

20 – Sudarśana, the Vidyādhara, is liberated

I. The pastime

Sudarśana, the Vidyādhara, is liberated

- ॐ Once upon a time, the cowherd men of Vṛndāvana, headed by Nanda Mahārāja, desired to go to Ambikāvana to observe the Śiva-rātri ceremony.
- ॐ The rāsa-lilā was performed during the autumn, and after that the next big ceremony is Holi, or the Dolāyātrā ceremony.
- ॐ Between the Dolāyātrā ceremony and the rāsa-lilā ceremony there is an important ceremony called Śiva-rātri, which is especially observed by the Śaivites, or devotees of Lord Śiva.
- ॐ Sometimes the Vaiṣṇavas also observe this ceremony because they accept Lord Śiva as the foremost Vaiṣṇava.
- ॐ But the function of Śiva-rātri is not observed very regularly by the bhaktas, or devotees of Kṛṣṇa.
- ॐ Under the circumstances, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam states that Nanda Mahārāja and the other cowherd men “once upon a time desired.”
- ॐ This means that they were not regularly observing the Śiva-rātri function but that once upon a time they wanted to go to Ambikāvana out of curiosity.
- ॐ Ambikāvana is somewhere in Gujarat Province, and it is said to be situated on the river Sarasvatī.
- ॐ Yet we do not find any Sarasvatī River in Gujarat Province, although there is a river named Savarmatī.
- ॐ They very devotedly began to worship the deity of Lord Śiva and Ambikā.
- ॐ After taking a bath, they worshiped the deities and then distributed charity in the holy places.
- ॐ
- ॐ The cowherd men, headed by Nanda Mahārāja, spent that night on the bank of the Sarasvatī.
- ॐ They fasted all day and drank a little water at night. But while they were taking rest, a great serpent from the nearby forest appeared before them and hungrily began to swallow up Nanda Mahārāja.
- ॐ Nanda cried out helplessly, “My dear son, Kṛṣṇa, please come and save me from this danger! This serpent is swallowing me!”
- ॐ When Nanda Mahārāja cried for help, all the cowherd men got up and saw what was happening.
- ॐ They immediately took up burning logs and began to beat the snake to kill it.
- ॐ But in spite of being beaten with burning logs, the serpent was not about to give up swallowing Nanda Mahārāja.

Description is found
Srimad Bhagavatam
(Krishna Book)

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- ॐ At that time Kṛṣṇa appeared on the scene and touched the serpent with His lotus feet.
- ॐ Immediately upon being touched by the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, the serpent shed its reptilian body and appeared as a very beautiful demigod named Vidyādhara.
- ॐ His bodily features were so beautiful that he appeared to be worshipable.
- ॐ There was a luster and effulgence emanating from his body, and he was garlanded with a gold necklace.
- ॐ He offered obeisances to Lord Kṛṣṇa and stood before Him with great humility.
- ॐ
- ॐ Kṛṣṇa then asked the demigod, “You appear to be a very nice demigod and to be favored by the goddess of fortune.
- ॐ How is it that you performed such abominable activities that you got the body of a serpent?”
- ॐ
- ॐ The demigod then began to narrate the story of his previous life.
- ॐ “My dear Lord,” he said, “in my previous life I was named Vidyādhara and was known all over the world for my beauty.
- ॐ Because I was a celebrated personality, I used to travel all over in my airplane.
- ॐ While traveling, I saw a great sage named Aṅgirā.
- ॐ He was very ugly, and because I was very proud of my beauty, I laughed at him.
- ॐ Due to this sinful act, I was condemned by the great sage to assume the form of a serpent.”
- ॐ “Because I was very proud of the exquisite beauty of my body,” he said, “I derided the ugly features of the great sage Aṅgirā.
- ॐ He cursed me for my sin, and I became a snake.
- ॐ Now I consider that this curse by the sage was not at all a curse; it was a great benediction for me.
- ॐ Had he not cursed me, I would not have assumed the body of a serpent and would not have been kicked by Your lotus feet and thus freed from all material contamination.”
- ॐ “My dear Lord,” Vidyādhara continued, “now, since I think I have become freed from all kinds of sinful activities, I am asking Your permission to return to my abode, the heavenly planets.”
- ॐ Vidyādhara, awaiting Kṛṣṇa’s permission to return to the heavenly planets, said, “Now, because I have been touched by Your lotus feet, I am relieved of all kinds of material pangs.
- ॐ You are the most powerful of all mystics.
- ॐ You are the original Supreme Personality of Godhead.
- ॐ You are the master of all devotees.

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- ॐ You are the proprietor of all planetary systems, and therefore I am asking Your permission.
- ॐ You may accept me as fully surrendered unto You.
- ॐ I know very well that persons who are constantly engaged in chanting Your holy name attain release from all sinful reactions, and certainly persons who are fortunate enough to be personally touched by Your lotus feet are freed.
- ॐ Therefore I am sure that I am now relieved of the curse of the brāhmaṇa simply by seeing You and being touched by Your lotus feet.”
- ॐ In this way, Vidyādhara got permission from Lord Kṛṣṇa to return to his home in the higher planetary system.
- ॐ After receiving this permission, he circumambulated the Lord and offered his respectful obeisances unto Him, and then he returned to his heavenly planet.
- ॐ Thus Nanda Mahārāja was relieved of the imminent danger of being devoured by the snake.
- ॐ
- ॐ The cowherd men, who had come to execute the ritualistic function of worshiping Lord Śiva and Ambikā, finished their business and prepared to return to Vṛndāvana.
- ॐ While returning, they recalled the wonderful activities of Kṛṣṇa.
- ॐ By relating the incident of Vidyādhara’s deliverance, they became more attached to Kṛṣṇa.
- ॐ They had come to worship Lord Śiva and Ambikā, but the result was that they became more and more attached to Kṛṣṇa.

II. The Anartha

A. Kṛṣṇa Saṁhita

- ॐ As the Vaiṣṇava’s happiness continually increases in the process of worship, they sometime lose consciousness. At that time the feeling of merging overcomes them. This feeling of merging with the Lord is the snake that swallowed Nanda Māhārāja. A practitioner who remains free from this snake will become a qualified Vaiṣṇava.

B. Caitanya Śikṣāmṛta

- ॐ (16) ... The snake that attempted to swallow Nanda Mahārāja represents impersonalistic *māyāvāda* philosophy and other such philosophies that try to swallow up the real nature of *bhakti*. Thus, the association of adherent to *māyāvāda* philosophy must be avoided.

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C. Professor Sanyal

- ॐ The next obstacle is offered by the growing sense of blissfulness that tends to increase by the cultivation of the habit of worship till it assumes the form of self suppression approximating the state of merging with the Object of worship. This mood for merging with the Divinity is a species of serpent that swallows up Nanda. The novice should endeavour to be a bona fide servant of Godhead by carefully avoiding this fatal temptation.

III. Notes

- ॐ We must be equiposed in our service and not be attached
ॐ We must be attached to pleasing Guru and Gauranga and not the bliss of devotional service
ॐ We must also understand that service isn't always blissful; we must sometime suffer anxiety for the Lord's pleasure

IV. How it all fits together

- ॐ Nanda means happiness
ॐ Snakes are envious
ॐ When we become envious of others when they are enjoying (and we are not), we lose the bliss of devotional service