



PARABLES FROM THE PAST



At the beginning of the Kali-yuga there was a Brahmin called Bhu:pathi, in one of the villages around Puri (Jagannath-Puri in the present Orrisa). He was very rich. He went on a pilgrimage to *Brunda:vanam*, which is situated on the banks of the most sacred river *Yamuna*. In those days there were no proper transport facilities. Hence one had to walk or go on chariots or bullock carts to reach distant places. One fine evening Bhu:pathi finally reached the outskirts of *Brunda:vanam*, after walking for many days. He decided to rest for the night in a temple of Lord Krishna, which was situated in the vicinity.

Even as he was about to go to bed a handsome youth came to that temple. Bhu:pathi inquired about the particulars of that youth. That youth said that he was a *bramhacha:ry* (a bachelor) and was from the province of *Kalinga*. He further told that he was a poor Bramhin, his name was Gopal das and had come on a pilgrimage to *Brunda:vanam*. Bhu:pathi was pleased to listen to that as he too hailed from the same province. Gopal das shared the food that he was carrying with Bhu:pathi and both of them slept together that night.

The following morning both of them finished their respective ablutions and other morning rituals. They decided to part after having the *Darsan* of the Lord. As soon as the temple opened in the morning, both of them had the *Darsan* of the Lord. Bhu:pathi being

impressed with Gopal das's attitude offered the hand of his daughter to him. Gopal das too accepted and both of them decided to meet in the village of Bhu:pathi after their respective pilgrimages. The entire interaction took place in front of the said deity. Both of them parted after agreeing so.

After some time Bhu:pathi became reluctant to give his daughter to Gopal das, as he was poor. He hurriedly finished his pilgrimage, returned to his village and started to search for a suitable match for his daughter. One fine day Gopal das came to Bhu:pathi's house. Bhu:pathi shrewdly refused to recognize Gopal das. Poor Gopal das innocently made an effort to make Bhu:pathi remember him by telling about their agreement in front of the Lord Krishna, in Brundavanam. Bhu:pathi refused to acknowledge their agreement and started to abuse Gopal das in various ways.

Being offended by the attitude of Bhu:pathi, Gopal das approached the village council and filed a complaint against Bhu:pathi. The village council summoned Bhu:pathi and questioned him about the agreement between him and Gopal das. Cunning Bhu:pathi said that, as he had never seen Gopal das before, there was no possibility of any sort of agreement between them. Hence the village council asked Gopal das if there was any eyewitness to their agreement. To that Gopal das said "Lord who was present in that temple

was the only witness to their agreement.” After listening to Gopal das the members of the village council asked Gopal das to fetch the said deity to substantiate the said agreement.

Gopal das was very strongly devoted to the Lord and was confident of fetching the Lord Krishna. He immediately proceeded to *Brundavanam* to fetch the Lord to bear evidence to the said agreement. He approached the said deity, humbly submitted the entire thing to Lord Krishna in that deity form. He further requested Lord Krishna to come with him to confirm their agreement. The all merciful Lord Krishna started to speak to Gopal das in that deity form and told that, as He was in a deity form He could not move from that place. To that Gopal das said that the Lord was omnipotent and can do any thing if he wills to do. Gopal das once again pleaded the Lord to act as he had requested earlier.

Lord Krishna was moved by the pleas of Gopal das and agreed to go with him as a witness to the agreement. Lord Krishna said that He would follow Gopal das until Gopal das turns back to make sure that the Lord is following him. Lord further told that He would become a still deity at the place where Gopal das turns back to make sure that He is following him. Gopal das was overjoyed to listen to the Lord. He started to proceed towards Bhu:pathi's village. The Lord also started to follow him with the tinkling sounds springing from the bells of His lotus feet. All through the way Gopal das was listening to those

tinkling sounds. He was careful enough not to turn back to see whether the Lord was following him or not.

However, as soon as Gopal das reached the outskirts of the said village he could not listen to the tinkling sounds of the bells any more. He was worried. He forgot the condition set by the Lord for a moment and turned back to make sure that the Lord was following him. To his astonishment he saw the Lord in the form of a deity just behind him. The Lord stood motionless and refused to move towards the village or speak to Gopal das. Gopal das was amazed. He ran toward the village and reported everything to the villagers. All the villagers rushed to see the Lord with various articles of worship and glorified the Lord in various ways. Bhu:pathi realized his folly and happily gave his daughter in marriage to Gopal das.

In the course of time a big temple was constructed to the Lord and a small town sprung up around the temple. The Lord in that form became reputed as Sakshi Gopala or as Saki Gopal. Sakshi means witness and Gopala is one of the names of the Lord. The town is also named after the Lord. One can see the said deity even today, near Puri.

The omnipresent Lord is present with His full potential even in the deity form. He interacts with His sincere devotees who are devoted and have full faith in Him.

Hence let us not consider the deity form of the Lord to be a mere stone and let us enhance our faith in His deity form.

