saying, “Now I can see why you indicated that the compact Dwapara Yuga pronunciations of Sri Krishna were expanded in details through leela-lives of divine ‘Krishna-Balarama-natured’ personalities in Kali Yuga and a series of schools of philosophical thought evolved culminating in the next Krishna avatar. It is so interesting.”

Sree Sree Maa smiled and remarked, “The principal architect of Krishna leela in Dwapara was Sri Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa. It was a presentation of his realization. He continued this in Kali Yuga too, again with the help of the rishi mandala and divine personalities, requesting them descend for demonstrating of the spiritual tenants Brahma-Bhagwat-Vidya. You may have observed in your research studies that many of the acharyas you mentioned met with Vyasa during their lives. Most of them produced commentaries on his works, namely the Brahma Sutra and Gita.

If you carefully study the links to Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, you will find a saint by the name

of Sri Madhavendra Puri to be at the root of the Gaudiya movement. He initiated the three principal figures that played critical roles in Chaitanya-dev's manifestation, namely Ishwar Puri (one who initiated him), Keshav Bharati (one who gave him sannyas) and Advaita Acharya (who beseeched his descent and publicly recognized him as Krishna). Madhavendra Puri was an embodiment of Vyasa. In a sense, it is he who orchestrated the divine descent of Mahaprabhu - to demonstrate the ultimate finality of all fulfillment. Like Madhavendra Puri, Sri Vallabhacharya was also another embodiment of Vyas-deva. Mahaprabhu himself went to meet Vallabhacharya after which the life of the erstwhile scholarly acharya was completely transformed into a God-like saint. You may also explore the interesting linkage of Madhavendra Puri and Vallabhacharya through Lord Srinath-ji.

Again when Kali Yuga moved into Dwapara and the ascending cycle of time began, we see the emergence of great personalities like Sri Ramakrishna, Shyamacharan Lahiri, Prabhu Jagatbandhu and so many others. Behind the scenes, we see great leela-directors like Trailanga Swami, Mahavatar Babaji Maharaj and Bhagwan Kishori Mohan. Many great sages of brahmarshi and maharshi levels have come at this juncture. The new order for the new age has been initiated. The evil forces perpetuating bondage through the darkness of ignorance have also become very powerful. Many great battles have been and are being fought about which very few know."

I could not hide my personal curiosity and asked, "Maa, I know from you that Sage Sanat Kumara, our Babaji Maharaj was Buddha, Lord Baladeva was Ramanuja and Vyas-deva was Vallabhacharya. The internet says that Nimbarka was an embodiment of the divine Sri Sudarshana Chakra, Madhvacharya a manifestation of Lord Vayu and Adi

Shankacharya was a Rudra avatar but does not identify the original personalities. Can you please confirm?"

"Again curiosity!!" retorted Sree Sree Maa continuing, "What will you do with all this information without inner realization? It is more important to convert these glimpses of vague thought waves that have hit you into crystal clear realization through sadhana. It is not as easy as you spoke. The linkages are very intricate and the drama of God and his kinsmen is difficult to gauge by hearing or studying books. So many great saints who came at various points in time to set platforms for spiritual upliftment. Almost all are linked. There have been similar movements in Islam which have gone hand-in hand, not only in India but also in the Arab world. Much remains historically undocumented and lost to general mankind. Only those who have lived those times and retain memories of those experiences can provide details". Looking at my morose face, she relented a bit and said, "Our Sri Sri Baba had said that Adi Shankara was Sage Shaktri, the powerful and realized son of Sage Vashistha and Sri Madhvacharya was an embodiment of Vasanta (spring season) in Goloka, both eminently suited for their roles, one as Shiva-avatar and the other as a divine devotee. Now go and do some Kriya. These days you have become lazy." I knew that this particular discussion session had reached its logical end. I would have to wait for another opportunity.

**-Sri Partha Pratim Chakrabarti,
Her Blessed Child**