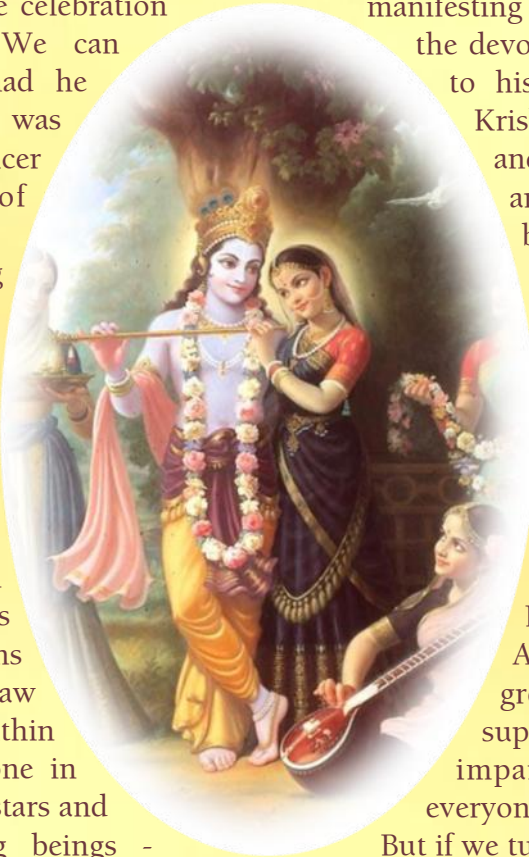


Where Love Supersedes Law

"I would believe in a God who could dance." said German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. During his times, God was generally portrayed as a frozen perfection, as remote, static, and wholly unsociable. No wonder he was disillusioned by this pernicious stereotypical idea of God. He would have been pleasantly surprised had he heard about Krishna, the God who danced with spellbinding expertise on the hoods of the venomous serpent Kaliya, the God who danced to the tune of his mother just to get butter, the God who danced with the gopis in the celebration of divine love, the rasa-lila. We can scarcely imagine his surprise had he known that a name of God was Vrindavana-natabara, the best dancer in the pastoral paradise of Vrindavana.

Krishna as God is a mesmerizing blend of greatness and sweetness. All theistic traditions assert that God is great. In Krishna, that greatness is graphically demonstrated. In the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavad-gita, Krishna gives a glimpse of his awe-inspiring greatness through his vishva-rupa darshana, which is one of the greatest mystical visions in world literature. Arjuna saw within the Universal Form - within Krishna - everything and everyone in existence. He saw all the planets, stars and universes as well as all living beings - celestial, terrestrial and subterranean. Krishna also exhibited his omnipotence by effortlessly conquering numerous powerful demons, who were the scourges of the universe.

Most endearingly, Krishna delights, not in the magnificence of godhood, but in the sweetness of uninhibited love. Krishna expresses his sweetness in His lila as a naughty prankster who steals butter from the houses of the elderly gopis. Krishna as God is self-satisfied and doesn't need anything for his enjoyment. Moreover, when everything belongs to him, where is the question of his stealing anything? Yet just to reciprocate love with those devotees who love him in a parental mood (vatsalya-bhava), Krishna plays the role of their darling child and speaks and behaves mischievously. The



disarming hospitality that Krishna extended to Sudama and the subsequent generous benedictions that he

bestowed upon his poor gurukula-friend are also eloquent testimony to Krishna's personal warmth and sweetness.

For the demoniac, Krishna's sweetness gives way to his greatness. Krishna went as a shanti-duta (peace messenger) to dissuade Duryodhana from war with sweet words. But when the arrogant prince tried to arrest him instead, Krishna foiled Duryodhana by manifesting the gigantic universal form. But for

the devotees, Krishna's greatness gives way to his sweetness. During the rasa-lila, Krishna disappeared from the gopis and reappeared in the majestic four-armed Vishnu form. When his most beloved consort Radha offered him obeisance and asked him where Krishna had gone, He tried to artfully point in a false direction. But seeing her selfless love and her intense anxiety caused by separation, Krishna could no longer maintain his guise. His two extra hands disappeared and Radha beheld before her the sweet Lord of her heart.

As Krishna's sweetness surpasses his greatness, so too does his love supersede his laws. The laws of karma impartially and unerringly deliver everyone their karmic dues sooner or later.

But if we turn to Krishna with devotional love, He manifests his sweetness as a forgiving father. That His mercy transcends his justice is evident from his unequivocal promise in one of the concluding verses of the Gita (18.66), "Abandon all varieties of religion and surrender unto me. I will free you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear."

We can easily surrender to Krishna by chanting his holy names, which also manifest both his greatness and sweetness. The holy name has the great power that even nuclear weapons don't have - the power to destroy all our negative habits and tendencies. And the holy name is so irresistibly sweet that saints desire thousands of mouths to relish its taste. Janmashtami is a reminder that our untapped birthright to enjoy divine sweetness is beckoning us. Krishna is ready for us. Are we ready for him?