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# *Krishna's Love for Sudama*

## The Acme of God's Love

BY PRABHUSHRI SWAMIJI

**C**IVILIZATION STARTS WITH the cultural and spiritual side of human evolution, the evolution of consciousness. The true history of civilization is of those harbingers of evolution, the Prophets, who are actually making history possible. Except for the few rulers who have been benevolent, what we call history today is actually the history of crimes. Read it from that angle—who killed whom, who ruled over whom, who invaded whom. Those who fought wars, invaded or defended each other, are subsidiary, whether in the East or West is immaterial. Certainly Krishna, Rama, Buddha and other such figures existed before Western history was written. The epics are the actual history of mankind.

An American devotee once asked, "But don't you think, Swamiji, that wherever the military has gone, civilization has grown?" It depends upon how you define civilization. From age to age the kings, emperors and philosophers have been influenced by the truly great ones, whether it was Krishna, Jesus, Buddha, Rama or others. If you carry this back in time you will see that at the change of each age, it is the

great ones who establish civilization of any kind, or make possible the next evolution. But because they are viewed as spiritual beings, holy men or women, messengers, we do not consider them to be historical figures—as if history is only created by politics and conquests.

That is where Krishna's and Rama's Incarnations are pertinent, because they were both kings and Prophets. The lives of the Prophets are living history, far beyond the kings and emperors of many nations whose names are hardly remembered. They came and went. It is the Prophets who start and end history, the evolutionary process. For each evolution or age the Prophets see what is needed, where we stand, what we can grasp, how to behave with us; which language, which actions,

agreed to go. But before leaving he told to his wife, "I can't go empty-handed. I should take something, as an offering at least." So she tied some puffed rice into a cloth—all that they had to eat—and tucked it into his waist, saying, "Offer him this."

Sudama walked all the way from his village and after days reached the golden city. But once outside Krishna's palace, he felt very shy and berated himself for coming. "I might have been his friend in school, but now he's King and I am nobody. What merit have I to even meet him, let alone ask him for anything?" Sudama wrestled back and forth in his mind, but since he had traveled so far, he finally sent a message to Krishna that Sudama, his school friend, had come.

There are many aspects and incidents in each Prophet's life that, if taken quite ordinarily, could be misunderstood. So it was with Jesus, Buddha, Rama and Krishna. Krishna's life, however, is the most misunderstood and the greatest enigma; not only because of the variety of things he did, but also because his was the most perfect manifestation of Divinity. But in spite of that, after nearly five thousand years he still lives and grows in our consciousness. Why? It seems a contradiction but on a deeper level it is not. That is the only way it could be. In the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, the story of Krishna's play on earth, the author, Vedavyas, wrote that if you truly want to understand Krishna, you have to be very, very pure.

gold, and all he had brought was a handful of puffed rice! But Krishna knew everything. Sudama tried to say, "I didn't bring anything," but Krishna was clever. "You have brought one thing," he said, and with his own hands caught hold of the bundle of puffed rice, opened it and began to eat it.

Sudama by that time was totally melted. Krishna asked him again, "What can I do for you? Just tell me." But Sudama was shy and simply said, "I have your love and your friendship. That is more valuable to me than anything." Krishna told him, however, "When you return home, your days will now be better." And it is written that when Sudama returned home, where his simple hut had stood was a mansion, and his wife

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which feelings will carry us to the next evolution. They know what is not known to us: at what level our karmas would be exhausted by their play. They are finishing our karmas, trying to solve our problems, awakening us to evolve, to raise our Consciousness.

Prophets are born in human bodies, therefore part of their life is always human. It cannot be otherwise. If they were to just fly around and do all kinds of occultism, we would not be able to relate to them; there would be no link. Part of them has to be like us in order to communicate and relate to us. This, then, creates difficulties, skepticism—*Why, if he was a Prophet, did he do (or not do) this?* If Rama weeps for his abducted wife, some think he is behaving like an ordinary husband. However, the inner significance is entirely different. When Krishna weeps for Radha, it creates a history of its own, an example for coming generations and centuries. Krishna's love was not a common relationship of lover and beloved. It showed what love should and could be—Divine. Radha was lost in love and devotion with her Lord; it was transcendent. Or when Krishna played at stealing the milkmaids' butter and cream, those ladies *loved* it. He was stealing the butter—our soul, our spirit—the cream of life, meaning, symbolically: God captures our hearts and souls.

Krishna's life history is an epic in itself, and within that, Sudama was, as if, a non-entity. But when his message reached Krishna, the Lord immediately came running to meet his friend. Sudama stood there in simple clothes and Krishna came and embraced him as if no time had passed between them. Sudama was amazed—*Krishna, I am not worthy of this*—but Krishna told him, "Don't worry, you are my friend," and took him inside the palace. Krishna's queen, Rukmini, then came and together they washed Sudama's feet. In those days in Bharat—even today in some homes—it was the custom to wash the feet of guests. They come on dusty roads, often without socks or even shoes.

Sudama was made to sit on a plush, velvet-covered seat and they fed him a sumptuous meal. Afterwards Krishna had Sudama sit by his side and inquired, "Tell me, what can I do for you, Sudama?" By that time Sudama was melting. He could not comprehend what he was seeing and experiencing, how Krishna could treat him so tenderly. He was very humbled, so much so that he forgot all about why he had come. He could not ask for anything. Meanwhile, Krishna asked Sudama, "Did you bring anything for me?" Now Sudama was so shy, so modest, he could not even respond. There he was in Krishna's palace, being served on plates of silver and

Though he played a role that included violence, Krishna was truly Love Incarnate. Love was the basis of his character. Wisdom he had in full glory—he was Almighty, as he revealed his Universal Form to Arjuna. But Krishna fought only as a last resort; even in the Mahabharat war he did not fight. His expression and manifestation throughout life was love. He loved and protected the downtrodden, the simple people, honest lovers of God, devotees. He protected them against exploitation. He defended simplicity of heart. He could be simple with simple people. A story from his life illustrates this:

Sudama, a Brahmin boy, was one of Krishna's best friends during their school days. He was a great devotee of Krishna. Eventually Krishna became King and built a golden kingdom on the western coast of India. Sudama was devout but very poor, married to a poor but noble wife; they had several children. When hard times came, there was no food and the children were on the verge of starvation, Sudama's wife reminded him of Krishna. "He was your great friend in school and now he is King of Dwaraka. Why don't you go to him and ask him to help us." Sudama was reluctant to ask for money or food from Krishna; he did not want to spoil their loving friendship. But they were desperate, so Sudama finally

came to meet him bedecked in jewels and fine clothing.

Each Prophet played his role on Earth in his own way. But Krishna's life is the perfection of *Leela* (God's play), as God would be with all beings—whether virtuous or sinner, strong or weak, high or low, man or woman, rich or poor, talented or illiterate. His Incarnation is a flawless example of how the Creator deals with His creation in all respects. On whichever level of consciousness you exist, He meets you there. If He were to mechanically deal with everyone uniformly, it would have no meaning, nor would it benefit us.

Love is the only all-attractive reality and Krishna and love are synonymous. He stands by the simple-hearted people, the lowly, the downtrodden, to whom injustice has been done. He is a perfect lawgiver, a perfect lover, a perfect warrior and a perfect peacekeeper. To understand the significance of his life is very revealing. It is no small thing that he still lives after so many thousands of years. When we understand Krishna's love, we will understand God's love. Then everything else will be revealed. 🙏

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