

I. Lalita Mādhava

In Lalita Madhava Paurnameśi explains that Kamsa had had some idea that something was going on in Vṛndāvana with one young boy, so he sent Kesi and Arista there to investigate. When they returned Kesi explained the glory of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and then Arista suggested that Kamsa steal Rādhā. Then Kamsa sent Sankhacuda. When he failed Kamsa sent Arista.

Śrīla Rupa Goswami says: "When the frightened demons headed by Arista, Vatsa and Kesi, saw Your kindness to the cows and other animals, they abandoned all pride and assumed the forms of animals."

II. Notes

- ॐ According to Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmi Parjanya Mahārāja (the father of Nanda Maharāja) performed a puja on top of Nandisvara Hill in order to get a good son. A divine voice told him that he would have a good son who would be the father of the Supreme Lord, so he then decided to live there. So he lived at Nandagram for many years, but when Kesi started terrorizing Vraja he and all his family moved to Mahavana. (Apparently Kesi did not know that Arista was dead until he reached Vṛndāvana, but when he found out he became a mountain of anger.)
- ॐ Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmi explains that when the Kesi demon was causing disturbances in Vṛndavana by assuming a large horse's body that was so big that he could jump over the trees, mother Yasoda told her husband, Nanda Maharaja, "Our child is very restless, so we had better keep Him locked up within the house. I have been very worried about the recent disturbances of the Kesi demon, who has been assuming the form of a giant horse."
- ॐ When it was learned that the demon was entering Gokula in an angry mood, mother Yasoda became so anxious to protect her child that her face dried up and there were tears in her eyes. These are some of the signs of the ecstasy of dread in devotional service, caused by seeing and hearing something that is dangerous to Kṛṣṇa.
- ॐ Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmi explains that at this point Nanda Maharaja told his wife, "My dear Yasoda, although your son, Kṛṣṇa, is as delicate and soft as the mallika flower, He has gone to kill the Kesi demon, who is as strong as a mountain. Therefore I have become a little disturbed. But never mind, all auspiciousness to my son! I shall raise this hand, which is as strong as a pillar, and I shall kill the Kesi demon, just to give freedom from all anxieties to the inhabitants of Vraja-mandala!"
- ॐ Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmi explains that when the Kesi demon was assassinated by Kṛṣṇa, Kamsa became hopeless. He said, "Kesi-daitya was as dear to me as my own life, but he has been killed by some cowherd boy who is crude, uneducated and ignorant in fighting. Even though I have defeated the King of heaven without difficulty, still I do not know the value of life." Because this

hopelessness has a slight touch of attraction for Kṛṣṇa, it is considered to be a reflection of ecstatic love in hopelessness.

III. B-HAD-BHṢGAVATṢM-TA ON KESI AND ARISTṢSURA

Once, Kamsa's two great demon servants Kesi and Arista, the first assuming the form of a great horse, and the second assuming the form of a bull, both of them so tall their great bodies touched the sky, both of them like death personified, and both of them terrifying the gopas, wreaking havoc in Gokula, and with their roaring making every living entity fall to the ground, came to Vraja. Surrounded by His dear friends terrified of the two demons, Kṛṣṇa, comforting them and showing them His heroic power, flexed His arm. First the horse came running, and Kṛṣṇa kicked it far away. Then Kṛṣṇa went to the bull, pierced its nose, and brought it before the deity of Lord Siva, so Lord Siva could ride it.

When the horse came again, very powerful Kṛṣṇa, jumping on its back, subdued it and, ordering it to go here and there, was very splendid and glorious. With his friends and relatives, Kṛṣṇa enjoyed riding on the horse, as with pastimes of wonderful leaps of thousand of hands it wandered on the ground and in the sky. In a moment defeating it, bringing it under His control and bridling it, for pastimes of riding Kṛṣṇa kept the horse in Vraja. In the same way He kept the bull for pulling carts.

IV. The Pastime

Keśi

- ॐ After being instructed by Kamsa, the demon Keśi assumed the form of a terrible horse.
- ॐ He entered the area of Vṛndāvana with the speed of the mind, his great mane flying and his hooves digging up the earth.
- ॐ He began to whinny and terrify the whole forest. Kṛṣṇa saw that the demon was terrifying all the residents of Vṛndāvana with his whinnying and his tail wheeling in the sky like a big cloud.
- ॐ Kṛṣṇa could understand that the horse was challenging Him to fight.
- ॐ The Lord accepted his challenge and stood before the Keśi demon, calling him to fight.
- ॐ The horse then ran toward Kṛṣṇa, making a horrible sound like a roaring lion, his jaws spread wide open as if to swallow the whole sky.
- ॐ Keśi rushed toward the Lord with great speed and tried to trample Him with his legs, which were strong, forceful and as hard as stone.
- ॐ Kṛṣṇa, however, immediately caught hold of his legs and thus baffled him.
- ॐ Kṛṣṇa was somewhat angry, and thus He began to whirl the horse around.

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- ॐ After a few rounds, He contemptuously threw him a hundred yards away, just as Garuḍa throws a big snake.
- ॐ Thrown by Kṛṣṇa, the horse immediately passed out, but after a little while he regained consciousness and with great anger and force again rushed toward Kṛṣṇa with his mouth open.
- ॐ As soon as Keśi reached Him, Kṛṣṇa pushed His left arm within the horse's mouth, and it looked as though a big snake had entered a hole in the field.
- ॐ The horse felt great pain because Kṛṣṇa's arm felt to him like a hot iron rod.
- ॐ Immediately his teeth fell out.
- ॐ Kṛṣṇa's arm within the mouth of the horse at once began to expand, and Keśi's throat choked up.
- ॐ As the great horse suffocated, perspiration appeared on his body, and he threw his legs hither and thither.
- ॐ As his last breath came, his eyeballs bulged in their sockets and he passed stool and urine simultaneously.
- ॐ Thus the vital force of his life expired.
- ॐ When the horse was dead, his mouth became loose, and Kṛṣṇa could extract His arm without difficulty.
- ॐ He did not feel any surprise that the Keśi demon was killed so easily, but the demigods in the sky were amazed, and out of their great appreciation they offered Kṛṣṇa greetings by showering flowers.

V. The anartha

A. Kṛṣṇa Samhita

- ॐ *Pride – in the sense of being better than others*
Keśi, a demon in the form of a horse, personifies the practitioner's conception of being more expert than others in devotional service. When he comes to Vraja, he creates a great disturbance. As a Vaiṣṇava gradually begins proclaiming his own superiority, a mentality of disrespect for the Lord arises and the devotee falls from his position. Therefore it is most important to prevent this evil mentality from entering the heart. **Even if one is expert in devotional service, a Vaiṣṇava will never give up the quality of humility. If one does so, then there is a need for killing Keśi. This is the eighteenth obstacle.**

B. Caitanya Śikṣāmṛta

- ॐ *Pride – in the sense of considering oneself to be an ācārya*
(19) The Keśi-vadha-līlā, Kṛṣṇa's pastime of killing the demon that had assumed the form of a huge horse, represents freeing the sincere devotee from the illusion of considering oneself a great devotee or ācārya. Such an illusion

produces material pride and the tendency to lord offensively over others. This illusion must be carefully given up.

C. *Professor Sanyal*

- ॐ The eighteenth obstacle is the demon Keshi who has the form of the horse. As the quality of devotion of the novice undergoes swift development, the sense of one’s own superiority makes its appearance. If the novice gives a free scope to the speculation regarding his own excellence, it is apt to lead him into the dire offense of disrespect for the Divinity, causing his fall. It is, therefore, necessary that such wicked sentiment may never arise in the heart of the Vaishnava. **Even after devotion has been fully developed the quality of sincere humility should never be absent from the conduct of the Vaishnava.** As the contrary of this tends to happen, it becomes necessary for Krishna to kill the demon Keshi.

VI. Humility

A. *Dāsanudāsaḥ*

*ye me bhakta-janāḥ pārtha
na me bhaktās ca te janāḥ
mad-bhaktānām ca ye bhaktās
te me bhakta-tamā matāḥ*

“[Lord Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna:] ‘Those who are My direct devotees are actually not My devotees, but those who are the devotees of My servant are factually My devotees.’ [CC 2.11.28, Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta 2.6, Ādi Purāṇa]

*ādarāḥ paricaryāyām
sarvāṅgair abhivandanam
mad-bhakta-pūjābhyadhikā
sarva-bhūteṣu man-matiḥ*

*mad-artheṣv aṅga-ceṣṭā ca
vacasā mad-guṇeraṇam
mayy arpaṇam ca manasaḥ
sarva-kāma-vivarjanam*

“My devotees take great care and respect in rendering Me service. They offer obeisances to Me with all their bodily limbs. They worship other devotees and find all living entities related to Me. For Me they engage the entire energy of their bodies. They engage the power of speech in the glorification of My qualities and form. They also dedicate their minds unto Me and try to give up all kinds of material desires. Thus My devotees are characterized.’ [CC 2.11.29-30, SB 11.19.21-22]

ārādhanaṅgāṁ sarveṣāṁ

23 – Keśi

*viṣṇor ārāadhanam param
tasmāt parataram devi
tadīyānām samarcanam*

“[Lord Śiva told the goddess Durgā:] ‘My dear Devī, although the Vedas recommend worship of demigods, the worship of Lord Viṣṇu is topmost. However, above the worship of Lord Viṣṇu is the rendering of service to Vaiṣṇavas, who are related to Lord Viṣṇu.’ [CC 2.11.31, Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta 2.4]

*nāham vipro na ca nara-patir nāpi vaiśyo na śūdro
nāham varṇī na ca gṛha-patir no vanastho yatir vā
kintu prodyan-nikhila-paramānanda-pūrnāmṛtābdher
gopī-bhartuḥ pada-kamalayor dāsa-dāsānudāsaḥ*

“I am not a brāhmaṇa, I am not a kṣatriya, I am not a vaiśya or a śūdra. Nor am I a brahmacārī, a householder, a vānaprastha or a sannyāsī. I identify Myself only as the servant of the servant of the servant of the lotus feet of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the maintainer of the gopīs. He is like an ocean of nectar, and He is the cause of universal transcendental bliss. He is always existing with brilliance.” [CC 2.13.80, Padyāvalī 74]

B. Disrespecting devotees

*yasya sākṣād bhagavati
jñāna-dīpa-prade gurau
martyāsad-dhīḥ śrutam tasya
sarvam kuñjara-śaucavat*

The spiritual master should be considered to be directly the Supreme Lord because he gives transcendental knowledge for enlightenment. Consequently, for one who maintains the material conception that the spiritual master is an ordinary human being, everything is frustrated. His enlightenment and his Vedic studies and knowledge are like the bathing of an elephant. [SB 7.15.26, spoken by Nārada Muni]

*ācāryam mām vijānīyān
navamanyeta karhicit
na martya-buddhyāsūyeta
sarva-deva-mayo guruḥ*

One should know the ācārya as Myself and never disrespect him in any way. One should not envy him, thinking him an ordinary man, for he is the representative of all the demigods. [SB 11.17.27 spoken by Kṛṣṇa to Uddhava]

*kṛṣṇeti yasya giri tam manasādriyeta
dikṣāsti cet prañatibhiś ca bhajantam īśam
śuśrūṣayā bhajana-vijñam ananyam anya-*

23 – Keśi

nindādi-sūnya-hṛdam īpsita-saṅga-labdhyā

One should mentally honor the devotee who chants the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, one should offer humble obeisances to the devotee who has undergone spiritual initiation [dīkṣā] and is engaged in worshipping the Deity, and one should associate with and faithfully serve that pure devotee who is advanced in undeviated devotional service and whose heart is completely devoid of the propensity to criticize others. [NOI 5]

*dṛṣṭaiḥ svabhāva-janitair vapuṣāś ca doṣair
na prākṛtatvam iha bhakta janasya paśyēt
gaṅgāmbhasām na khalu budbuda-phena-paṅkair
brahma-dravatvam apagacchati nīra-dharmaiḥ*

Being situated in his original Kṛṣṇa conscious position, a pure devotee does not identify with the body. Such a devotee should not be seen from a materialistic point of view. Indeed, one should overlook a devotee's having a body born in a low family, a body with a bad complexion, a deformed body, or a diseased or infirm body. According to ordinary vision, such imperfections may seem prominent in the body of a pure devotee, but despite such seeming defects, the body of a pure devotee cannot be polluted. It is exactly like the waters of the Ganges, which sometimes during the rainy season are full of bubbles, foam and mud. The Ganges waters do not become polluted. Those who are advanced in spiritual understanding will bathe in the Ganges without considering the condition of the water. [NOI 6]

C. Śikṣāṣṭakam

*tṛṇād api sunīcena
taror iva sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena
kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ"*

"One who thinks himself lower than grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honor but is always prepared to give respect to others, can very easily always chant the holy name of the Lord."

One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street; one should be more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and should be ready to offer all respect to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.