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KR̥ṢṢṢNA'S DĀMODARA-LĪLĀ

Rendering based on passages from the
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam
Gopāla-Campūḥ and
Ānanda-Vṛndāvana-Campūḥ

SVĀMĪ SADĀNANDA DĀSA

Translated into English by
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from Svāmī Sadānanda Dāsa's German original
Die Dāmodara-Līlā Kṛṣṇa's

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Introduction

God's form is composed of eternal being, eternal knowledge and eternal joy (sat-cit-ānanda), and God is in every way and in all respects infinite. Through eternity He experiences Himself as being, knowledge and joy. Through eternity He does not reach the end of His Own being, does not know Himself to the last remainder and does not exhaust the happiness that He Himself is.

His being knows no "why". He is the fullness that cannot be in want of anything. He Himself is the object of knowledge and experience. He Himself is the One Who knows, and He Himself is the One Who becomes known, the One Who loves and the One Who is beloved. He is the infinite unity of the "I" and the "You".

The "I" is He Himself. The "You" is His Own beloved companions, in whom He knows, experiences, understands, loves and as joy forms Himself.

He Himself is the fullness of glory, grandeur and majesty. He Himself is the fullness of beauty, loveliness and unrestricted liveliness. He is Nārāyaṇa. He is Vraja-Kṛṣṇa. Through eternity He Himself is play: grave and dignified, cheerful and unconcerned. To know, to convey and to experience Himself is His nature. There is no purpose that lies beyond Himself, as He Himself is the fullness. The fullness itself is the eternal play (līlā).

The power that distinguishes Himself, that constitutes His Own nature, is the power that forms His Own being. Through this power He knows Himself and experiences Himself as joy. This power also forms the being of His beloved, His eternal companions. Through this power they know Him and experience Him as joy. He is at the centre. His beloved companions know and experience for

the sake of God, for the sake of His happiness. They do not have any I that separated from Him could demand a knowledge and a happiness that was not His knowledge and His happiness. Their happiness is His happiness, and His happiness is their happiness, as He and they are nothing else than He Himself. He loves them, they love Him. The love that radiates from Him is the power of knowing, which in the form of love returns to Him – as its source – to Himself.

He and His realm know no limits of time and space. Nevertheless, where He knows and experiences Himself as the fullness of beauty, loveliness and liveliness – in and together with His beloved ones, His Own companions – the fullness of grandeur, glory and majesty will express itself only on rare occasions. It reveals itself only occasionally, although it is ever present. But when it happens, the experience of the second kind of fullness will intensify the experience of the first kind of fullness. In that case, the peculiar secret of the beloved ones' love of Kṛṣṇa as the fullness of beauty breaks through, in spite of the distinct and unambiguous manifestation of the fullness of majesty, which they certainly experience, but not as such.

One example that shows how this wonderful secret takes place is the Dāmodara-līlā, enacted by Kṛṣṇa of Vraja.

Man could not know anything of the inner secret that God is if the play, which is God Himself, did not shine forth in our world from time to time. Kṛṣṇa's līlā, unbounded by time and space, shone forth a little more than five thousand years ago. At that time He, His Own and His realm became visible on earth. This is His grace, but bestowing of grace was not the purpose of this līlā. The play becomes visible in eternal rhythm, because He and His Own

love and experience themselves and Him in a special way. In this play, He, the eternal Youth Kṛṣṇa, presents Himself as a child and seems to grow up from a suckling to a youth, just as a human child, though He never is a growing child; He only manifests the characteristics of growth. Without ceasing to be the fullness of majesty, He is so absorbed in Himself as the fullness of beauty that He is only very occasionally aware of the fact that He is the fullness of majesty as well. His Own companions are so absorbed in the marvel of this Divine figure's fullness of charm and beauty that they are barely able to experience His majesty.

They appear in a world of time and space and consider themselves to be mere human children, although they are not.

In this way, He and His Own experience themselves in a peculiar way, but it is not that the wish suddenly arises to experience themselves in this līlā. In truth, this līlā and every single phase of it is eternal, is one of the ways in which He experiences Himself, through eternity. This is the reason why bhaktas, who possess God's Own power of knowledge, by force of this power, in blessed moments are able to see this līlā in the mirror of their ātmā – because when this happens their ātmā is freed from the limitations of time and space.

Long before this līlā became visible on earth, the great seers were acquainted with it. The eternal Revelation in the shape of the eternal Word is ever present. It becomes audible in the ears of the great bhaktas and is communicated by them to worthy listeners. The Divine Word appears in this world, veiled in the raiment of the Sanskrit language, but only those who possess His power of knowledge – because they have love for Him – are able to perceive God's Word in that language.

Although the līlā appeared in the world of time and space, and even those who did not belong to His Own could “see” something of it, they did not understand anything, because this līlā is enacted as if it concerned ordinary occurrences in the lives of quite ordinary people in a particular district in India. God’s Own Word, His appearance in the form of the Words of the Śāstram-s, i.e., the Sacred Scriptures, has propounded the paths for man to follow if he wants to acquire knowledge of the nature of the world, his own ātmā and of God. These Śāstram-s speak of the serving, cognizant love of God, which can touch and seize man, if he is willing to let himself be enlightened by the Words of His līlā, the Words flowing from the lips of those who possess this serving, knowing power of love. Some of those who proceeded on this path of eternal serving, knowing love were allowed to participate directly in God’s play in Vraja, some as independent individuals, others merged into the being of one or other of Kṛṣṇa’s beloved companions during the appearance of this līlā on earth, i.e., when the Divine play for a certain space of time became visible in the district of Vraja. Droṇa and Dharā from the hoary past merged into the beings of Nanda and Yaśodā, Kṛṣṇa’s beloved ones, who through eternity know themselves to be the parents of the Divine Child.

In the līlā which becomes visible on earth, Yaśodā, the mother, and Nanda, the father, consider themselves as ordinary human beings. The beauty, loveliness and liveliness cast a spell on both of them. They know, understand and experience the joy that the fullness of beauty is, and they exhaust themselves in their love for this Child. Kṛṣṇa, too, is under the spell of this infinite love, which pours out from Him and through the beloved companions flows back to Him. Like all of His Own, who play with Him in Vraja,

they live only for His sake, “They consider their house, their property, their relations and friends, their own body, all their endeavour, their lives and their hearts His property, and they possess them only for His sake.” Since He is everything to them, they are everything to Him.

We, as human beings, may at the best from afar sense somewhat of this secret. Are we able to imagine what is going on in the hearts of those who through eternity, day and night, play with Him in His capacity as fullness of beauty, loveliness and liveliness, and who in this revealed *lilā* consider themselves as human beings, although they are not? Are we able to understand at all that the serving, loving knowledge of this fullness of beauty is a knowledge infinitely much deeper than the knowledge of the fullness of grandeur, omnipotence and omniscience? We are barely able to believe – and only with hesitation – that the unfolding and dissolution of countless systems of worlds is nothing but an insignificant concern, produced by Viṣṇu’s occasional glance; Viṣṇu, who is merely a partial aspect of God in His capacity as fullness of majesty, glory and grandeur. When through the mere knowledge of Viṣṇu all ignorance of the nature of the world, God and the *ātmā*, together with the relationship between them, is completely obliterated, and the *ātmā* then in all clarity and purity experiences the true reality – could there be any doubt that His companions in *Vraja* can never be touched, even lightly, by a distant breath of *Māyā*, the fundamental ignorance?

“Desire, hate and every passion are thieves that deprive man of the possibility to bear God in mind. Man’s home is a prison. To be influenced to self-oblivion is a shackle on man’s feet. But only as long as they have not totally become Yours, i.e., as long as they

have not wholly and solely dedicated all they have and themselves to You.” (*Bhāgavatam* X,14,36) “Through eternity the inhabitants of Vraja have dedicated themselves and all they have to Him.” (*Bhā. X,14,35*) “The fullness, the Absolute, Brahma, which is the highest possible joy, is their Beloved, their Friend, and their Kinsman since eternity.” (*Bhā. X,14,32*) They, to whom He is everything, have their home, passions, self-oblivion not as a result of selfishness as man, but their passions, their home, their self-oblivion are entirely formed by the power of knowledge and are joy, because they are for Kṛṣṇa’s sake. “Nanda and the other cowherds knew nothing of the suffering and ignorance of the world of change.” (*Bhā. X,11,58*) “There can be no question, ever, of the women of Vraja ever being part of the world of change – they who eternally regard Kṛṣṇa with motherly love – because the world of change has its cause in ignorance.” (*Bhā. X,6,40*)

It is the eternal power of the play, i.e., His Own power of knowledge and joy, which forms the play – not the deceptive, enchanting power of Māyā – and it is this supreme power that lets His Own companions experience themselves as mere human beings. Māyā’s deceptive power keeps the enchanted ātmā distant from God, the ātmā who out of his free will has chosen to turn his back on Him. In order to give the ātmā the possibility to experience the world of ignorance, this power of Māyā makes him believe that he is the body, the mind or the individual soul, all stemming from Māyā.

God and His Own have this special līlā in Vraja. It seems as if He grows up from a suckling to a youth and that He undergoes these changes, when He actually only manifests the different stages of growth and in reality, eternally, is the Youth. Those who are His

Own appear as parents of this world, and in pleasure and pain they exhaust themselves for His sake, as if He were a child, in its helplessness in need of His parents.

He and His play are always transcendental, even when He acts as being of this world. He and those who belong to Him always consist of being, knowledge and joy; they never become humans of flesh and blood. Only deceived fools believe that Kṛṣṇa has a body consisting of Māyā, that He is born like a human child, that He is a slave under the laws of our world.

He and His play with His Own are not an idealization of the world formed by ignorance; His Play is a derision, an insult to the world and people's relations to each other. Man's love for his children is like a travesty of the Divine parents' genuine love for the Divine Child. When He and His Own play in this līlā on earth, in forms whose distorted shadows are the Māyā-begotten men of this world, He and His Own experience a peculiar, intensified form of joy. Just as His Own only breathe and exist for His sake, He exists and plays only for their sake and for their happiness. Their happiness, and consequently His Own, intensify in the līlā that appears in the world.

The Śāstram-s tell about this līlā and in a way that gives insight into God's inner life. But just as no one, except those who are His Own, is able to experience the true līlā – it is concealed by the way it appears and the fact that man has turned his back on God – no one is able to understand the statements of the Śāstram-s, unless he is at least willing, in serving, knowing devotion, to let himself be enlightened by the Śāstram-s. The purpose of this act of listening to the Dāmodara-līlā is not to satisfy man's craving for knowledge, but to make it possible for the desire to arise in the heart of

someone who wants to serve this līlā to become, in a future life through God's and His Own's grace, a particle of dust under the feet of His Own (*Bhā. X,14,34*) or one day to be allowed to serve those who already serve Him since eternity (*Bhā. X,87,23*).

The Dāmodara-līlā is subject of inner reflection of all those who are filled with unflinching confidence that the serving, knowing love of Kṛṣṇa is the path as well as the goal, the eternal fulfilment of the aim of the ātmā in the eternal realm of God.

For one whole month a year, the bhaktas, those who are dedicated to God, reflect upon, celebrate and discuss this Dāmodara-līlā. This month is therefore called Dāmodara. Those who have turned their backs on God call this month Kārttika.

The following rendering of the Dāmodara-līlā presents the statements of this līlā as given by the *Bhāgavatam*, *Gopāla-Campūḥ* and *Ānanda-Vṛndāvana-Campūḥ*. This introduction to the presentation must be thoroughly thought-out, understood, and unceasingly kept in mind. The greatest possible danger lies in regarding this Dāmodara-līlā with the eyes of a mother or a father of this human world or in dismal abandonment of God even mentally or emotionally wanting to place oneself in the role of a Nanda or a Yaśodā. Man as such, however noble and good, may never think – even in his most pious imagination – that he, with his individual I, could try to force himself near to one of His Own or even Kṛṣṇa Himself. The highest value of man lies in dismissing himself in the transition from rejection of God to dedication to the power of serving, knowing love. This love prays for the gift to be allowed, through one's ears, heart and thoughts, to serve the eternal parents by attentive listening and a versatile mind.