

Janmashtami
Commemorative Service Reading
Volume III

Commemorative Service Readings

Please use the reading from the volume appropriate for the year in which you are reading. The volume number of the commemorative service readings must match the volume number of the Sunday service readings.

There are two colors of font — black and blue. Black indicates a section created by the reader as an introduction, transition, or summary. These may be altered to suit your reading style. Blue indicates material taken from an SRF sources, such as *Autobiography of a Yogi*, *Mejda*, *Self-Realization Magazine*, etc. These are not to be changed. If you find an error, please notify the chairperson of the readers' committee for correction.

At the end of quoted material there is usually the source and page number from which the material is taken. This is for your information only and is not to be read.

Janmashtami

Reading

Volume III

In his translation and commentary on the Bhagavad Gita, *God Talks With Arjuna*, Paramahansa Yogananda provides unique and comprehensive explanations of the dialog between the guru, Krishna, and his chief disciple, Arjuna. In its introduction he recounts historical and allegorical facts about Sir Krishna:

Sri Krishna was raised in a pastoral setting in Gokula and nearby Brindaban on the banks of the Yamuna River, having been secretly carried there by his father, Vasudeva, immediately after his birth to Devaki in the prison in Mathura. Miraculously the locked doors had opened and guards had fallen in a deep stupor, allowing the infant to be carried safely to his foster home....

As a child in Brindaban, Krishna amazed all with his precocious wisdom and display of incredible powers. His inner joy frequently erupted in prankish outbursts — to the amusement and delight, and sometimes consternation, of those at whom his fun was directed....

Beautiful in form and feature, irresistible in charm and demeanor, an embodiment of divine love, giving joy to all, the young boy Krishna was beloved of everyone in the community, and an entrancing leader and

friend to his childhood companions, the gopas and gopis, who with him tended the village herds of cows in the sylvan environs....

It would seem that Krishna was hardly more than a boy when it came time for him to leave Brindaban in fulfillment of the purpose of his incarnation: to assist the virtuous in restraining evil.... Of kingly birth, as an adult Sri Krishna fulfilled his kingly duties, engaging in many campaigns against the reigns of evil rulers;... and was particularly significant in the Kurukshetra war between the Pandus and Kurus.

When Sri Krishna had completed his divinely ordained mission on earth, he retired to the forest. There he relinquished his body as a result of an accidental wound inflicted by an arrow from a hunter who mistook him for a deer as he rested in a glade.... an event that had been foretold as the cause of his earth exit. (*God Talks with Arjuna* Introduction: xxviii-xxx)

Sri Krishna's message in the Bhagavad Gita is the perfect answer for the modern age, and any age: Yoga of dutiful action, of nonattachment, and of meditation for God-realization.... The path advocated by Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita is the moderate, medium, golden path, both for the busy man of the world and for the highest spiritual aspirant — the way of righteous activity and meditation for divine communion and salvation — ... the wisdom of which has enthroned him in the hearts and minds of devotees throughout the ages.... His life demonstrates the ideal not of renunciation of action — but rather the renunciation of earth-binding desires for the fruits of action; that it is not necessary to flee the responsibilities of material life but rather to bring God here where He has placed us. (Ibid. PP. xxx, xxxi)

The writing of *God Talks With Arjun* was a monumental task. Master spent months in his desert retreat dictating it. In the Fall, 2010 edition of *Self-Realization Magazine* in an interview with Margaret Wolff, Brother Anandamoy was asked: "What was it like to be with Paramahansaji when he was writing *God Talks with Arjuna*?"

Brother Anandamoy replied:

It's very hard to convey. That was for me a spiritual experience — and you cannot describe a spiritual experience with language, because language is based on sense perception. I can only say that when I went into the room where he was working, the presence of God was so tangible that it was to me like stepping into God Himself. That divine vibration filled the whole room, and clearly flowed through the Master.

Whereas a scholar might pause to consider how he wanted to interpret an idea, Paramahansaji didn't need to stop and think about what to say. He just went on dictating his commentaries hour after hour — without interruption, without pause, sometimes far into the night. It was obvious that he was in a deep state of God-communion, and that he was receiving his inspiration directly from God.

I remember on one occasion, his secretary stopped typing and said, "Sir, the word you just used does not exist in the English language."

The Master turned to her and said, "Yes it does. Look it up in the dictionary."

"Sir, it's not here."

"Then that dictionary is no good," he replied. "Look in another one."

She searched for the word in a second dictionary, but it was not there either. So he again told her to look in another dictionary. She left the room and came back with two more dictionaries — bigger ones —

and set them down on the floor. The third one did not have it, but the fourth one, the biggest one, did. "You see," he said, "if the word didn't exist, God would not have given it to me." Then he asked not to be interrupted anymore, saying: "We have important work to do."

So you see, this was not an intellectual interpretation, "manmade" so to speak, based on one man's thought about what life was all about. This was truth, straight from God. (PP. 35, 36)

And the interview concluded with the question: "What is the essential message of the Gita, it's heart and soul?" Brother Anandamoy responded:

Krishna's message to Arjuna, and to us, is "You've got to fight! There's no other way. You are a *Kshatriya*, a warrior." Paramahansaji tells us, "Each person has to fight his own battle of Kurukshetra. It is a war not only worth winning, but in the divine order of the universe and of the eternal relationship between the soul and God, a war that sooner or later must be won." He's not just saying that we can make it; he's assuring us that we will make it!

The Master told us again and again, "If you fall flat, get up and walk on. If you fall again and think you cannot get up, get up and walk on." At the end of the Gita, Arjuna expresses so beautifully the attitude of a true disciple when he says, "I will act according to Thy word." That is the attitude of the spiritual warrior: "Even through I feel it is hard — sometimes impossible — still I will make the effort."

Gradually, the spiritual life becomes a natural thing, and the whole picture changes. You see that it's not just a battle. God is there. Even when the path ahead seems dark, you know that within the darkness is God's light. And more and more that becomes your reality. In the end,

you realize that you never were the mistakes you made. You were always the perfect soul. (Ibid. PP. 42, 43)

This poem "Come to me, O Krishna" is from *Whispers from Eternity* and was written by Paramahansa Yogananda in honor of Lord Krishna. Look with attention at the picture of Lord Krishna while a portion of the poem is read as a prayer as though you yourself are addressing these words to him.

"O Krishna, Lord of Hindustan, I sorrowed by the lonely Junma river bank, where Thy flute-notes thrilled the air and led the lost calves to their homes....

I am one of Thy lost calves which followed Thy flower-footprints on the shoals of time. Listening to the melody of Thy flute of wisdom, I am following the middle path of calm activity, by which Thou hast led many through the portals of the dark past into the light.

Since all of us are Thy fold, whether moving, sidetracked, or held stationary by the fogs of disbelief, O Divine Krishna, lead us back to Thy fold of everlasting freedom. O Krishna, Thou reignest on the heart-throne of each knower of Thy love." (PP. 50, 51)