

THE DESCENT OF RADHA-KRISHNA TO GOLAK DHAM BRINDABAN



Shree -Shree Radha-Krishna
[Boy Krishna and young girl Radha]
(Courtesy; Pinterest. Royalty-Free)

This is the story of how Radha and Krishna came down to Braj Brindaban from Golak {Celestial Abode), to be born among the pastoral people of Braj – an area around Mathura, Brindaban, Agra, Etah etc., speaking a western Hindi, known as *Braj Bhasa*.

This is the story of how they became separated from one another for one hundred years after their short encounter in Brindaban, because of a curse that Shree Dham (a devotee of Krishna) hurled against Radha. Krishna left Brindaban at the age of 11 for Madhupur [Mathura]. He never came back. It is also the narrative of how Radha and Krishna met after one hundred years, briefly, before they returned to Golak to be united forever.

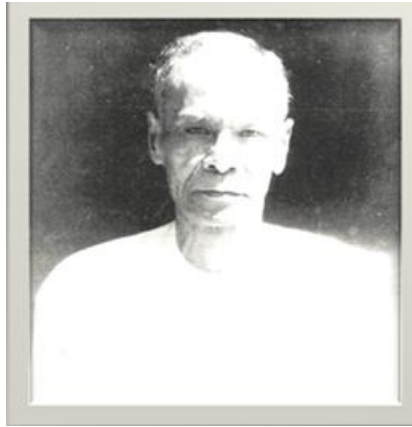
According to Vaishnavism, Radha is never separate from Krishna. The bond of love between Radha and Krishna was not physical, rather it was a spiritual and a pure form of devotion.

INTRODUCTION

As I was getting a bit long in the tooth and having a lot of time to prance and caper about, I began reading a few Manipuri books including one that my father translated into Manipuri from Bhagavad purana (written in Sanskrit, probably between 5th and 10th centuries of Christian Era). It was named *Radha Krishna anina golakdhamda lengkhiba* (The descent of Radha Krishna to Golakdham [Brindaban]).

I also read Bhagavad Gita or the Song of the Lord (Bhagavad = Lord, used as an epithet of Krishna Bhagwan; Gita = song). It was a long time ago when I was doing research in theology

in search of God. That research developed into a thesis statement addressing the groundwork question, “Where is God”? I published them in book forms in Delhi. The first was entitled, My Search for God (2003) and the second, Quest Beyond religion (2006). The last one had been kept in the Parliament Library in Delhi, where my wife and I had the honour to be invited by the Librarian at that time and were taken round to see the huge library.



My father Irengbam Gulamjat Singh, a Vaishnav, translated this essay from Sanskrit to Manipuri in 1970.

Gita is partly philosophical and partly devotional. The *Gita* (English translation) I liked best was *Essays on the Gita* by Victor Gollanz (1938). I read the 6th edition with annotations by Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950 CE), which was published by Aurobindo Ashram in Puducherry in 2014. I bought a copy in 2015 when my wife and I visited the Ashram, both old and new.



(L) Aurobindo Ashram (Old), Entrance at the far end, Puducherry.
(R) Aurobindo Ashram (New), The Golden Globe, meditation Hall,
Puducherry 2015

I was not a religious person as a boy. I became more irreligious as an adult, after studying many books on religion, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Bible, Quran, and so on, I read more of the Bible as it is the most scientifically studied book. None of these could satisfy me with a rationality about the existence of God. So, I went back to square one.

I became an established non-believer. I am probably the first Meitei, who declares to be an atheist/agnostic like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. My dear friend, the late Khuraijam Dharendra Singh, an agricultural scientist, declared that he became agnostic since he read my book.

I am a scientist/philosopher in the sense that I try to arrive at reasoned opinions on any subject as seen from a large perspective. The nature of science is concerned with the probability or improbability, rather than proving or not proving.

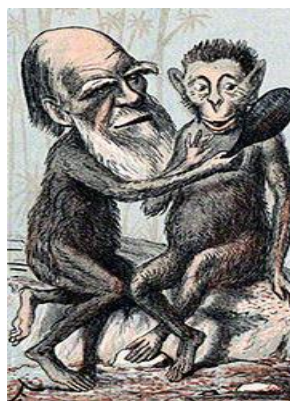
People who believe in the non-existence of God, or Atheists, existed as far back as the 5th century BCE, such as the Greek and Roman philosophers: Epicurus, Democritus and Lucretius and many others.

In the 17th century CE, the Dutch philosopher Spinoza was a very interesting figure. He wrote: "the Bible was not a book filled with scientific or philosophical knowledge but was primarily written to teach the masses obedience. In that lies its divinity."

The French philosopher Voltaire in the 18th Century CE, was another highly intellectual philosopher. He wrote: "The idea of a God is derived from feeling. God is somehow a source of consolation and hope in the face of a terrible suffering."

As people began to think about *the origin of life* (non-God origin), a new science of Biology towards evolution began to lure more and more students from mathematics and physics in the 17th century. This new science was discouraged as it could not solve its initial problem of *the origin of life*.

Equally mysterious and almost as baffling was the *process of reproduction of offspring*. That is the process by which organisms replicate themselves. The year 1859 saw the climax of modern biology when Darwin published his book, *On the Origin of Species* and his *theory of Natural selection*, to great international interest.



Caricature of Charles Darwin: a monkey with his own human head. He holds up a mirror up to another monkey which is sitting next to him. (Courtesy: Fargo's sketch. London. 18 Feb 1874)

After the publication of his book, Darwin had a very agonized time. Not surprisingly, the public during the Victorian era did not believe him. They made fun of him. Darwin took 20 years

before he published his book as he was afraid of the reaction it might provoke among the scientific community and of damaging his reputation.

It was only in 1876 CE that a German doctor/zoologist observed under the microscope, the actual reproduction when two gametes viz., sperm and egg united to replicate the same species.

Over the centuries many attempts were made to show that living matter could be generated spontaneously from nonliving matter. It was only in the late 20th century that it was experimentally proven to do so that life began 3.8 to 3.55 billion years ago from the *Primordial Soup* containing all the ingredients necessary to the origin of life. (cf. Author's Book, *Quest Beyond Religion, The Origin of life*, 2006, pp 2006-273, ISBN – 81-220-0713-9, Amazon).

Though I am outside the territory of faith, and against organised religions, I am still attached to Hinduism, with which I was born and brought up. As Voltaire pointed out, even Jesus unlike St Paul remained attached to Judaism despite his criticism of the Pharisees (Lawyer group of Jews).

Man replaced God for many, as the spiritual horizon began to shrink through is still present. By the end of the 19th century, religion was failing everywhere, because of industrialization, which depended on scientific methods.

But religion survived as purely materialistic rewards did not satisfy human beings. They felt the need for spiritual resources to help in their self-esteem, hope, joy, and love of living.

In this book, which is being serialized, I am merely doing a literal translation of my father's book *The Descent of Radha-Krishna to Golak Dham Brindaban* without my views on them except for those in Box brackets, maps, and images. They are meant for clarity of the text that was written in prose-poetry.

There are many books on Krishna. The stories vary in many ways. The best I find are the Bhagavad Gita and Bhagavad Purana. My father translated his book from Bhagavad Purana in Manipuri from its Sanskrit text, which was composed by Ved Vyas. It is about *Vaishnavism*, which is full of myths.

Mythology is a very essential part of Hinduism. It permeates the whole life of Hindus as a controlling power in their everyday life. Indeed, I find mythology as a part of all religions. To mention a couple. Jesus' walking on water or turning water into red wine twice.

Hindu books were written eons ago for the illiterate teeming mass of Indians, who worshipped the Sun as a god, and Tulsi plant (Indian Balsam) as goddess, to teach them morality and the distinction between right and wrong, or good and bad behaviour.

The Hindu mythological fables like Jesus's parables had done very well in educating the Indians in morality and influencing them in their social, cultural, and political life. They are their devotional working philosophies in the free-floating atmosphere of parables.

As this narrative in a prose-poetry genre, which I am translating is also a part of Hindu mythology, I feel it prudent to write a few lines about Hinduism as introduction. There are four sects of Hinduism: Saivism, Shaktism, Vaishnavism, and Smartism (worshipping all Hindu gods).

Among many, Mahabharat contains both early and fully formed mythological stories, in keeping with mankind's effort to know the world around him. So are the stories of Krishna and Radha, which were written in the puranas and epics.

Krishna became well-known after the epic Battle of Mahabharat. He was then in his early thirties. The city of Dwarka where he ruled for 36 years, during which the Mahabharat War took place, seems real as it has recently been discovered, submerged under the sea.

Talking of another great Hindu epic of Ramayana in the context of Mythologies, it is no exception. There are myths in Ramayana, though most Hindus regard the existence of Ram as historical. It is the story of chivalry, truth, and love, whilst Ram remains the philosophical Absolute.

Gauria Vaishnavism with its vast array of myths, which this series entertains, is a devotional stream of Hinduism. It teaches its followers to worship one Supreme God, Vishnu (Swayam Bhagwan). This extends to his ten Avatars (Incarnations) that include Krishna (The 8th Avatar).

Many Meiteis became Vaishnavs during the reign of king Pamheiba (Gharib Nawaz) in 1717. In Vaishnavism, Radha is known as a mediator without whom access to Krishna Bhagwan is not possible. The idol worship of Radha-Krishna is accepted as the tangible physical interpretations of God (Vishnu).

Vaishnavism is a Vedic tradition. There are two kinds: *Gauria Vaishnavism* (12th -16th century CE), popularised by Chaitanya in Navdeep in north India. In this sect of Hinduism, Radha's selfless devotion to Krishna is the perfect kind of bhakti.

The other is *Tantric Vaishnavism* that originated in Tamil Nadu (7th-10th century CE) in south India, founded by Sankara and Ramanuja. They worship Narayan (another form of Vishnu). The followers are known as Pancharatas.

Vaishnavism is not very popular in south India as Shaivism with Shiv (South Indian god) is their main sect of Hindu religion.

Despite my best efforts, I still cannot find out why Shiv is associated with smoking Ganja (Marijuana) in his Chillum. Probably to help in his meditation. A bit like Jeenat Aman, singing with her chillum, *Dum Maro Dum, Mit jaaye ghum, bolo shuba sham, Hare Krishna Hare Ram* in the late Dev Anand's film, *Haré Rama Haré Krishna*.

That Krishna became the most popular god of the Vaishnav cult was due to a revival of Hinduism with Bhakti movement in the 8th century CE. It was to counteract the flourishing

tide of Buddhism over Hinduism about the time of Ashoka 9c. 304-232 BCE) when Hindu Brahmins stopped eating cows. The movement succeeded in pushing Buddhism out of India, like a foreign religion.

Debonair Krishna in his 30s, became very popular as he played a very dominant role in the Mahabharat War, especially with his Gita. In more modernity, he was made more popular by Jayadeva from Odisha (12th century), Rajput Mirabai (15th century) and Bengali Chaitanya (16th century). The cult became very complex and increased the arrogance of the Brahmins and their hubris.

Krishna became the most popular Hindu god. He is handsome, dashing, frivolous and very smart. No wonder then, many girls like Radha and Chandrabali were ready to die for him. He has a dark skin like Shiv, as he belongs to an indigenous pastoral tribe of Yadav. Krishna came from Sanskrit Krsna, meaning black. It is for aesthetic perception that he is almost always painted greyish blue or dark cloud rather than black.



Mirabai Temple in Chittorgarh
(Courtesy: The British Library)

Birthplace of Chaitanya, Navdeep
(My own photograph)

In this text I am transliterating, there are many Sanskrit words that I have laboured to translate into English. If some are a bit deviant, here is my apology.



Gokul Village, where Krishna was brought up.
(Photo taken in 1980s when I visited it). In a room on the right, there was a cradle, believed to have cradled baby Krishna.

Still a village. I don't know why a large painting of Shiv is there