

PORTLAND, OREGON, SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 21, 1915.

He Had 16,000 Wives and Was Happy!



Once as Krishna was playing the flute a number of beautiful women came to play and dance with him, but as all these women could not hold Krishna's hand as they danced he multiplied himself into as many forms as there were women, each woman believing she held the hand of the true Krishna.



THE European war put a damper on the recent annual celebration of Indian natives in honor of Krishna, a deified hero who, according to his Hindu followers, out-Solomoned Solomon in the number of his wives. Krishna, so they say, had no less than 16,100 life partners: And he was happy!

With many of their loved ones facing death on far-removed battlefields, the worship of the natives at the Temple of Puri in Orissi was confined mostly to prayers for their safety, rather than to the rites which Dr. W. W. Hunter once termed "licentious." Even the innermost sanctuaries of the temple, where "the mystic songs" of Jayadeva and the "ocean of love" were wont to play an important part in the voluptuous ceremonies, breathed a more spiritual atmosphere.

"The most deplorable corruption of Vishnu worship," observes Dr. Hunter, "is that which has covered the temple walls with indecent sculptures and filled its innermost sanctuaries with licentious rites," yet "it is difficult for a person not a Hindu to pronounce upon the extent of the evil. None but a Hindu can enter any of the larger temples, and none but a Hindu priest really knows the truth about their inner mysteries."

Some Interesting New Commentaries on Krishna, Eighth of the Incarnations of the God Vishnu, and Who, if Indian Folklore Is to Be Believed, Out-Solomoned Solomon Twenty to One

Krishna was, as the scholars tell us, the eighth and most celebrated of the ten chief incarnations of the god Vishnu.

Krishna, say the doctors, is the most renowned demigod of the Indian folklore and the most famous in Indian history. It is probable that when the story of his life is stripped of its mythological incidents it will be found that he was a historical personage who belonged to the Aryan race when they were making their gradual inroads south and west in the peninsula of India, and the enemies he attacked and subdued, the Turanian races, who constituted the aborigines of the country, and who, fighting fiercely in their primeval forest, came to be magnified into gods and demigods.

A noted scholar once said jestingly that if the men of modern times were possessed of the powers attributed to Krishna half of them would be bigamists. Asked to explain further, he said: "Krishna acquired his many wives after conquering Naraka, the King of Prayjyotisha, and slaying all his forces. In the women's apartment of

the palace he found 16,100 damsels, and at an auspicious moment received the hands of all, according to the ritual, in separate houses. Into so many forms did Krishna multiply himself that each of the damsels thought he had wedded her in his single person, and he abode severally in the dwelling place of each of his wives."

Multiplication and division seemed to be the favorite pastime of Krishna, relates Hindu legend. Once as he was playing the flute a number of beautiful women came to play and dance with him, but as all these women could not hold Krishna's hand as they danced he multiplied himself into as many forms as there were women, each woman believing she held the hand of the true Krishna.

His favorite wife was Radha. It is she whose name is ever associated with Krishna in hymns, songs, prayers and pictures.

The love of Krishna for Radha, and vice versa, makes that of Romeo and Juliet a purely platonic friendship in comparison. Many scholars say that nowhere in myth-

ology or actual history is the divine passion so manifest as in the lives of this couple. The reciprocal attraction is beautifully described in the tenth book of the *Bhagavat*, and is the subject of the appealing pastoral drama, entitled *Gita Govinda*, by Jayadeva, who wrote before our era.

We shall quote some passages from this beautiful poem. The reader will occasionally call to mind that some of the effusions must be received not literally but emblematically, as in the mystical poetry of other people.

The following is the tender lamentation of Radha for her lord:

"Though he takes recreation in my absence, and smiles on all around him, yet my soul remembers him whose languishing reed modulates an air, sweetened by the nectar of his quivering lips, while his ear sparkles with gems, and his eye darts amorous glances—him whose locks are decked with the plumes of peacocks, resplendent with many-colored moons, and whose maple gleams like a dark blue-cloud

illuminated with rainbows—him whose graceful smile gives new luster to his lips, brilliant and soft as a dewy leaf—sweet and muzzy as the blossoms of *Bandhujiva*.

"My weak mind thus enumerates his qualities; and though offended strives to banish his offense. What else can it do? It cannot part with its affection for Krishna. Bring, O my sweet friend, that vanquisher of the demon Kesi, whose discourse was once composed of the sweetest words, to converse with me, who am bashful on his first approach, and express my thoughts with a smile as sweet as honey. Bring him who formerly drew me by the locks to his embrace, whose feet tinkle as they move with rings of gold and gems, whose loosened zone sounds as it falls, and whose limbs are as slender as the creeping plant.

"That god, whose cheeks are beautiful by the nectar of his smiles, whose pipe drops in ecstasy from his hand, I saw in the grove encircled by damsels of *Vraja*, who gazed on him—absence from the corners

of their eyes. I saw him in the grove with happier damsels, yet the sight of him delighted me. Soft is the gale that blows over yon clear pool, and extends the clustering blossoms of the voluble *asoca*; soft, yet grievous to me in the absence of the foe of Madhu. Delightful are the flowers of the *Amra*, on the mountain top, while the murmuring bees pursue their voluptuous toll; delightful, yet afflicting to me, O friend! in the absence of the youthful *Kesava*."

Krishna, afflicted by the jealous anger of Radha, exclaims:

"Grant me but sight of thee, oh, lovely Radha, for my passion torments me. I am not the terrible Mahesa; a garland of water lilies, with subtle threads, decks my shoulders, not serpents with twisted folds; the blue petals of the lotos glitter on my neck, not the aure gleam of poison; powdered sandalwood is sprinkled on my limbs, not pale ashes.

"I meditate on her delightful embrace; on the ravishing glances darted from the fragrant lotos of her mouth; on her nectar-dropping speech; on her lips, ruddy as the berries of the *Bimba*."

We must recollect, like the scholars, that the seemingly amorous conflicts of these ardent lovers are mere mythical descriptions of "the reciprocal attraction between the divine goodness and the human soul."

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