

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO**

### **Kṛṣṇa Steals the Garments of the Unmarried Gopīs**

This chapter describes how the marriageable daughters of the cowherd men worshiped Kātyāyanī to get Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa as their husband, and how Kṛṣṇa stole the garments of the young girls and gave the girls benedictions.

During the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, every day early in the morning the young daughters of the cowherds would take one another's hands and, singing of Kṛṣṇa's transcendental qualities, go to the Yamunā to bathe. Desiring to obtain Kṛṣṇa as their husband, they would then worship the goddess Kātyāyanī with incense, flowers and other items.

One day, the young gopīs left their garments on the shore as usual and began playing in the water while chanting of Lord Kṛṣṇa's activities. Suddenly Kṛṣṇa Himself came there, took away all the garments and climbed a nearby kadamba tree. Wanting to tease the gopīs, Kṛṣṇa said, "I understand how fatigued you gopīs are from your austerities, so please come onto the shore and take back your clothes."

The gopīs then pretended to become angry and said the cold water of the Yamunā was giving them great pain. If Kṛṣṇa did not give them back their garments, they said, they would inform King Kāṁsa of all that had happened. But if He did give the clothes back, they would willingly carry out His orders in the mood of humble servants.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied that He had no fear of King Kāṁsa, and that if the girls really intended to follow His command and be His maidservants they should each immediately come onto the shore and take their respective garments. The girls, trembling from the cold, climbed out of the water with their two hands covering their private parts. Kṛṣṇa, who felt great affection for them, again spoke: "Because while executing a vow you bathed in the water naked, you have committed an offense against the demigods, and to counteract it you should offer obeisances with joined palms. Then your vow of austerity will achieve its full result."

The gopīs followed this instruction and, folding their hands in respect, offered obeisances to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Satisfied, He gave them back their

clothing. But the young girls had become so attracted to Him that they could not leave. Understanding their minds, Kṛṣṇa said that He knew they had worshiped Kātyāyanī to get Him as their husband. Because they had offered their hearts to Him, their desires would never again become tainted by the mood of materialistic enjoyment, just as fried barleycorns can no longer grow into shoots. Next autumn, He told them, their most cherished desire would be fulfilled.

Then the gopīs, fully satisfied, returned to Vraja, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His cowherd friends went off to a distant place to graze the cows.

Sometime later, when the boys felt disturbed by the great heat of summer, they took shelter at the base of a tree that stood just like an umbrella. The Lord then said that the life of a tree is most excellent, for even while feeling pain a tree continues to protect others from heat, rain, snow and so on. With its leaves, flowers, fruits, shade, roots, bark, wood, fragrance, sap, ashes, pulp and sprouts, a tree fulfills the desires of everyone. This kind of life is ideal. Indeed, said Kṛṣṇa, the perfection of life is to act with one's vital energy, wealth, intelligence and words for the benefit of all.

After the Lord had glorified the trees in this way, the entire company went to the Yamunā, where the cowherd boys let the cows drink the sweet water and also drank some themselves.

Text 1:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: During the first month of the winter season, the young unmarried girls of Gokula observed the vow of worshiping goddess Kātyāyanī. For the entire month they ate only unsalted khichrī.

Texts 2-3:

My dear King, after they had bathed in the water of the Yamunā just as the sun was rising, the gopīs made an earthen deity of goddess Durgā on the riverbank. Then they worshiped her with such aromatic substances as sandalwood pulp, along with other items both opulent and simple, including lamps, fruits, betel nuts, newly grown leaves, and fragrant garlands and incense.

Text 4:

Each of the young unmarried girls performed her worship while chanting the following mantra. “O goddess Kātyāyanī, O great potency of the Lord, O possessor of great mystic power and mighty controller of all, please make the son of Nanda Mahārāja my husband. I offer my obeisances unto you.”

Text 5:

Thus for an entire month the girls carried out their vow and properly worshiped the goddess Bhadrakālī, fully absorbing their minds in Kṛṣṇa and meditating upon the following thought: “May the son of King Nanda become my husband.”

Text 6:

Each day they rose at dawn. Calling out to one another by name, they all held hands and loudly sang the glories of Kṛṣṇa while going to the Kālindī to take their bath.

Text 7:

One day they came to the riverbank and, putting aside their clothing as they had done before, happily played in the water while singing the glories of Kṛṣṇa.

Text 8:

Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and master of all masters of mystic yoga, was aware of what the gopīs were doing, and thus He went there surrounded by His young companions to award the gopīs the perfection of their endeavor.

Text 9:

Taking the girls’ garments, He quickly climbed to the top of a kadamba tree. Then, as He laughed loudly and His companions also laughed, He addressed the girls jokingly.

Text 10:

[Lord Kṛṣṇa said:] My dear girls, you may each come here as you wish and take back your garments. I’m telling you the truth and am not joking with you, since I see you’re fatigued from executing austere vows.

Text 11:

I have never before spoken a lie, and these boys know it. Therefore, O slender-waisted girls, please come forward, either one by one or all together, and pick out your clothes.

Text 12:

Seeing how Kṛṣṇa was joking with them, the gopīs became fully immersed in love for Him, and as they glanced at each other they began to laugh and joke among themselves, even in their embarrassment. But still they did not come out of the water.

Text 13:

As Śrī Govinda spoke to the gopīs in this way, His joking words completely captivated their minds. Submerged up to their necks in the cold water, they began to shiver. Thus they addressed Him as follows.

Text 14:

[The gopīs said:] Dear Kṛṣṇa, don't be unfair! We know that You are the respectable son of Nanda and that You are honored by everyone in Vraja. You are also very dear to us. Please give us back our clothes. We are shivering in the cold water.

Text 15:

O Śyāmasundara, we are Your maidservants and must do whatever You say. But give us back our clothing. You know what the religious principles are, and if You don't give us our clothes we will have to tell the king. Please!

Text 16:

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: If you girls are actually My maidservants, and if you will really do what I say, then come here with your innocent smiles and let each girl pick out her clothes. If you don't do what I say, I won't give them back to you. And even if the king becomes angry, what can he do?

Text 17:

Then, shivering from the painful cold, all the young girls rose up out of the water, covering their pubic area with their hands.

Text 18:

When the Supreme Lord saw how the gopīs were struck with embarrassment, He was satisfied by their pure loving affection. Putting their clothes on His shoulder, the Lord smiled and spoke to them with affection.

Text 19:

[Lord Kṛṣṇa said:] You girls bathed naked while executing your vow, and that is certainly an offense against the demigods. To counteract your sin you should offer obeisances while placing your joined palms above your heads. Then you should take back your lower garments.

Text 20:

Thus the young girls of Vṛndāvana, considering what Lord Acyuta had told them, accepted that they had suffered a falldown from their vow by bathing naked in the river. But they still desired to successfully complete their vow, and since Lord Kṛṣṇa is Himself the ultimate result of all pious activities, they offered their obeisances to Him to cleanse away all their sins.

Text 21:

Seeing them bow down like that, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the son of Devakī, gave them back their garments, feeling compassionate toward them and satisfied by their act.

Text 22:

Although the gopīs had been thoroughly cheated, deprived of their modesty, ridiculed and made to act just like toy dolls, and although their clothing had been stolen, they did not feel at all inimical toward Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Rather, they were simply joyful to have this opportunity to associate with their beloved.

Text 23:

The gopīs were addicted to associating with their beloved Kṛṣṇa, and thus they became captivated by Him. Thus, even after putting their clothes on they did not move. They simply remained where they were, shyly glancing at Him.

Text 24:

The Supreme Lord understood the determination of the gopīs in executing their strict vow. The Lord also knew that the girls desired to touch His lotus feet, and thus Lord Dāmodara, Kṛṣṇa, spoke to them as follows.

Text 25:

[Lord Kṛṣṇa said:] O saintly girls, I understand that your real motive in this austerity has been to worship Me. That intent of yours is approved of by Me, and indeed it must come to pass.

Text 26:

The desire of those who fix their minds on Me does not lead to material desire for sense gratification, just as barleycorns burned by the sun and then cooked can no longer grow into new sprouts.

Text 27:

Go now, girls, and return to Vraja. Your desire is fulfilled, for in My company you will enjoy the coming nights. After all, this was the purpose of your vow to worship goddess Kātyāyanī, O pure-hearted ones.

Text 28:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: Thus instructed by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the young girls, their desire now fulfilled, could bring themselves only with great difficulty to return to the village of Vraja, meditating all the while upon His lotus feet.

Text 29:

Some time later Lord Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devakī, surrounded by His cowherd friends and accompanied by His elder brother, Balarāma, went a good distance away from Vṛndāvana, herding the cows.

Text 30:

When the sun's heat became intense, Lord Kṛṣṇa saw that the trees were acting as umbrellas by shading Him, and thus He spoke as follows to His boyfriends.

Texts 31-32:

[Lord Kṛṣṇa said:] O Stoka Kṛṣṇa and Amśu, O Śrīdāma, Subala and Arjuna, O Viśāla, Vṛṣabha, Ojasvī, Devaprastha and Varūthapa, just see

these greatly fortunate trees, whose lives are completely dedicated to the benefit of others. Even while tolerating the wind, rain, heat and snow, they protect us from these elements.

Text 33:

Just see how these trees are maintaining every living entity! Their birth is successful. Their behavior is just like that of great personalities, for anyone who asks anything from a tree never goes away disappointed.

Text 34:

These trees fulfill one's desires with their leaves, flowers and fruits, their shade, roots, bark and wood, and also with their fragrance, sap, ashes, pulp and shoots.

Text 35:

It is the duty of every living being to perform welfare activities for the benefit of others with his life, wealth, intelligence and words.

Text 36:

Thus moving among the trees, whose branches were bent low by their abundance of twigs, fruits, flowers and leaves, Lord Kṛṣṇa came to the Yamunā River.

Text 37:

The cowherd boys let the cows drink the clear, cool and wholesome water of the Yamunā. O King Parīkṣit, the cowherd boys themselves also drank that sweet water to their full satisfaction.

Text 38:

Then, O King, the cowherd boys began herding the animals in a leisurely way within a small forest along the Yamunā. But soon they became afflicted by hunger and, approaching Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, spoke as follows.