

Krishna and the Kaliya Serpent



One day, during the summer season, the boys and cows became very thirsty and began to drink the water of the Yamuna. The river, however, had been made poisonous by the venom of the great serpent known as Kaliya.

Because the water was so poisonous, the boys and cows suddenly fell down on the ground, apparently dead. Then Krishna, simply cast His merciful glance over them, and all the boys and cows regained consciousness and began to look at one another with great astonishment. They could understand that by drinking the water of the Yamuna they had died and that the merciful glance of Krishna had restored their lives

Within the river Yamuna there was a great lake, and in that lake the black serpent Kaliya used to live. Because of his poison, the whole area was so contaminated that it emanated a poisonous vapor twenty-four hours a day. If a bird happened to even pass over the spot, it would

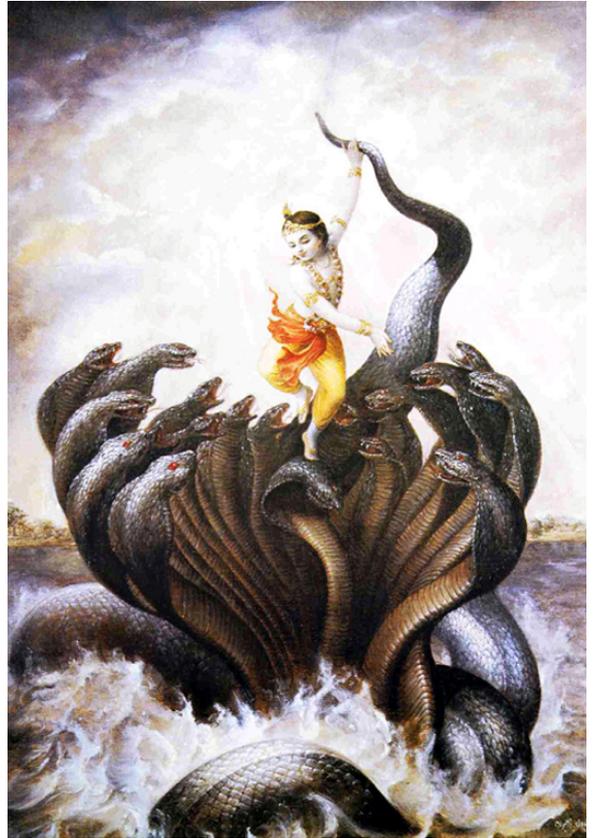
immediately die and fall down into the water. Lord Krishna saw the effect of the great serpent's poison: the whole river that ran before Vrindavan was now deadly.

Krishna immediately climbed up into a big Kadamba tree on the bank of the Yamuna. After climbing to the top of the tree, He tightened His belt cloth and, slapping His arms just like a wrestler, jumped into the midst of the poisonous lake.

When Krishna was swimming about just like a great strong elephant, He made a tumultuous sound, which the great black serpent Kaliya could hear. The tumult was intolerable for him, and he could understand that this was an attempt to attack his home. Therefore he immediately came before Krishna. Kaliya saw that Krishna was indeed worth seeing because His body was so beautiful and delicate; its color resembled that of a cloud, and His feet resembled lotus flowers. He was decorated with Srivatsa, jewels and yellow garments. He was smiling with a beautiful face and playing in the river Yamuna with great strength. But in spite of Krishna's beautiful features, Kaliya felt great anger within his heart, and thus he grabbed Krishna with his mighty coils. Seeing the incredible way in which Krishna was enveloped in the coils of the serpent, the affectionate cowherd boys and other inhabitants of Vrindavan immediately became stunned out of fear and fell down on the ground. All the cows, bulls and small calves, with great anxiety, could only cry in agony and stand erect on the bank, unable to help their beloved Krishna. For two hours Krishna remained like an ordinary child gripped in the coils of Kaliya, but when He saw that all the inhabitants of Gokula—including His mother and father, the gopis, the boys and the cows—were just on the point of death, Krishna immediately freed Himself. He began to expand His body, and when the serpent tried to hold Him, he felt a great strain. On account of the strain, his coils slackened, and he had no alternative but to let Krishna loose, from his grasp. Kaliya then became very angry, and his great hoods expanded. He exhaled poisonous fumes from his nostrils, his eyes blazed like fire, and flames issued from his mouth. The great serpent remained still for some time, looking at Krishna. Licking

his lips with bifurcated tongues, the serpent looked at Krishna with double hoods, and his eyesight was full of poison. Krishna immediately pounced upon him. Thus attacked, Kaliya looked for an opportunity to bite Him, but Krishna moved around him. As Krishna and Kaliya moved in a circle, the serpent gradually became fatigued, and his strength seemed to diminish considerably. Krishna immediately pressed down the serpent's hoods and jumped up on them. The Lord's lotus feet became tinged with red from the rays of the jewels on the snake's hoods. Then He began to dance upon the hoods of the serpent, although they were moving to and fro.

While Krishna was dancing on his hoods, Kaliya tried to push Him down with some of his other hoods. Kaliya had about a hundred hoods, but Krishna took control of them. He began to dash Kaliya with His lotus feet, and this was more than the serpent could bear. Gradually, Kaliya was reduced to struggling for his very life. He vomited all kinds of refuse and exhaled fire. While throwing up poisonous material from within, Kaliya became reduced in his sinful situation. Out of great anger, he began to raise one of his hoods to kill the Lord. The Lord immediately captured that hood and subdued it by kicking it and dancing on it. Kaliya then began to vomit blood instead of poison; he was completely fatigued. His whole body appeared to be broken by the kicks of the Lord. Within his mind, however, he finally began to understand that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and he surrendered unto



Him. He realized that Krishna is the Supreme Lord, the master of everything.

The wives of the serpent, known as the Nagapatnis, saw that their husband had been subdued by the Lord's kicking and that he was almost at the point of death due to bearing the heavy burden of the Lord. They prepared to worship the Lord, surrendered unto the Supreme Lord and began to pray.

After the Nagapatnis submitted their prayers, Lord Krishna released Kaliya from his punishment. Kaliya was already unconscious from being struck by the Lord. With folded hands, he humbly began to pray to the Supreme Lord Krishna, "My dear Lord, I am born as a serpent; therefore, by natural instinct I am very angry. How is it then possible to give up my acquired nature without Your mercy? I surrender unto You. Now You can punish me or save me, as You desire."

After hearing this, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who was acting as a small human child, ordered the serpent thus: "You must immediately leave this place and go to the ocean. Leave without delay. Don't pollute the waters of the Yamuna. Let it be drunk by My cows and cowherd boys."

Mother Yashoda, Rohini, Maharaj Nanda, the cowherd men and boys were very happy to see Krishna back with them and they all hugged Krishna in turn, pressing Him to their chests. Now they didn't have to be afraid of the Kaliya serpent any more.