

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma Enter Mathurā

This chapter describes how Lord Kṛṣṇa entered the city of Mathurā, killed a washerman and bestowed benedictions upon a weaver and a garland-maker named Sudāmā.

After showing His Viṣṇu form to Akrūra in the waters of the Yamunā and receiving Akrūra's prayers, Lord Kṛṣṇa withdrew that vision just as an actor winds up his performance. Akrūra emerged from the water and in great amazement approached the Lord, who asked him whether he had seen something wonderful while bathing. Akrūra replied, "Whatever wonderful things there are in the realms of water, earth or sky, all have their existence within You. Thus when one has seen You, nothing remains unseen." Akrūra then began driving the chariot again.

Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and Akrūra reached Mathurā late in the afternoon. After meeting up with Nanda Mahārāja and the other cowherds, who had gone on ahead, Kṛṣṇa asked Akrūra to return home, promising to visit him there after He had killed Kāṁsa. Akrūra unhappily bid the Lord goodbye, went to King Kāṁsa to inform him that Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma had come, and went home.

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma took the cowherd boys with Them to see the splendorous city. As they all entered Mathurā, the women of the city eagerly came out of their houses to see Kṛṣṇa. They had often heard about Him and had long since developed a deep attraction for Him. But now that they were actually seeing Him, they were overwhelmed with happiness, and all their distress due to His absence was eradicated.

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma then came upon Kāṁsa's wicked washerman. Kṛṣṇa asked him for some of the first-class garments he was carrying, but he refused and even chastised the two Lords. At this Kṛṣṇa became very angry and beheaded the man with His fingertips. The washerman's assistants, seeing his untimely end, dropped their bundles of clothes on the spot and ran off in all directions. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma then took some of the garments They especially fancied.

Next a weaver approached the two Lords and arrayed Them suitably, for which service he received from Kṛṣṇa opulence in this life and liberation in the next. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma then went to the house of the garland-maker Sudāmā. Sudāmā offered Them his full obeisances, worshiped Them by bathing Their feet and offering Them such items as arghya and sandalwood paste, and chanted prayers in Their honor. Then he adorned Them with garlands of fragrant flowers. Pleased, the Lords offered him whatever benedictions he wished, and then They moved on.

Text 1:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: While Akrūra was still offering prayers, the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa withdrew His form that He had revealed in the water, just as an actor winds up his performance.

Text 2:

When Akrūra saw the vision disappear, he came out of the water and quickly finished his various ritual duties. He then returned to the chariot, astonished.

Text 3:

Lord Kṛṣṇa asked Akrūra: Have you seen something wonderful on the earth, in the sky or in the water? From your appearance, We think you have.

Text 4:

Śrī Akrūra said: Whatever wonderful things the earth, sky or water contain, all exist in You. Since You encompass everything, when I am seeing You, what have I not seen?

Text 5:

And now that I am seeing You, O Supreme Absolute Truth, in whom reside all amazing things on the earth, in the sky and in the water, what amazing things could I see in this world?

Text 6:

With these words, Akrūra, the son of Gāndinī, began driving the chariot onward. At the end of the day he arrived in Mathurā with Lord Balarāma and Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Text 7:

Wherever they passed along the road, O King, the village people came forward and looked upon the two sons of Vasudeva with great pleasure. In fact, the villagers could not withdraw their eyes from Them.

Text 8:

Nanda Mahārāja and the other residents of Vṛndāvana, having reached Mathurā ahead of the chariot, had stopped at a garden on the outskirts of the city to wait for Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma.

Text 9:

After joining Nanda and the others, the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa, the controller of the universe, took humble Akrūra's hand in His own and, smiling, spoke as follows.

Text 10:

[Lord Kṛṣṇa said:] Take the chariot and enter the city ahead of us. Then go home. After resting here a while, we will go to see the city.

Text 11:

Śrī Akrūra said: O master, without the two of You I shall not enter Mathurā. I am Your devotee, O Lord, so it is not fair for You to abandon me, since You are always affectionate to Your devotees.

Text 12:

Come, let us go to my house with Your elder brother, the cowherd men and Your companions. O best of friends, O transcendental Lord, in this way please grace my house with its master.

Text 13:

I am simply an ordinary householder attached to ritual sacrifices, so please purify my home with the dust of Your lotus feet. By that act of purification, my forefathers, the sacrificial fires and the demigods will all become satisfied.

Text 14:

By bathing Your feet, the exalted Bali Mahārāja attained not only glorious fame and unequaled power but also the final destination of pure devotees.

Text 15:

The water of the river Ganges has purified the three worlds, having become transcendental by bathing Your feet. Lord Śiva accepted that water on his head, and by that water's grace the sons of King Sagara attained to heaven.

Text 16:

O Lord of lords, master of the universe, O You whose glories it is most pious to hear and chant! O best of the Yadus, O You whose fame is recounted in excellent poetry! O Supreme Lord Nārāyaṇa, I offer You my obeisances.

Text 17:

The Supreme Lord said: I will come to Your house with My elder brother, but first I must satisfy My friends and well-wishers by killing the enemy of the Yadu clan.

Text 18:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: Thus addressed by the Lord, Akrūra entered the city with a heavy heart. He informed King Kāṁsa of the success of his mission and then went home.

Text 19:

Lord Kṛṣṇa desired to see Mathurā, so toward evening He took Lord Balarāma and the cowherd boys with Him and entered the city.

Texts 20-23:

The Lord saw Mathurā, with its tall gates and household entrances made of crystal, its immense archways and main doors of gold, its granaries and other storehouses of copper and brass, and its impregnable moats. Beautifying the city were pleasant gardens and parks. The main intersections were fashioned of gold, and there were mansions with private pleasure gardens, along with guildhalls and many other buildings. Mathurā resounded with the calls of peacocks and pet turtledoves, who sat in the small openings of the lattice windows and on the gem-studded floors, and also on the columned balconies and on the ornate rafters in front of the houses. These balconies and rafters were adorned with vaidūrya stones, diamonds, crystal quartz, sapphires, coral, pearls and emeralds. All the

royal avenues and commercial streets were sprinkled with water, as were the side roads and courtyards, and flower garlands, newly grown sprouts, parched grains and rice had been scattered about everywhere. Gracing the houses' doorways were elaborately decorated pots filled with water, which were bedecked with mango leaves, smeared with yogurt and sandalwood paste, and encircled by flower petals and ribbons. Near the pots were flags, rows of lamps, bunches of flowers and the trunks of banana and betel-nut trees.

Text 24:

The women of Mathurā hurriedly assembled and went forth to see the two sons of Vasudeva as They entered the city on the King's road, surrounded by Their cowherd boyfriends. Some of the women, my dear King, eagerly climbed to the roofs of their houses to see Them.

Text 25:

Some of the ladies put their clothes and ornaments on backwards, others forgot one of their earrings or ankle bells, and others applied makeup to one eye but not the other.

Text 26:

Those who were taking their meals abandoned them, others went out without finishing their baths or massages, women who were sleeping at once rose when they heard the commotion, and mothers breast-feeding their infants simply put them aside.

Text 27:

The lotus-eyed Lord, smiling as He recalled His bold pastimes, captivated those ladies' minds with His glances. He walked with the gait of a lordly elephant in rut, creating a festival for their eyes with His transcendental body, which is the source of pleasure for the divine goddess of fortune.

Text 28:

The ladies of Mathurā had repeatedly heard about Kṛṣṇa, and thus as soon as they saw Him their hearts melted. They felt honored that He was sprinkling upon them the nectar of His glances and broad smiles. Taking Him into their hearts through their eyes, they embraced Him, the embodiment of all ecstasy, and as their bodily hairs stood on end, O

subduer of enemies, they forgot the unlimited distress caused by His absence.

Text 29:

Their lotus faces blooming with affection, the ladies who had climbed to the roofs of the mansions rained down showers of flowers upon Lord Balarāma and Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Text 30:

Brāhmaṇas standing along the way honored the two Lords with presentations of yogurt, unbroken barleycorns, pots full of water, garlands, fragrant substances such as sandalwood paste, and other items of worship.

Text 31:

The women of Mathurā exclaimed: Oh, what severe austerities the gopīs must have performed to be able to regularly see Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, who are the greatest source of pleasure for all mankind!

Text 32:

Seeing a washerman approaching who had been dyeing some clothes, Kṛṣṇa asked him for the finest laundered garments he had.

Text 33:

[Lord Kṛṣṇa said:] Please give suitable garments to the two of Us, who certainly deserve them. If you grant this charity, you will undoubtedly receive the greatest benefit.

Text 34:

Thus requested by the Supreme Lord, who is perfectly complete in all respects, that arrogant servant of the King became angry and replied insultingly.

Text 35:

[The washerman said:] You impudent boys! You're accustomed to roaming the mountains and forests, and yet You would dare put on such clothes as these! These are the King's possessions You're asking for!

Text 36:

Fools, get out of here quickly! Don't beg like this if You want to stay alive. When someone is too bold, the King's men arrest him and kill him and take all his property.

Text 37:

As the washerman thus spoke brazenly, the son of Devakī became angry, and then merely with His fingertips He separated the man's head from his body.

Text 38:

The washerman's assistants all dropped their bundles of clothes and fled down the road, scattering in all directions. Lord Kṛṣṇa then took the clothes.

Text 39:

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma put on pairs of garments that especially pleased Them, and then Kṛṣṇa distributed the remaining clothes among the cowherd boys, leaving some scattered on the ground.

Text 40:

Thereupon a weaver came forward and, feeling affection for the Lords, nicely adorned Their attire with cloth ornaments of various colors.

Text 41:

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma looked resplendent, each in His own unique, wonderfully ornamented outfit. They resembled a pair of young elephants, one white and the other black, decorated for a festive occasion.

Text 42:

Pleased with the weaver, the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa blessed him that after death he would achieve the liberation of attaining a form like the Lord's, and that while in this world he would enjoy supreme opulence, physical strength, influence, memory and sensory vigor.

Text 43:

The two Lords then went to the house of the garland-maker Sudāmā. When Sudāmā saw Them he at once stood up and then bowed down, placing his head on the ground.

Text 44:

After offering Them seats and bathing Their feet, Sudāmā worshiped Them and Their companions with arghya, garlands, pān, sandalwood paste and other presentations.

Text 45:

[Sudāmā said:] O Lord, my birth is now sanctified and my family free of contamination. Now that You both have come here, my forefathers, the demigods and the great sages are certainly all satisfied with me.

Text 46:

You two Lords are the ultimate cause of this entire universe. To bestow sustenance and prosperity upon this realm, You have descended with Your plenary expansions.

Text 47:

Because You are the well-wishing friends and Supreme Soul of the whole universe, You regard all with unbiased vision. Therefore, although You reciprocate Your devotees' loving worship, You always remain equally disposed toward all living beings.

Text 48:

Please order me, Your servant, to do whatever You wish. To be engaged by You in some service is certainly a great blessing for anyone.

Text 49:

[Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued:] O best of kings, having spoken these words, Sudāmā could understand what Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma wanted. Thus with great pleasure he presented Them with garlands of fresh, fragrant flowers.

Text 50:

Beautifully adorned with these garlands, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were delighted, and so were Their companions. The two Lords then offered the surrendered Sudāmā, who was bowing down before Them, whatever benedictions he desired.

Text 51:

Sudāmā chose unshakable devotion for Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Soul of all existence; friendship with His devotees; and transcendental compassion for all living beings.

Text 52:

Not only did Lord Kṛṣṇa grant Sudāmā these benedictions, but He also awarded him strength, long life, fame, beauty and ever-increasing prosperity for his family. Then Kṛṣṇa and His elder brother took Their leave.