**Demons in Goloka**

(from Kåñëa-saìgati: Meetings with Kåñëa, by Çivaräma Swami. Kåñëa in Våndävana Vol. 3)

I shall now introduce a fascinating aspect of Kåñëa’s aprakaöa-lélä described by Çréla Sanätana Gosvämé in Çré Båhad-bhägavatämåta. Sanätana points out that all the features of the prakaöa-lélä are also present eternally in Kåñëa’s aprakaöa-lélä, even up to the killing of demons. He also points out that in the aprakaöa-lélä, Kåñëa’s associates forget those pastimes. That forgetfulness serves as an elixir to make the eternally recurring pastimes appear to the residents of the dhäma as if they are happening for the first time, every time.

This concept expands our understanding of how in the spiritual world there are no demons, of how Kåñëa never leaves his associates, and of how pastimes in the spiritual world are eternal.

Çréla Bhaktisiddhänta Sarasvaté Öhäkura, in his commentary on Brahma-saàhitä 5.2, quotes Çréla Sanätana Gosvämé and Çréla Jéva Gosvämé to verify that all the pastimes of the aprakaöa-dhäma appear in the prakaöa-dhäma. And in the Öhäkura’s commentary to verse 37, he goes on to say: “Those pastimes that manifest themselves on the mundane plane are his visible pastimes. All those pastimes exist in their non-visible forms in Goloka beyond the ken of mundane knowledge.”

A knowledgeable reader may think, “Well and good. We know that many of Kåñëa’s terrestrial pastimes, like the räsa dance, go on eternally in Goloka.”

But in Çré Båhad-bhägavatämåta, Çréla Sanätana Gosvämé surprises his readers by narrating unexpected aprakaöa-léläs, like the chastisement of Kaàsa, Käliya, Pütanä, and others. And most important to the readers of Kåñëa-saìgati, Çréla Sanätana describes how Akrüra comes to Våndävana and takes Kåñëa to Mathurä, not only once but repeatedly, without limit. Thus, Sanätana explains, in aprakaöa-lélä Kåñëa leaves Våndävana, again and again. [Båhad-bhägavatämåta 2.6–7]

How is this possible? How can Sanätana Gosvämé’s statement, that there are demons in Goloka, be reconciled with Çréla Prabhupäda’s? Çréla Prabhupäda said, “So in the spiritual world there is no facility for the demons. Therefore when Kåñëa likes to fight… he comes to this material world.” [In a lecture on Bhagavad-gétä 13.4, 12 August, 1973, Paris, Çréla Prabhupäda repeatedly emphasised the same point: “There are no demons in Vaikuëöha.” When Kåñëa wants to fight he has to come to the material world. In his purport to Çrémad-Bhägavatam 3.16.26, Prabhupäda paraphrases the opinion of the äcäryas: “It is to be understood that there was a plan in the cursing of the Lord’s devotees in Vaikuëöha, and this plan is explained by many stalwart authorities. The Lord sometimes desires to fight… but in the Vaikuëöha world there is no enemy because everyone is engaged fully in His service. Therefore He sometimes comes to the material world as an incarnation in order to manifest His fighting spirit.”] Furthermore, the Brahma-saàhitä [Brahma-saàhitä 5.5] describes how the spiritual sky is protected by ten tridents that prevent from entering those who want to enter Goloka “without the grace of Kåñëa.” How can this statement be reconciled with Sanätana’s?

Before discussing Çréla Sanätana Gosvämé’s answer, let us examine a statement by Çréla Bhaktisiddhänta Sarasvaté Öhäkura. He describes the prakaöa-lélä as being a “variant manifestation” of aprakaöa-lélä. [Ibid., 5.37, purport] The implication is that the pastime of killing demons in the material world is but a variation of a similar pastime in Goloka.

In short, unlike the material world, where the conditioned souls, overcome by desire and hate, become antagonistic to Kåñëa, [Bhagavad-gétä 7.27] there is no such rebellious spirit in the aprakaöa-dhäma. Thus there is no fertile ground, no “facility” for the demons to exist in the Goloka of the spiritual sky. Yet by the grace of Kåñëa, the forms of demons appear briefly in aprakaöa-dhäma to give Kåñëa pleasure. And because Kåñëa’s pastimes are eternal, the same pastimes happen repeatedly—forever.

A more detailed analysis of this understanding is as follows:

In his Dig-darçiné commentary on Çré Båhad-bhägavatämåta, Çréla Sanätana Gosvämé admits that the concept of Kåñëa’s repeatedly killing demons in Goloka “may confuse a person.” [Båhad-bhägavatämåta 2.6.356] To remove this confusion, Sanätana answers two questions. How can demons appear in Goloka? And how can the same pastimes happen there repeatedly?

To answer the first question, Sanätana says that Kaàsa and other enemies join Kåñëa’s eternal pastimes for the same reason as do his associates—to facilitate his enjoyment. Unlike in the prakaöa-dhäma, where Kaàsa and other demons are residents of earth who make life miserable for devotees until Kåñëa finally kills them, in the aprakaöa-dhäma these demons are made to appear by Yogamäyä, only at the times they are needed in Kåñëa’s pastimes. The demons have no permanent residence in Goloka, and they are not recruited from the residents of the aprakaöa-dhäma. They are products of Yogamäyä’s energies. [Ibid., 2.6.209]

An example of Yogamäyä’s manufacturing of demons is described in Änanda-våndävana-campü (18.40–44). There Çréla Kavi Karëapüra describes an incident preceding the räsa dance, in which Kåñëa left the gopés. At that time, in an intense mood of separation, the gopés acted out many of Kåñëa’s pastimes, including the killing of demons.

Clearly, the role of demons was not in harmony with the gopés’ loving mood. Therefore, Yogamäyä created gopés imbued with the mood of demons to enact the role of demons like Pütanä, Çakaöäsura, and Tåëävarta. When the gopés had finished acting out Kåñëa’s killing of the demons, the gopé “demons” created by Yogamäyä disappeared.

Yogamäyä performs similar magical feats in the aprakaöa-dhäma. She temporarily manifests demons for the pleasure of Kåñëa and his devotees. Then Kåñëa kills them, and when he is inclined to fight again, or when his devotees desire to see such pastimes, Yogamäyä again manifests them by her inconceivable power.

I have tried to explain how “demons” exist in Goloka. I shall now try to clarify how the pastimes, like demons being killed, can recur, and how Kåñëa’s associates can forget those recurring events.

Unlike the prakaöa-lélä where, for example, Kåñëa kills Kaàsa only once, in the aprakaöa-lélä that pastime is eternal. It happens repeatedly, without cessation. Although “the Goloka-väsés still think that demons have been there and are likely to come back soon,” [Båhad-bhägavatämåta 2.6.209] a form of Kaàsa appears only when needed for Kåñëa’s pastime. That form has no permanent physical presence in the dhäma. In other words, Kaàsa is not an eternal resident of Goloka, but he repeatedly appears whenever Kåñëa’s pastimes require his presence.

And every time Kåñëa desires to kill Kaàsa, Kåñëa must leave Våndävana to go to Mathurä. Accordingly, Akrüra repeatedly comes to Nandagräma and eternally re-enacts the tearful drama of taking Kåñëa and Balaräma out of Våndävana. Then, after Kaàsa’s death, when Kåñëa hears of the Vraja-väsés’ sorrow in his absence, he quickly returns to Våndävana to give them back their lives. Like his departure from Våndävana, Kåñëa’s return to Våndävana is re-enacted each time Kaàsa is killed.

The influence of prema and the actions of Yogamäyä cause the Goloka-väsés to forget the past events of Kåñëa’s fighting with demons—or, for that matter, any of the eternally recurring pastimes in Goloka. Thus, each time a pastime is repeated, it seems to the Vraja-väsés completely new, as if they had never seen it or heard of it before.

And even more wonderful is that Kåñëa, by the influence of his Yogamäyä, cannot always remember what he has done and what he is going to do next. [Ibid., 2.6.361]

I shall mention one last feature of the aprakaöa-lélä before I discuss how Kåñëa’s associates enter the prakaöa-lélä.

In previous paragraphs, I have cited Çréla Sanätana Gosvämé’s explanation of how Kåñëa leaves aprakaöa Våndävana to kill Kaàsa. Yet, there are many statements that seem to contradict Sanätana’s, [Çréla Rüpa Gosvämé writes in Laghu-bhägavatämåta (1.5.485): “Although in his prakaöa pastimes the Lord is sometimes briefly absent, in his aprakaöa-dhämas, he eternally enjoys pastimes in all three abodes [and is never absent].” Çrémad-Bhägavatam 11.31.24 begins, nityaà sannihitas tatra: “Lord Madhusüdana, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is eternally present in Dvärakä…”] among which is the following: “Kåñëa, the son of Nanda Mahäräja, never at any time leaves Våndävana.” [Yämala Tantra] These statements stress that Kåñëa never leaves his aprakaöa-dhäma. How is this apparent contradiction resolved?

The first step in answering this question is to accept that both statements are true. Kåñëa never leaves aprakaöa Vraja, and he repeatedly leaves to kill Kaàsa.

The next step is to examine more closely what Kåñëa’s being “eternally present” in aprakaöa Vraja means, and what his “leaving” Våndävana means.

As already discussed, our experience of Kåñëa “leaving” is based on what takes place in the manifest lélä. When Kåñëa leaves prakaöa Vraja, he enters into aprakaöa Vraja, and Väsudeva-Kåñëa, who is known as a resident of Dvärakä, occasionally returns for visits. At those times, Çyämasundara appears from his aprakaöa-dhäma and Väsudeva merges into him. Thus Çyämasundara appears to return. Finally, when the manifest lélä comes to an end, Kåñëa leaves prakaöa Vraja and enters his unmanifested dhäma.

Kåñëa’s leaving Våndävana in the prakaöa-lélä means that he gives up his status as a Vraja-väsé. In that sense he really leaves Våndävana.

The picture in aprakaöa Vraja, however, is different. In aprakaöa-lélä Kåñëa lives forever in Våndävana, giving bliss to his associates. When he leaves, it is only occasionally, to answer the call of duty. But he quickly returns to resume his pastimes of a cowherd. In other words, in aprakaöa-lélä Kåñëa is eternally a resident of Våndävana, a Vraja-väsé, who occasionally visits other places.

In that sense, if we compare Kåñëa’s “leaving” in the prakaöa-lélä with that of his leaving in the aprakaöa-lélä, in aprakaöa Kåñëa never really “leaves” Våndävana; he simply goes out to visit and immediately comes back.

In short, since the aprakaöa Vraja is eternal, even if Kåñëa briefly leaves to go to Mathurä, he at once returns. In that sense he is eternally present in Våndävana, and never leaves. The same can be said for Kåñëa’s eternal comings and goings in aprakaöa Mathurä and Dvärakä. He actually remains a resident of those aprakaöa-dhämas, although he may occasionally leave to perform some special duty.

This picture of the aprakaöa-dhäma and aprakaöa-lélä incorporates the duality of the prakaöa sphere. Dualities such as fear for Kåñëa’s safety from demons, the relief that comes from his killing them, the pain which results in separation from Kåñëa, the happiness in being reunited with him, and so on, are inherent parts of the prakaöa-lélä. But from the vision of one within the aprakaöa-lélä, although these same dualities may seem to exist, they exist in a purified, transcendental form, fully under the jurisdiction of Kåñëa’s internal potencies and free of all inebriating characteristics of the mundane world.

This dynamic diversity increases the mutual love between Kåñëa and his associates. In this way, Kåñëa’s eternal pastimes, composed of eternity, knowledge, and bliss, serve Kåñëa’s lotus feet. They follow Kåñëa wherever he goes and provide the suitable entourage and paraphernalia he needs, in the prakaöa or aprakaöa realms.