

## ॥ Gopāla Viṁśati ॥



### Gopāla Viṁśati of Śrī Vedānta Deṣika

*Twenty beautiful Verses on Gopāla, the cowherd boy of Vṛndāvana*

Gopāla is a name of Kṛṣṇa and means the cowherd boy of Vṛndāvana. Viṁśatiḥ means twenty. So Gopāla Viṁśatiḥ means the Twenty beautiful Verses on Gopāla, the cowherd boy of Vṛndāvana.

Swami Deṣikan paints a word picture of the incomparable beauty of Śrī Gopāla. He describes the structure of His mantra and affectionately recalls the many mischievous deeds performed by Bāla-Gopāla (the child Gopāl) in Gokula and Brindāvana to the utter delight of the humans and the celestial beings.

Śrī Gopāla Viṁśati must have been very dear to Swami Deṣika as indicated by his inclusion of the twelfth verse of this stotram in his esoteric masterpiece *Sankalpa Suryodayam*. There, he depicts Nārada descending from heaven singing joyously the above verse during his journey to meet Purushan and initiate him into the mahāmantra of the Lord .

May our thoughts be blessed with the delectable experience of Swami Deṣikan! I salute Śrī Vedānta Deṣika prior to attempting to provide an English translation to these bhakti-laden verses dedicated to Śrī Rukmini Satyabhama sameta Rājā Veṅugopāla (The Flute player Gopāla).

॥ गोपाल विंशतिः ॥

॥ gopāla viṁśatiḥ ॥

Invocation

श्रीमान् वेङ्कट नाथार्यः कवितार्किक केसरी ।  
वेदान्ताचार्य वर्यो मे सन्निधत्तां सदा हृदि ।

*śrīmān veṅkaṭa nāthāryaḥ kavītārkika kesarī |  
vedāntācārya varyo me sannidhattām sadā hr̥di |*

Text 1

वन्दे बृन्दावन चरं वल्लवी जन वल्लभम् ।  
जयन्ती संभवं धाम वैजयन्ती विभूषणम् ॥ १ ॥

*vande bṛndāvana caram vallavī jana vallabham |  
jayantī sambhavam dhāma vaijayantī vibhūṣaṇam || 1 ||*

I salute that divine effulgence named Gopāla, who was born on this Śrī Jayanthi day and roamed in the forests of Brindāvanam wearing the unfading garland, known as Vaijayanti, made of wild flowers of the forest. This garland was his characteristic decoration. He enchanted the gopīs of Brindavanam. I salute this illustrious jyoti.

Text 2

वाचां निजाङ्क रसिकां प्रसमीक्षमाणो  
वक्त्रारविन्द विनिवेशित पाञ्चजन्यः ।  
वर्ण त्रिकोण रुचिरे वर पुण्डरीके  
बद्धासनो जयति वल्लव चक्रवर्ती ॥ २ ॥

*vācām nijāṅka rasikām prasamīkṣamāṇo  
vaktrāravinda viniveśita pāñcajanyaḥ |  
varṇa trikoṇa rucire vara puṇḍarīke  
baddhāsano jayati vallava cakravartī || 2 ||*

The Lord of the cowherds, Śrī Gopāla is seated on a yantra in the shape of a eight-petalled lotus. Inside that yantra is yet another yantra in the shape of a triangle. Gopāla-upāsakas seat Him at the center of this inner triangle and enjoy His illustrious beauty. On His lap, they find Sarasvati, the goddess of learning. He blesses Her with His auspicious glances .

He has on His lotus lips the conch known as Panchajanya, whose sound is that of the holy praṇavam symbolizing the essence of the Vedas. (His devotees meditate on Him in this manner and receive His blessings).

Text 3

आम्नाय गन्धि रुदित स्फुरिताघ रोष्टम्  
आस्त्राविलेक्षण मनुक्षण मन्दहासम् ।  
गोपाल डिम्भ वपुषं कुहना जनन्याः  
प्राण स्तनन्धयमवैमि परं पुमांसम् ॥ ३ ॥

*āmnāya gandhi rudita sphuritādha roṣṭam  
āsrāvilekṣaṇa manukṣaṇa mandahāsam |  
gopāla ḍimbha vapuṣaṁ kuhanā jananyāḥ  
prāṇa stanandhayamavaimi param pumāṁsam || 3 ||*

I visualize and revere Śrī Gopāla as the Supreme Lord, who took the form of the child born in the cowherd family. He was not an ordinary baby. As he feigned fear at the sight of the approaching evil Puthana, he alternately cried and smiled. As He cries, his upper and lower lips quivers from the exertion. At that time, his sweet breath carries the fragrance of the Vedas. He also smiled in between his crying spells. His smile was over the thought of what he planned to do next with the deceitful Puthana. He not only helped himself to the poisonous milk from her breast, but also sucked her life through the very same act of responding to her cunning invitation to breast-feed him. He drank at one swoop Puthana's milk and her life force and blessed her this way. This certainly is no ordinary child!

Text 4

आविर्भवत् वनिभृताभरणम् पुरस्तात्  
 आकुञ्चितैक चरणं निभृतान्य पादम् ।  
 दध्ना निमन्थ मुखरेण निबध्द तालं  
 नाथस्य नन्द भवने नवनीत नाट्यम् ॥ ४ ॥

*āvīrbhavat vanibhṛtābharaṇam purastāt  
 ākuñcitaika caraṇam nibhṛtānya pādām |  
 dadhnā nimantha mukhareṇa nibadhda tālam  
 nāthasya nanda bhavane navanīta nāṭyam || 4 ||*

At the house of his parents, Yasodha was strenuously churning milk to produce butter as part of the daily chore. Krishna, the bhāgyam of Yasodha, heard these rhythmical sounds coming from her efforts and began a special dance to amuse her and to receive gobs of butter as a reward. He planted one of his feet firmly and he moved the other foot around in different directions, the gold necklaces, jewellery and the ankle bells on His holy feet producing a most delightful musical sound, which matched the laya patterns emanating from his mother's efforts at churning milk. May that vision of this sweet, butter dance of Lord Gopāla appear before my eyes! (*navanītam* is freshly churned butter mixed with sugar ).

Text 5

हर्तुं कुम्भे विनिहित करः स्वादु हैयङ्ग वीनं  
 दृष्ट्वा दाम ग्रहण चटुलां मातरं जात रोषाम् ।  
 पायादीषत् प्रचलित पदो नाप गच्छन् न तिष्ठन्  
 मिथ्यागोपः सपदि नयने मीलयन् विश्व गोप्ता ॥ ५ ॥

*hartuṁ kumbhe vinihita karaḥ svādu haiyaṅga vīnaṁ  
 dr̥ṣṭvā dāma grahaṇa caṭulāṁ mātaraṁ jāta roṣām |  
 pāyādīṣat pracalita pado nāpa gacchan na tiṣṭhan  
 mithyāgopaḥ sapadi nayane mīlayan viśva goptā || 5 ||*

Here, Swami Deṣikan enjoys the scene just before the Lord is caught by his angry mother in the act of stealing butter from a hidden vessel.

May the special pose that this protector of the Universe, who acted like an innocent child born in the family of cowherds of Gokulam, nurture the inhabitants of his world! His mother normally

stored freshly churned butter in shallow earthen vessels (chattis). Gopāla routinely raided the kitchen and stole this butter. Yasodha thought that she could hide the butter in deep water pots (kumbha) to mislead her child. Gopāla defeated his mother in her efforts to save the butter and won the game. When his mother stepped out of the kitchen for a moment, he put his hands into the pot and helped himself. As he was enjoying himself, his mother arrived suddenly suspecting something was going on behind her back. She saw Gopāla stealing butter again and ran towards him, rope in her hand, to tie him up as punishment.

Gopāla was bewildered by the sight of his angry mother. For a moment, he wanted to run away to escape his mother. He lifted his foot to run. His (feigned) fright at his mother however made him stop. He stood still pretending that he did not know what to do next. He closed his eyes at the thought of the impending calamity of being caught and punished by his mother. He appeared as though he was averting that danger by closing his eyes. It is common for ordinary human beings to close their eyes, when they face serious danger, out of a sense of utter helplessness. Our Lord, who is the protector of His universe adopted this posture as if he was a mere mortal. May the thought of the simplicity that he adapted for this occasion protect all of us in our daily lives!

#### Text 6

ब्रज योषिदपाङ्ग वेधनीयं  
मधुरा भाग्यम् अनन्य भोग्यमीडे ।  
वसुदेव वधू स्तनन्धयं तत्  
किमपि ब्रह्म किशोर भव दृश्यम् ॥ ६ ॥

*vraja yoṣidapāṅga vedhanīyaṁ  
madhurā bhāgyam ananya bhogyamīḍe |  
vasudeva vadhū stanandhayaṁ tat  
kimapi brahma kiśora bhava dṛśyam || 6 ||*

The young girls of Gokulam look at this lovely child of Yasodha with great affection. Their glances enter him like arrows and makes him subservient to them. He is the great fortune of the city of Northern Madhurai (Mathura). He who was born there is the object of delectable experience for the sages, who do not covet anything else in this world. Right from his infancy, when he was breast fed by his natural mother Devaki in the prison, he has been the essence of beauty in all the three worlds. I salute and offer my tribute to this supreme being known as Gopāla.

#### Text 7

परिवर्तित कन्धरं भयेन  
स्मित फुल्लाधर पल्लवं स्मरामि ।  
विटपित्व निरासकं कयोश्चित्  
विपुलोलूखल कर्षकं कुमारम् ॥ ७ ॥

*parivartita kandharam bhayena  
smita phullādhara pallavaṁ smarāmi |  
viṭapitva nirāsakam kayościt  
vipulolūkhala karṣakam kumāram || 7 ||*

I meditate on that child Gopāla, who dragged the big mortar to which he was tied by his angry mother Yasodha. She wanted to teach him a lesson for stealing butter. As Yasodha went away, he checked around to make sure that she was out of sight and then pulled the tied mortar to the garden. He smiled with a sense of satisfaction that he duped his mother once again and his lips were rosy with that joy. He dragged the mortar further and went between two Marutha trees. The shock of the collision with the mortar broke the twin trees and the sons of Kubera, who stood as the trees in the garden of the Lord, got released from their curse and regained their original bodies. I offer my worship to that blessed child, who freed the sons of Kubera from their existence as twin trees.

Text 8

निकटेषु निशामयामि नित्यं  
निगमन्तैरधुनाऽपि मृग्यमाणम् ।  
यमलार्जुन दृष्ट बाल केलिं  
यमुना साक्षिक यौवनं युवानम् ॥ ८ ॥

*nikaṭeṣu niśāmayāmi nityam  
nigamantairadhunā'pi mṛgyamaṇam |  
yamalārjuna dṛṣṭa bāla kelim  
yamunā sākṣika yauvanam yuvānam || 8 ||*

Vedas are still searching for Him; His līlas were seen by the twin Marutha trees in His backyard. Even after they were released from their state as trees, the sons of Kubera did not want to get back to their home, since they wanted to enjoy some more of His Bala Līlas. The river Yamuna, the daughter of Surya was a joyous witness to all his playful deeds that took place on her sandy banks. I see that wonderful young Gopala next to me always. (This is a blessing that Swami Desikan earned as a result of his meditation on Rājā-gopāla.)

Text 9

पदवीम् अदवीयसीं विमुक्तेः  
अटवी संपदम् अम्बु वाहयन्तीम् ॥  
अरुणाधर साभिलाष वंशां  
करुणां कारण मानुषीं भजामी ॥ ९ ॥

*padavīm adavīyasīm vimukteḥ  
aṭavī saṃpadam ambu vāhayantīm |  
aruṇādhara sābhilāṣa vaṃśām  
karuṇām kāraṇa mānuṣīm bhajāmi || 9 ||*

I worship the most merciful Gopāla, who is the root cause of the creation, sustenance and destruction of this universe; He is the one, who revealed to us the easy-to-practise route of Prapatti as the short road to Moksha. He is the rejuvenating, rain-bearing cloud that enhanced the wealth and well-being of the citizens of Brindāvanam. The flute that rests on His red lips during the time of His playing appears to be deeply eager to taste the sweetness of his mouth. I salute this embodiment of mercy known as Veṅugopāla.

Text 10

अनिमेष निषेवणीयमक्षणोः  
अजहद्यौवन माविरस्तु चित्ते ।  
कलहायित कुन्तलं कलापैः  
करणोन्मादक विभ्रमं महो मे ॥ १० ॥

*animesa niṣevaṇīyamakṣṇoḥ  
ajahadyauvana māvirastu citte |  
kalahāyita kuntalam kalāpaiḥ  
karaṇonmādaka vibhramam maho me || 10 ||*

One should enjoy the unchanging and incomparable beauty of the youth, Gopala, with unblinking eyes. When we blink, we lose that moment of this delectable experience. He is wearing the peacock feathers (peelis) in his dark tresses. The "eyes" at the top of each of the peelis decorating his hair seem to compete for the attention of his youthful beauty. When we think of His many playful deeds/pranks as Bālagopāla in Gokulam and Brindāvanam and his blemishless beauty, our minds fall in intense love with Him. Our senses are overpowered. May the overflowing flood of that beauty and its lustre remain steadily in my mind .

Text 11

अनुयायि मनोज्ञ वंश नालैः  
अवतु स्पर्शित वल्लवी विमोहैः ।  
अनघ स्मित शीतलैरसौ माम्  
अनुकम्पा सरिदम्बुजैरपाङ्गैः ॥ ११ ॥

*anuyāyi manojña vaṁśa nālaiḥ  
avatu sparśita vallavī vimohaiḥ |  
anagha smita śītalairasau mām  
anukampā saridambujairapāṅgaiḥ || 11 ||*

Veṅugopāla plays on his flute and creates delightful music and casts his most merciful glances on the Gopīs. They are totally captivated by his friendly smile and the divine music originating from His flute. At this time, His cool and welcoming eyes resemble a pair of just-blossomed lotuses in the river of His mercy (Dayā). May this enchanting youth Gopāla protect me always!

Text 12

अधराहित चारु वंश नालाः  
मकुटालम्बि मयूर पिञ्छ मालाः ।  
हरिनील शिला विभङ्ग नीलाः  
प्रतिभाः सन्तु मम अन्तिम प्रयाणे ॥ १२ ॥

*adharāhita cāru vaṁśa nālāḥ  
makuṭālambi mayūra piñcha mālāḥ |*

*harinīla śilā vibhaṅga nīlāḥ  
pratibhāḥ santu mama antima prayāne || 12 ||*

May the resplendent blue jyoti of Gopāla reminding one of an incomparable blue gem stone (indranīla or blue sapphire), with blue peacock feather decorations on His dark black hair and the divine flute on His lips appear before me during the last moments of my life on this earth.

This is the famous verse sung by Sage Nārada in Sankalpa Suryodayam. The beauty of Venugopāla (The *Flute* player *Gopāla*) and His world-enchancing flute music has been celebrated by Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and Periyazhwaar in particular (Periya Tirumozhi: 3.6)

Text 13

अखिला नवलोकयामि कालान्  
महिलाधीन भुजान्तरस्य यूनः ।  
अभिलाष पदं ब्रजाङ्ग नानाम्  
अबिलापक्रम दूरमाभिरूप्यम् ॥ १३ ॥

*akhilā navalokayāmi kālān  
mahilādhīna bhujāntarasya yūnaḥ |  
abhilāṣa padam vrajāṅga nānām  
abilāpakrama dūramābhirūpyam || 13 ||*

Even in His incarnation as Kṛṣṇa/Gopāla, Śrī Devi is always united with Him. He has left her His chest region as Her place of special residence and enjoyment. He has the eternal and youthful beauty that qualifies Him to play with Her. We are powerless to describe His full beauty. The Gopīs of Gokulam are thirsting to enjoy His beauty. I am blessed to have the vision of this beautiful youth everywhere and at all times .

Text 14

हृदि मुग्ध शिकण्ड मण्डनो  
लिखितः केन ममैष शिल्पिना ।  
मदनातुर वल्लवाङ्गना  
वदनाम्बोज दिवाकरो युवा ॥ १४ ॥

*hr̥di mugdha śikaṇḍa maṇḍano  
likhitaḥ kena mamaīṣa śilpinā |  
madanātura vallavāṅganā  
vadanāmbōja divākaro yuvā || 14 ||*

Which (bold) artist has drawn this picture of this insatiable beauty known as Gopāla in my heart? Who etched this embodiment of beauty wearing the charming peacock feathers in His hair? Which painter painted the picture of this beautiful youth in my heart, who is like the morning Sun to the lotus-like faces of the love-sick Gopīs ?

Text 15

महसे महिताय मौलिना

विनते नाञ्जलि मञ्जनत्विषे ।  
कलयामि विमुग्ध वल्लवी  
वलयाभाषित मञ्जु वेणवे ॥ १५ ॥

*mahase mahitāya maulinā  
vinate nāñjali mañjanatviṣe |  
kalayāmi vimugdha vallavī  
valayābhāṣita mañju veṇave || 15 ||*

I join my hands in Anjali Mudra and lower my head in salutation of that much revered effulgent, dark-hued Jyothi of Gopāla, whose divine flute music joins in conversation as it were with the tālam of Gopīs whose golden bangles that jingle as they keep up with the rhythmic patterns.

Text 16

जयति ललित वृत्तिं शिक्षितो वल्लवीनां  
शितिल वलय शिञ्जा शीतलैर्हस्त तालैः ।  
अखिल भुवन रक्षा गोप वेषस्य विष्णोः  
अधर मणि सुधायां अम्शवान् वंशनालः ॥ १६ ॥

*jayati lalita vṛttim śikṣito vallavīnām  
śitila valaya śiñjā śītalairhasta tālaiḥ |  
akhila bhuvana rakṣā gopa veṣasya viṣṇoḥ  
adhara maṇi sudhāyām amśavān vaṁśanālah || 16 ||*

The incarnation of Vishnu taking the form of a cowherd to protect all the universes has on its coral-red lips the bamboo flute that tastes the nectar of this Gopala's mouth. As he plays the flute on the banks of the Yamuna river during the moon-lit nights, the lovelorn Gopīs engage in rAsa krīḍa with him. The Gopīs beat tālam to the music of their Lord with their cool hands decorated with golden bangles. Their follow-up with taaLam suggests as though they are teaching the abhinayam step known as Laḷitham to the flute of the Lord. [The Abhinaya sastras describe Laḷitham as the gesture, where the dancer places her hands on the appropriate portion of the body and change the movement of her eyebrows to mimic the different rasas. The delectable interplay between the bhāvam, rāgam and tālam - Bharatanatyam - is suggested here as the rāsa krīḍa progresses.]

Text 17

चित्राकल्पः श्रवसि कलयन् लाङ्गली कर्णपूरं  
बर्होत्तंस स्फुरित चिकुरो बन्धुजीवं दधानः ।  
गुञ्जा बद्धा मुरसि ललितां धारयन् हार यष्टिं  
गोप स्त्रीणां जयति कितवः कोऽपि कौमार हारी ॥ १७ ॥

*citrākālpaḥ śravasi kalayan lāṅgalī kaṇṇapūram  
barhottamsa sphurita cikuro bandhujīvaṁ dadhānaḥ |  
guñjā baddhā murasī lalitām dhārayan hāra yaṣṭim  
gopa strīṇām jayati kitavaḥ ko'pi kaumāra hārī || 17 ||*

Gopāla is a roamer of the forest. Hence, he decorates himself with the ornaments appropriate to the dwellers of the forests i.e. natural products available in the forests.

The mischievous Gopāla, who stole the youth of the Gopīs appears before them with many decorations that enhance his beauty. On his ears, the Gopīs find the flower known as Lāngali (flower from the coconut tree's sheaf/ Tennampālai flower); peacock feathers are found by them on his dark and curly tresses; red hibiscus also decorates those tresses. On his broad chest, they find a beautiful necklace made of yellowish-red seeds known as Gunjā or Kunrimani strung together . With these and more ābharanās made of forest products, Gopāla enchants the hearts of the adoring Gopīs.

Text 18

लीलायष्टिं कर किसलये दक्षिणे न्यस्य धन्याम्  
अंसे देव्याः पुलक रुचिरे सन्निविष्टान्य बाहुः ।  
मेघ श्यामो जयति ललितो मेखला दत्त वेणुः  
कुञ्जापीड स्फुरित चिकुरो गोपकन्या भुजङ्गः ॥ १८ ॥

*līlāyāṣṭim kara kisalaye dakṣiṇe nyasya dhanyām  
amse devyāḥ pulaka rucire sanniviṣṭānya bāhuh |  
megha śyāmo jayati lalito mekhalā datta veṇuḥ  
kuñjāpīḍa sphurita cikuro gopakanyā bhujāṅgaḥ || 18 ||*

Lord Gopāla, showing great affection for the Gopīs, stands before them in resplendent attire. He strikes a pose with his tender right hand holding the shepherd's bent stick; his left hand rests on the shoulder of the beautiful Nappinnai; that touch of Gopāla sends shivers of joy over Nappinnai's body. That beautiful Gopāla has tucked his flute inside his waist band and has additional decoration in the form of a chain of Kunrimani beads tied across his own dark hair pulled up in the form of a bun. He shines with his dark blue hue, reminiscent of the clouds in the rainy season and wins over the Gopīs with his formidable beauty. He roams around with great desire for union with Gopīs.

Text 19

प्रत्यालीढ स्थितिमधिगतां प्राप्त गाढाङ्ग पालिं  
पश्चा दीषन्मिलित नयनां प्रेयसीं प्रेक्षमाणः ।  
भस्त्रा यन्त्र प्रणिहित करो भक्त जीवातु रव्यात्  
वारि क्रीडा निबिड वसनो वल्लवी वल्लभो नः ॥ १९ ॥

*pratyālīḍha sthitimadhigatām prāpta gāḍhāṅga pālim  
paścā dīṣanmilita nayanām preyasīm prekṣamāṇaḥ |  
bhasrā yantra praṇihita karo bhakta jīvātu ravyāt  
vāri krīḍā nibiḍa vasano vallavī vallabho naḥ || 19 ||*

Gopāla desirous of performing water sports with the Gopīs tucked tightly his garments. He took in his hands the water pump used in those sports. He approached one of the Gopīs, who was standing with one foot forward in the water and the other planted backward on the land. He surprised her from behind and embraced her tightly. That Gopī was overpowered by that delectable experience

and partially closed her eyes and looked at Gopāla with half-open eyes. He returned her affectionate glances. Their eyes met.

May that Gopāla engaged in water sports with the Gopīs as their lover protect us, since he is the medicine for his devotees suffering from the afflictions of Samsāra.

Text 20

वासो हृत्वा दिनकर सुतासन्निधौ वल्लवीनां  
लीलास्मेरो जयति ललिताम् आस्थितः कुन्द शाखाम् ।  
सव्रीडाभिस्तदनु वसने ताभिरभ्यर्थ्य माने  
कामि कश्चित् कर कमलयोर् अञ्जलिं याचमानः ॥ २० ॥

*vāso hṛtvā dinakara sutāsannidhau vallavīnām  
līlāsmēro jayati lalitām āsthitaḥ kunda śākhām |  
savrīḍābhistadanu vasane tābhirabhyarthya māne  
kāmi kaścit kara kamalayor añjalim yācamānaḥ || 20 ||*

On the banks of the Yamunā river shines the Lord, who is seated on the bow of a kunthā tree with a smile on his face. He is enjoying the prank that he played on the unsuspecting Gopīs, who had left their clothes on the river bank and were engaged in taking morning ablutions. [He wanted to teach them a lesson for breaking the rules of Sāstras, which forbid one from taking bath in the river without wearing a cloth.] Gopāla sneaked up on the crowd of Gopīs deeply absorbed in water sports and took all of their clothes and climbed up the kunthā tree and sat on one of its branch and waited for them to come out of the water. The unaware Gopīs completed their water sports and ablutions and got out of the water and discovered that their clothes were removed by the smiling Gopāla sitting on the adjacent Pinnai (Kuntha) tree. Overcome by modesty, they rushed back into the water and prayed to him to return their clothes. He commanded them to come out of the water with folded hands raised above their hands [as a mark of atonement for the sin of breaking the injunctions of Sāstras]. They had no choice, but to obey him to regain their clothes. May that mischievous Gopāla fond of Gopīs be victorious!

Text 21

इत्यनन्य मनसा विनिर्मितां वेङ्कटेश कविना स्तुतिं पठन्  
दिव्य वेणु रसिकं समीक्षते दैवतं किमपि यौवत प्रियम् ॥ २१ ॥

*ityananya manasā vinirmitām veṅkaṭeśa kavinā stutiṁ paṭhan  
divya veṇu rasikaṁ samīkṣate daivatam kimapi yauvata priyam || 21 ||*

This stotram has been created by the poet Veṅkaṭeśa, who does not consider any God other than Gopāla/ Nārāyaṇa. Those who read and recite this eulogy will have the blessings of the darśanam of the God of incomparable beauty, Veṅugopāla (The *Flute* player *Gopāla*) who was the keen object of desire of youthful gopīs .

॥ स्वामि श्री निगमान्त महा देशिकन् तिरुवदिगले षरणम् ॥

|| svāmi śrī nigamānta mahā deṣikan tiruvadigale ṣaraṇam ||

This is a stotra containing twenty beautiful descriptions and unforgettable pen-pictures of that Darling of Humanity Gopāla -- not the mature Krishna of Mathura, but the Child of Gokula with countless joyous pranks to his credit, and the pre-adolescent boy dallying with the cowheard damsels or the milkmaids of Vṛndāvan.

**Gopāla** or Gopāl is one of Kṛṣṇa's names and means the cowherd boy, so Kṛṣṇa is known as Gopāl-Kṛṣṇa. During Kṛṣṇa's childhood in Vṛndāvana in North India, he grew up as a cow boy/cow herder. He loves cows and took care of them by taking a herd of cows for grazing to forests and green pastures. He protected them from wild beasts. Gopāla is actually a joint name from two words: go + pala. The meaning of go = cow, and the meaning of pala = caretaker or a person who protects and is responsible for the safety of something or someone. Since Gopāla was very fond of playing on his flute, he was called Veṅugopāla. Veṅu means flute -Gopāl's flute-, so Veṅugopāla means The *Flute* player *Gopāla*

Swami Deṣikan was propelled by his deep devotion to visualize Bāla-Gopāla and His pastimes on the banks of Yamunā and Vṛndāvana. He composed this beautiful Stotra under the emotion of Anubhava (bhavanā prakarśam). Swami Deṣikan points out that those who recite this Stotra will be able to visualize the Lord ever dear to the Gopīs in His enchanting form of Veṅugopāla even without the benefit of any bhāvanā-prakarśam.

Swami Deṣikan states that he composed (constructed) this Stotra in a unique manner -- the poetry, the diction, the informing events were all granted to him by Rāja-Veṅugopāla. Swami Deṣikan informs us that the slokas arose from him out of the intensity of the emotional experience associated with the enjoyment of the bliss of visualizing Gopāla enacting these events on the banks of Yamunā and Vṛndāvana. Swami Deṣikan assures us that we will visualize the Lord and His nectarean youthful pranks even without the emotional fervour and investment. Swami Deṣikan pays tribute to this eternal Youth and matchless God.

**Śrī Vedānta Deṣika** - (1269 – 1370) is a great poet, devotee, philosopher and master-teacher belonging to the Śrī Vaishnava sect founded by saint Ramanuja. By the end of 14th century the followers of Saint Ramanuja had split in to Vadakalai and Tenkalai. The followers of the former consider Śrī Vedānta Deṣika as their Acharya (teacher). This great Stotra sings about the greatness of Gopāla (cow herd) and is extremely popular among his devotees. It is said that it was composed in Thiruvahindrapuram by the Acharya overwhelmed by the beauty of the Rājāgopāla idol in the temple. These are usually sung before Thadhiaradhanams (Group partaking of food offered to God) and on the occasion of marriages and on Krishna Jayanthi day in Thiruvahindrapuram.

The translation presented here is a simple literal translation, trying to bring out the beauty of this great stotra rathna. Those who are interested may refer Śrī V.Sadagopan's detailed commentary:

<http://www.sundarasimham.org/ebooks/GopalaVimsati.pdf>  
<http://www.ramanuja.org/sv/acharyas/desika/stotras/gopalavimsati.html>  
[http://www.ibiblio.org/sripedia/ebooks/vdesikan/gopala\\_vimsati/index.html](http://www.ibiblio.org/sripedia/ebooks/vdesikan/gopala_vimsati/index.html)