

## **CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR**

### **Nanda Mahārāja Saved and Śaṅkhacūḍa Slain**

This chapter describes how Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa saved His father Nanda from the clutches of a serpent and delivered a Vidyādhara named Sudarśana from the curse of the Āṅgīrasa sages.

One day Nanda Mahārāja and the other cowherd men placed their family members on their bullock carts and went to the Ambikāvana forest to worship Lord Śiva. After bathing in the Sarasvatī River and worshipping Lord Sadāśiva, a form of Lord Viṣṇu, they decided to spend the night in the forest. As they slept, a hungry serpent came and began to swallow Nanda Mahārāja. Terrified, Nanda cried out in distress, “O Kṛṣṇa! O my son, please save this surrendered soul!” The cowherd men immediately awoke and began beating the serpent with wooden torches, but the serpent would not release Nanda. Then Lord Kṛṣṇa came and touched the serpent with His lotus foot. The serpent was immediately freed from his reptilian body and appeared in his original form as a demigod. He told them about his previous identity and described how he had been cursed by a group of sages. Then he offered his homage at the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and, on the Lord’s order, returned to his own abode.

Later, during the Dola-pūrṇimā festival, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva enjoyed pastimes in the forest with the young women of Vraja. The girlfriends of Baladeva and those of Kṛṣṇa joined together and sang about Their transcendental qualities. When the two Lords became absorbed in singing to the point of apparent intoxication, a servant of Kuvera’s named Śaṅkhacūḍa boldly came forward and began abducting the gopīs. The young girls called out, “Kṛṣṇa, please save us!” and He and Rāma began to chase after Śaṅkhacūḍa. “Don’t be afraid!” Kṛṣṇa called out to the gopīs. In fear of the Lords, Śaṅkhacūḍa left the gopīs aside and ran for his life. Kṛṣṇa chased after him, swiftly approached him and with a blow of His fist removed Śaṅkhacūḍa’s jewel, together with his head. Then Kṛṣṇa brought the jewel back and presented it to Lord Baladeva.

Text 1:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: One day the cowherd men, eager to take a trip to worship Lord Śiva, traveled by bullock carts to the Ambikā forest.

Text 2:

O King, after arriving there, they bathed in the Sarasvatī and then devotedly worshiped with various paraphernalia the powerful Lord Paśupati and his consort, goddess Ambikā.

Text 3:

The cowherd men gave the brāhmaṇas gifts of cows, gold, clothing and cooked grains mixed with honey. Then the cowherds prayed, “May the lord be pleased with us.”

Text 4:

Nanda, Sunanda and the other greatly fortunate cowherds spent that night on the bank of the Sarasvatī, strictly observing their vows. They fasted, taking only water.

Text 5:

During the night a huge and extremely hungry snake appeared in that thicket. Slithering on his belly up to the sleeping Nanda Mahārāja, the snake began swallowing him.

Text 6:

In the clutches of the snake, Nanda Mahārāja cried out, “Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, my dear boy! This huge serpent is swallowing me! Please save me, who am surrendered to You!”

Text 7:

When the cowherd men heard the cries of Nanda, they immediately rose up and saw that he was being swallowed. Distraught, they beat the serpent with blazing torches.

Text 8:

But even though the firebrands were burning him, the serpent would not release Nanda Mahārāja. Then the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa, master of His devotees, came to the spot and touched the snake with His foot.

Text 9:

The snake had all his sinful reactions destroyed by the touch of the Supreme Lord’s divine foot, and thus he gave up his serpent body and appeared in the form of a worshipable Vidyādhara.

Text 10:

The Supreme Lord Hṛṣīkeśa then questioned this personality, who was standing before Him with his head bowed, his brilliantly effulgent body bedecked with golden necklaces.

Text 11:

[Lord Kṛṣṇa said:] My dear sir, you appear so wonderful, glowing with such great beauty. Who are you? And who forced you to assume this terrible body of a snake?

Texts 12-13:

The serpent replied: I am the well-known Vidyādhara named Sudarśana. I was very opulent and beautiful, and I used to wander freely in all directions in my airplane. Once I saw some homely sages of the lineage of Aṅgirā Muni. Proud of my beauty, I ridiculed them, and because of my sin they made me assume this lowly form.

Text 14:

It was actually for my benefit that those merciful sages cursed me, since now I have been touched by the foot of the supreme spiritual master of all the worlds and have thus been relieved of all inauspiciousness.

Text 15:

My Lord, You destroy all fear for those who, fearing this material world, take shelter of You. By the touch of Your feet I am now freed from the curse of the sages. O destroyer of distress, please let me return to my planet.

Text 16:

O master of mystic power, O great personality, O Lord of the devotees, I surrender to You. Please command me as You will, O supreme God, Lord of all lords of the universe.

Text 17:

O infallible one, I was immediately freed from the brāhmaṇas' punishment simply by seeing You. Anyone who chants Your name purifies all who hear his chanting, as well as himself. How much more beneficial, then, is the touch of Your lotus feet?

Text 18:

Thus receiving the permission of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the demigod Sudarśana circumambulated Him, bowed down to offer Him homage and then returned to his heavenly planet. Nanda Mahārāja was thus delivered from peril.

Text 19:

The inhabitants of Vraja were astonished to see the mighty power of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Dear King, they then completed their worship of Lord Śiva and returned to Vraja, along the way respectfully describing Kṛṣṇa's powerful acts.

Text 20:

Once Lord Govinda and Lord Rāma, the performers of wonderful feats, were playing in the forest at night with the young girls of Vraja.

Text 21:

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma wore flower garlands and spotless garments, and Their limbs were beautifully decorated and anointed. The women sang Their glories in a charming way, bound to Them by affection.

Text 22:

The two Lords praised the nightfall, signaled by the rising of the moon and the appearance of stars, a lotus-scented breeze and bees intoxicated by the fragrance of jasmine flowers.

Text 23:

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma sang, producing the entire range of musical sounds simultaneously. Their singing brought happiness to the ears and minds of all living beings.

Text 24:

The gopīs became stunned when they heard that song. Forgetting themselves, O King, they did not notice that their fine garments were becoming loose and their hair and garlands disheveled.

Text 25:

While Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Balarāma thus played according to Their own sweet will and sang to the point of apparent intoxication, a servant of Kuvera named Śaṅkhacūḍa came upon the scene.

Text 26:

O King, even as the two Lords looked on, Śaṅkhacūḍa brazenly began driving the women off toward the north. The women, who had accepted Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma as their Lords, began to cry out to Them.

Text 27:

Hearing Their devotees crying out “Kṛṣṇa! Rāma!” and seeing that they were just like cows being stolen by a thief, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma began to run after the demon.

Text 28:

The Lords called out in reply, “Do not fear!” Then They picked up logs of the śāla tree and quickly pursued that lowest of Guhyakas, who swiftly ran away.

Text 29:

When Śaṅkhacūḍa saw the two of Them coming toward him like the personified forces of Time and Death, he was filled with anxiety. Confused, he abandoned the women and fled for his life.

Text 30:

Lord Govinda chased the demon wherever he ran, eager to take his crest jewel. Meanwhile Lord Balarāma stayed with the women to protect them.

Text 31:

The mighty Lord overtook Śaṅkhacūḍa from a great distance as if from nearby, my dear King, and then with His fist the Lord removed the wicked demon’s head, together with his crest jewel.

Text 32:

Having thus killed the demon Śaṅkhacūḍa and taken away his shining jewel, Lord Kṛṣṇa gave it to His elder brother with great satisfaction as the gopīs watched.