

19 – Rescuing Nanda Mahārāja from the Abode of Varuṇa

I. The pastime

Varuṇa’s servant arrest NM

- ॐ The Govardhana-pūjā ceremony took place on the new-moon day.
- ॐ After this, there were torrents of rain and hailstorms imposed by King Indra for seven days.
- ॐ Nine days of the waxing moon having passed, on the tenth day King Indra worshiped Lord Kṛṣṇa, and thus the matter was satisfactorily settled.
- ॐ After this, on the eleventh day of the full moon, Ekādaśī, Mahārāja Nanda observed fasting for the whole day,
- ॐ and just early in the morning of the next day, Dvādaśī, he went to take a bath in the river Yamunā.
- ॐ He entered deep into the water of the river, but he was arrested immediately by one of the servants of Varuṇadeva.
- ॐ This servant brought Nanda Mahārāja before the demigod Varuṇa and accused him of taking a bath in the river at the wrong time.
- ॐ *According to astronomical calculations, the time in which he took a bath was considered demoniac. The fact was that Nanda Mahārāja wanted to take a bath in the river Yamunā early in the morning before the sunrise, but somehow or other he was a little too early, and he bathed at an inauspicious time. Consequently he was arrested.*
- ॐ
- ॐ When Nanda Mahārāja was taken away by one of Varuṇa’s servants, Nanda’s companions began to call loudly for Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma.
- ॐ Immediately Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma could understand that Nanda Mahārāja had been taken by a servant of Varuṇa.
- ॐ Thus They went to the abode of Varuṇa, for They were pledged to give protection to the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana, who were all unalloyed devotees of the Lord.
- ॐ Devotees, having no shelter other than the Supreme Personality of Godhead, naturally cry to Him for help, exactly like children who do not know anything but the protection of their parents.
- ॐ The demigod Varuṇa received Lord Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma with great respect and said, “My dear Lord, actually at this very moment, because of Your presence, my life as the demigod Varuṇa has become successful.
- ॐ Although I am the proprietor of all the treasures in the water, I know that such possessions do not make for a successful life.
- ॐ But at this moment, as I look at You, my life is made completely successful because by seeing You I no longer have to accept a material body.

Description is found
Srimad Bhagavatam
(Krishna Book)

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- ॐ Therefore, O Lord, Supreme Personality of Godhead, Supreme Brahman and Supersoul of everything, let me offer my respectful obeisances unto You.
- ॐ You are the supreme transcendental personality; there is no possibility of imposing the influence of material nature upon You. I am very sorry that my foolish man, by not knowing what to do or what not to do, has mistakenly arrested Your father, Nanda Mahārāja.
- ॐ So I beg Your pardon for the offense of my servant. I think that it was Your plan to show me Your mercy by Your personal presence here.
- ॐ My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, Govinda, be merciful upon me—here is Your father. You can take him back immediately.”

Kṛṣṇa rescues NM and reveals the universal form

- ॐ In this way Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, rescued His father and presented him before his friends, bringing them great jubilation.
- ॐ Nanda Mahārāja was surprised that although the demigod was so opulent, he offered such respect to Kṛṣṇa.
- ॐ That was very astonishing to Nanda, and he began to describe the incident to his friends and relatives with great wonder.
- ॐ The friends of Nanda Mahārāja, all the cowherd men, became eager to know if Kṛṣṇa was actually the Supreme Personality and if He was going to give them all salvation.
- ॐ When they were all thus consulting among themselves, Kṛṣṇa understood their minds, and in order to assure them of their destiny in the spiritual kingdom, He showed them the spiritual sky. *Generally, ordinary persons are engaged simply in working hard in the material world, and they have no information that there is another kingdom or another sky, which is known as the spiritual sky, where life is eternal, blissful and full of knowledge. As it is stated in the Bhagavad-gītā, a person returning to that spiritual sky never returns to this material world of death and suffering.*
- ॐ Hearing their inquiries, Kṛṣṇa immediately thought that His devotees in Vṛndāvana should be informed of the spiritual sky and the Vaikuṅṭha planets therein.
- ॐ Thus Kṛṣṇa showed them the eternal, ever-existing spiritual sky, which is unlimited and full of knowledge.
- ॐ Thus Kṛṣṇa led all the cowherd men, headed by Nanda Mahārāja, to the lake where Akrūra would later be shown the Vaikuṅṭha planetary system.
- ॐ They took their bath immediately and saw the real nature of the Vaikuṅṭhalokas. After seeing the spiritual sky and the Vaikuṅṭhalokas, all the men, headed by Nanda Mahārāja, felt wonderfully blissful, and upon coming out of the lake, they saw Kṛṣṇa, who was being worshiped with excellent prayers.

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II. The anartha

A. Kṛṣṇa Saṁhita

The transcendental happiness of the living entities in Vraja is known as *nanda*. In order to enhance that happiness, some deluded people drink wine, and as a result they create the great anartha of forgetting themselves. Kidnapping Nanda to the abode of Varuṇa is the fifteenth obstacle for the Vaiṣṇavas. People who are absorbed in the mood of Vraja never drink wine.

B. Caitanya Śikṣāmṛta

(16) The Varuṇa-lilā, the pastime of Kṛṣṇa releasing Nanda Mahārāja from the clutches of Varuṇa, symbolizes the misuse of intoxicants. Some people mistakenly think that imbibing liquor and other intoxicants will increase one's spiritual bliss and improve one's *bhajana*. Such misunderstandings must be abandoned.

C. Professor Sanyal

The fifteenth obstacle arises from addiction to intoxicants. In Braja the bliss, that is experienced by the individual soul on his being freed from the troubles of mind and body, is termed Nanda. There are found persons who betake to the use of intoxicants supposing such habit to be promotive of the above form of bliss. This quickly causes the serious drawback of self-forgetfulness. This predicament is represented by Nanda's sojourn to the abode of Varuna. This grave offense must be avoided by all means. Those persons who have attained the mode of loving devotion of Braja must, on no account, use any form of intoxicant.

III. Commentaries of Previous Acaryas on specific verses

A. SB 10.28.1

Śrī Bādarāyaṇi said: Having worshiped Lord Janārdana and fasted on the Ekādaśī day, Nanda Mahārāja entered the water of the Kālindī on the Dvādaśī to take his bath.

ॐ JG — there only remained a few moments to break fast. The word *tu* (but) indicates that only Nanda Maharṅ entered the water, as he had great knowledge of all the scriptural rules, more than the others.

ॐ VCT — there were only a few moments remaining of the Dvadasi, and there is a scriptural injunction that even if the last minutes of Dvadasi fall around midnight, one must still immediately fulfill all the obligations given by scripture, even those which would normally be performed up to noon.

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B. SB 10.28.2

Because Nanda Mahārāja entered the water in the dark of night, disregarding that the time was inauspicious, a demoniac servant of Varuṇa seized him and brought him to his master.

ॐ SS — the servant of Varuna who captured him was ignorant of the rules of scripture.

He was ignorant of the rules of devotional service.

ॐ VCT — the servant was a demon. Actually Nanda Maharāja had entered the water on the strength of scriptural injunction, which the servant did not know about.

C. SB 10.28.7

Your father, who is sitting here, was brought to me by a foolish, ignorant servant of mine who did not understand his proper duty. Therefore, please forgive us.

ॐ VCT — Ajānata means the servant who was not in knowledge of the bhakti-śāstras and therefore did not know that when the Dvadaśī is short one can enter the water even before dawn. As he says "Your father who has been brought here" Varuna points with folded hands to Nanda who has been seated within a jeweled welcoming pavillion and has been offered worship by Varuna himself.

ॐ He feels that the offense of his servant is the offense of himself.

IV. Notes and how it all fits together

ॐ Nanda means happiness

ॐ Varuṇa is the father of Varuṇī, the intoxicating beverage that Lord Balarāma drank. Therefore Varuṇa is the source of intoxication

ॐ This was contrary to Kṛṣṇa's will, Nanda Mahārāja was forcibly stolen away

ॐ But he was saved by the mercy of the devotees

ॐ Kṛṣṇa came in response to their cries

ॐ So similarly when we become distracted the devotees save us