

Brother Satyananda
Birth Stories of Jesus Christ and Bhagavan Krishna
Lake Shrine Temple
December 25, 2011

Thank you for joining us on Christmas morning. It's wonderful to have these opportunities, every few years, where we can gather together on a Sunday morning in the Temple and celebrate on Christmas morning. Brother said he thought that maybe Christ would have wanted us to.

Brother went on to say that he'd been asked what he wanted for Christmas. As a swami and a simple guy he said he doesn't need a lot of stuff but that he saw something on the Internet that maybe he could use. It was a personal luxury submarine and that it sounded really cool...that it was probably his kind of gift! Brother described it as about 215 feet in length with 5,000 square feet of space...a chef's kitchen, a dining room with an underwater view; a theatre with surround sound and a gymnasium with a health spa. "Doesn't that sound cool!"

Brother said that, of course, he'd put in a chapel and guest rooms and more guest rooms so his friends could all be aboard and so many more would live next door. That he would be the devil and the band would play "we all live in..." Brother chuckled and said not to get him a submarine, that he could think of better ways to spend 170 million dollars.

Brother then thanked everybody for their kindness and loving generosity this year at Christmastime. With the collection that was taken, the Monk's Ashram was going to buy two beautiful, vinyl, wicker patio chairs with cushions. The Ashram being just below the Retreat is right on Sunset has a small window view of the Pacific from the patio. Now the monks would be able to relax and enjoy watching the sunset from the patio while reading *Whispers From Eternity*. "How's that?"

Christmas Day! Christmas Day! What do we talk about on Christmas Day? It's the birth of Jesus. Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection are often called the greatest story ever told, by Christians. In Self-Realization Fellowship, according to the mission of our founder, Paramahansa Yogananda, it's all about similarities between Christianity and the teachings of Krishna, the ancient teachings of India. There are amazing similarities between the two lives. Our Guru liked to point them out himself, not only in the profound spiritual teachings of the two prophets, but also the parallel events of their lives.

In a lecture that Master gave in 1933 called, *Christ and Krishna: Avatars of One Truth*, he said: "Jesus was called the King of the Jews though his kingdom was not of this world. Krishna was an earthly king, as well as, a divine one. Jesus had women disciples, Mary, Martha and Mary Magdalene, who helped him and played a vital role in his mission. Krishna's women disciples, Radha and the gopis, similarly played divine roles. The destinies of both were prophesied in the scriptures. These two avatars, both Orientals, are generally recognized in the West and East, respectively, as the supreme incarnations of God." Brother said he would like to have some fun this morning and, in his opinion, we'd find it both informative and very interesting to look at the parallels between the birth stories - specifically the birth

stories of Jesus Christ and Bhagavan Krishna.

There are amazing parallels in both stories taken directly from the scriptures of the East and West that we can read about. Brother said that he believes that Luke, in the New Testament, tells the best sequence of events of the birth of Jesus, with a little supplement from Matthew, but mostly the 1st chapter of Luke.

Then from the East we have what's called the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. Bhagavan, as in Bhagavan Krishna; Bhagavatam being the story and life of Krishna. You can find many well annotated translated versions of the Bhagavatam and a good one is by Kamala Subramaniam. In the table of contents is found the "beginning of the life of Krishna".

Brother said that by the time he gets to the end of the comparison we'd be amazed as to how similar they are. There are the parents of Jesus, Joseph and Mary, and the parents of Bhagavan Krishna, Vasudeva and Devaki. In the scriptures of the East and West the parents are extolled as being exceptionally virtuous - a virtuous man and a virtuous woman - and being capable of receiving the presence of God with them. Most scriptures teach the virtue of the parents and there's also a similar current in both scriptures of a pronouncement before the birth.

We know that the Angel Gabriel came to both Joseph and Mary before Jesus was conceived. In the 1st chapter of Luke, Angel Gabriel said to Mary: "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. And he shall be known as the Son of God."

The pronouncement in the time of Krishna was a little different. In the City of Mathura, of ancient times, the parents, Vasudeva and Devaki, were getting married. They had this huge ceremony, a very public event, for their marriage and at the very end of the ceremony when they were departing the temple it is said in the scripture that there was a celestial voice that made a pronouncement to the whole hall that was gathered there. Basically the voice said: "A child will be born to this couple and the child will be a liberator, liberating the oppressed from the evil and lifting up virtuous dharma." This was like a pronouncement of foretelling the birth of Bhagavan Krishna as an avatar. So we have both the virtue of the parents and we have a common divine pronouncement that took place.

The Immaculate Conception is one of the cornerstones of Christianity's view of Jesus as the Son of God, of his divinity. His immaculate conception to the Virgin Mary, and to Christianity, is assumed to be the only time this took place in history but if you look into the scriptures of the East, also the birth story of Krishna there is the concept that Devaki was so virtuous that there was no sexual union to produce the child but that God manifested directly into her womb. And further, if you look into the details of the birth story of Buddha, you find the same thing where the queen, his mother, had a vision of God where she was impregnated divinely without sexual union from that high state.

Whether the mother was a virgin or not, because in Krishna's case there were other children involved, and even historical biblical scholars are fairly certain, that while they cannot find proof that there were

other children of Mary, Jesus wasn't necessary the only child; he was the first but not necessarily the only. So there is this concept of the shared birth stories where prophets manifest miraculously in the wombs of the mothers.

Then there's another parallel where the mothers were pregnant with a prophet child in their wombs and there is this description of glory. Brother explained that he finds it extremely beautiful and emotionally touching where the mothers are described as experiencing great glory, that is great joy, in carrying the vibration of a true, perfected soul within her. It is a joy for a woman to be pregnant, even with the hardships and all that; there is this joy of the divine process taking place. What if there was a prophet within your womb?

In 1st chapter of Luke, again, verse 46, Mary, the pregnant mother of Jesus, and she is singing with great joy about her carrying Jesus as a child. She says: "My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour."

The Śrīmad Bhāgavatam speaks of both Vasudeva and Devaki as experiencing this infusion of divinity. "Lord Narayan, who is the soul of the Universe, entered the mind of Vasudeva and he shone like the noon day sun since the Lord had found abode in him. Devaki received in her the embodiment of auspiciousness since she had become the mother of the Lord of Lords. Like the East glows with the newly risen moon, her form was radiant."

Isn't this mutual acknowledgement of the glory within the form beautiful? There is a mutual blessing of the fathers and mothers of the prophets.

From here Brother continued by saying that now the story gets a little bit dark because wherever there is light in the world of duality there is also darkness. So the evil kings enter stage left.

We know about the evil King Herod, the governor of Jerusalem. He was power hungry and insecure and it is a historical fact that this was so. He, also, had a reputation for great brutality. He even killed his own sons. When his power felt threatened he'd have constant nightmares of losing his power and authority and of being overthrown. He was a tormented man. That was King Herod, the ruler of Jerusalem, at the time of Jesus birth.

At the time of Krishna's birth in the City of Mathura there was also an evil king, called Kamsa. He was devious and clever. He was also extremely insecure and fearful of losing his power as a king. He, too, had dreams and in those dreams had warnings that his evil would attract retribution upon him and that he would be killed, lose his life, his power and his throne.

Both scriptures in the birth story have an evil king that has a part of the drama unfolding as the drama of God. Now we have the two evil kings and we, also, have the wise men, right?

We have the three wise men, the three wise kings, of the Orient coming. Our guru, Paramahansa

Yogananda, says: "Divinely guided by the Star of the East, that is, the spiritual eye, intuitively guiding them to the great prophet that was incarnating on earth." It is told in the Bible and maybe you don't know because it's not part of the common story related that when the wise men arrived in the region of the Holy Land, they first went to visit Herod. [Brother's comment: "I don't know how wise that was!"] These wise men were kings themselves so they probably had protocol to follow. As the story is told in the New Testament, the wise men, the wise kings, went to Herod first and they said: "We have been informed that there is a great birth taking place in your land and we are here to pay homage to it. Are you aware of this?" And Herod said: "No, I didn't know anything about this." Herod then calls a little conference with the astrologers and Hebrew authorities and they confirmed for him that it had been prophesied in the history of the Jewish nation that there would be a birth of a Jewish leader and this birth would take place in Bethlehem.

The three kings were there at that conference and after hearing this they said: "Thank you very much, we are going to Bethlehem." The king said: "Very good. When you find this little baby, please come back and tell me where he is so I can come and worship, too." At that point the three wise men realized that something was wrong. The scriptures tell us that they left the Holy Land, after seeing the child, by another route. So we have the three wise kings on the scene bringing their gifts, paying homage to the Christ child.

In the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam we have rishis, that is, wise sages that also came to King Kamsa, the evil king, and warned him. They said: "King, your ways are evil. Lord Vishnu is about to incarnate. He will overthrow your throne and you will be killed." The rishis did something similar to the three wise men. They fingered Vesudav and Devaki as being the parents. So Kamsa had confirmation that his demise and of the one who would potentially overthrow him was to be born as a child to Vesudav and Devaki. Consequently he had the parents thrown in prison. So we have the parents of Krishna in prison. The Star of the East!

Isn't this amazing! It's cool, isn't it? It gives one a very universal feeling with these birth stories.

The wise men follow the Star of Bethlehem. It shone high and bright on the night of the birth and there were wondrous event that occurred that night and there was "peace on earth and good will towards men that night" say the scriptures.

From the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam it says about the time of Krishna's birth: "The time was auspicious, the star was in the ascent and the planets were in positions from which they showered peace and joy to the world."

It's that cool; it's amazing! There are stars in both stories.

Jesus was born in a stable, a manger, an animal stall and Krishna was born in prison. This was where there was a little drama. But there are parallels even so in the scriptures.

Krishna was born in prison. There are guards guarding the cell. As it's told, the cell is a nice set of rooms that are outfitted securely so they can't get away. The king and his guards were watching Devaki because when she gave birth he was going to kill that baby.

On the night of the birth it is said that Vesudav, the father, received a divine message inwardly from God telling him to take the baby, the prophet baby, to Brindaban and leave it with the head family of the village leader there. Vesudav knew he had to do this but everything was heavily guarded so he didn't know how to do it. The baby was born and there was great rejoicing and joy. Then taking the baby he put it in a basket and this was what happened...

"Vesudeva placed the child in a small wicker basket and covered him with his upper cloth. He held the basket in his hands and looked in despair at the locked prison doors. A miracle was seen. The locks snapped open on their own and the bolted doors swung open. Vesudeva walked into the hall and saw that the guards keeping watch had sunk into a deep sleep. He walked silently without trouble and interference to the banks of the river Yamuna."

In the story, he walked out of the prison to the river Yamuna; crossed the river and went to Brindaban, made his delivery and then returned back to the prison. Then the scriptures of the East tell how in the morning there is a family who now had this little infant and how the cowherds, boys and girls of this rural village who watch over the cattle, came to worship the newborn Krishna. So we have this picture in Brindaban of this little baby, Krishna, lying in his humble bed in this rural village and the cowherds, the boys and the girls, watching and adoring. Doesn't this sound familiar? The adoration of the child!

We have the similar situation, although a little different from the 2nd Ch. of Luke when the shepherds come to adore Jesus. "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round them: and they were sore afraid. And the angels said unto them: 'Fear not because behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.' ...And they came with haste and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger."

We have this beautiful scene of adoration of the infant prophet that we have here on the altar. That could be Krishna, just as well, portrayed now as the baby Jesus with the most humble people of the land...the shepherds, the cowherds, the animals...that adored him...the newborn prophet child. This is told in the scriptures of both East and West.

Remember how Vesudeva was divinely guided to escape with his newborn son, Krishna, so that he might not fall into the hands of the evil King Kamsa. The same thing happened with Joseph. After they left Bethlehem on their way back to Nazareth, Joseph, in his sleep received a dream message from an angel. In the Book of Matthew, 2nd chapter, it tells how the angel came to Joseph and told him to take his family to Egypt. "When they were departed behold the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a

dream, saying: 'Arise, and take young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word for: Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt.'

There is not only the adoration of the child at the time of birth but there is the immediate escape that is by the design of God and guided by God...inwardly in both cases...to the fathers. God came to the fathers and said that their baby boys were in danger and that they needed to escape. Both fathers followed the guidance immediately even though it seemed like a long, arduous journey that would be impossible to make. Little miracles took place and the families escaped.

The story ends on a good note but also a sorrowful note because in both stories the kings lashed out in fear. We know what happened with King Herod. One of the infamous stories in Christianity is the Murder of the Innocents, as it's called in the church, where Herod realized that when the wise kings had not reported back that he had been deceived. He didn't know where the family was. He knew that a new leader of the Jews had been born but didn't know where this baby was. So he legislated that all children under the age of two should be killed and that is what the soldiers, under Herod, carried out as the Murder of the Innocents.

When King Kamsa discovered that the baby had been born and spirited away, he went into a rage. He, also, officially legislated that within the City of Mathura all children that had been born in the past year should be killed. Both churches, East and West, have a way of dealing with this and that is, that the Murder of the Innocents are the first martyrs of the church and gained their liberation through Christ. In the story of Krishna there is justification of the karma involved in the fact that they gave their lives for the birth of the Lord.

The bad news is that the children had to die; the good news is that the prophets survived to carry out their missions and the parallel continues. Isn't that an amazing birth story? There is just one parallel event after another. If you take time to compare the times, the situations, the languages, and the cultures, the details may be a little bit different but the essential events themselves are all there. They all line up correspondingly. You can read about it in the Book of Luke and you can also read about it in the Book of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam .

Because it's Christmas Day, honoring the birth of Jesus, Brother thought it would be "cool" to look at these birth stories and compare. Brother continued by saying that it gives us a feeling of the universality of God's drama. That there's not just one exclusive Son of God; that there are many and in fact, our Guru teaches that we, each one of us, are potentially, perfect sons of God, just like Jesus, just like Krishna. That it is our divine potential within us and that it is part of God's plan in this complex drama.

Even more profound than these parallel events in the birth stories is the parallel essential in the teachings and this was one of the missions of our guru, Paramahansa Yogananda, to show that the truths that came forth from the lives and teachings of these prophets are essentially the same. Our Guru teaches a symbiosis, living trust, and that there is a common origin in Christ Consciousness - Kutastha

Chaitanya.

From Luke, Ch. 6, in the scriptures, Jesus said: "Whosoever heareth my sayings and doeth them is like a man which built a house and laid the foundation upon a rock." And Krishna from Ch. 5: "The yogi engaged in divine union of the soul with Spirit attains bliss indestructible. He rests on the inner Foundations and attains complete liberation in Spirit."

And our Guru's commentary, as always, unites both these messages. Master says: "That devotee who builds his house of consciousness, not on the shifting sands of earthly pleasures, but with the pickax of meditation and God-communion, digs deep to reach the bedrock of intuitive wisdom and builds his house of bliss on the everlasting thought of God's Cosmic Consciousness."

Merry Christmas!