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### THE MEETING OF THE LORD AND THE GOPIS

*Srila Sukadeva Goswami*

This chapter narrates how the Yadavas and many other kings met at Kurukshetra during a solar eclipse and discussed topics concerning Lord Krishna. It also relates how Krishna met Nanda Maharaja and the other residents of Vrindavan at Kurukshetra and gave them great joy.

Hearing that a total eclipse of the sun was soon to occur, people from all over *Bhārata-varṣa* (greater India), including the Yadavas, visited Kurukshetra to generate special pious credit. After the Yadus had bathed and performed other obligatory rituals, they noticed that kings of Matsya, Ushinara and other regions had also come, as well as Nanda Maharaja and the cowherd community of Vraja, who were always feeling the intense anxiety of separation from Krishna. The Yadavas, overjoyed to see all these old friends, embraced them one by one as they shed tears of happiness. Their wives

also embraced one another with great pleasure.

When Queen Kunti saw her brother Vasudeva and other members of her family, she forgot all sorrow. Yet still she said to Vasudeva, "O brother, I am so unfortunate, because all of you forgot me during my tribulations. Alas, even one's relatives forget a person whom Providence no longer favors."

Vasudeva replied, "My dear sister, everyone is merely a plaything of fate. We Yadavas were so harassed by Kamsa that we were forced to scatter and take shelter in foreign lands. So there was no way for us to keep in touch with you."

The kings present were struck with wonder upon beholding Lord Sri Krishna and His wives, and they began to glorify the Yadavas for having gotten the Lord's personal association.

Seeing Nanda, the Vrsnis were delighted and stood up like dead bodies coming back to life. Having felt much distress at not seeing him for so long, they held him in a tight embrace. Vasudeva embraced



Nanda Maharaja with great joy. Beside himself with ecstatic love, Vasudeva remembered the troubles Kamsa had caused him, forcing him to leave his sons in Gokula for Their safety. O hero of the Kurus, Krishna and Balarama embraced Their foster parents and bowed down to them, but Their throats were so choked up with tears of love that the two Lords could say nothing. Raising their two sons onto their laps and holding Them in their arms, Nanda and saintly mother Yashoda forgot their sorrow. Then Rohini and Devaki both embraced the Queen of Vraja, remembering the faithful friendship she had shown them. Their throats choking with tears, they addressed her as follows.

What woman could forget the unceasing friendship you and Nanda have shown us, dear Queen of Vraja? There is no way to repay you in this world, even with the wealth of Indra. Before these two boys had even seen Their real parents, you acted as Their guardians and gave Them all affectionate care, training, nourishment and protection. They were never afraid, good lady, because you protected Them just as eyelids protect the eyes. Indeed, saintly persons like you never discriminate between outsiders and their own kin.

Sukadeva Goswami said: While gazing at their beloved Krishna, the young gopis had previously condemned the creator of their eyelids, which would momentarily block their vision of Him. Now, seeing Krishna again after such a long separation, with their eyes they took Him into their hearts, and there they embraced Him to their full satisfaction. In this way they became totally absorbed in ecstatic meditation on Him, although the great *yogīs* who constantly practice mystic yoga find such absorption difficult to achieve.

The Supreme Lord approached the gopis in a secluded place as they stood in their ecstatic trance. After embracing each of them and inquiring about their well-being, He laughed and spoke as follows. My dear friends, do you still remember Me? It was for My relatives sake that I stayed away so long, intent on destroying My enemies. Do you perhaps think I'm ungrateful and thus hold Me in contempt? After all, it is the Supreme Lord who brings living beings together and then separates them. Just as the wind brings together masses of clouds, blades of grass, wisps of cotton and particles of dust, only to scatter them all again, so

the creator deals with His created beings in the same way. Rendering devotional service to Me qualifies any living being for eternal life. But by your good fortune you have developed a special loving attitude toward Me, by which you have obtained Me. Dear gentle ladies, I am the beginning and end of all created beings and exist both within and without them, just as the elements ether, water, earth, air and fire are the beginning and end of all material objects and exist both within and without them. In this way all created things reside within the basic elements of creation, while the spirit souls pervade the creation, remaining in their own true identity. You should see both of these- the material creation and the self - as manifest within Me, the imperishable Supreme Truth.

Sukadeva Goswami said: Having thus been instructed by Krishna in spiritual matters, the gopis were freed of all tinges of false ego because of their incessant meditation upon Him. And with their deepening absorption in Him, they came to understand Him fully.

The esoteric meaning of Krishna's teachings to the gopis is found in *Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī*. This instruction on spiritual knowledge was meant for enlightening the gopis. However that did not happen at all. The gopis incessant meditation on Krishna which was constantly arising from their feelings of separation from Him was like a scorching sun which destroyed the inner recesses of their night blooming lotus like lives, just as a flower is destroyed by excessive sunlight. The only thing that kept the gopis alive was their hope of attaining Krishna.

It is not correct to say that the subtle material bodies (*liṅga deha*) of the gopis were destroyed, because the eternal associates of Krishna do not have material bodies. It cannot be accepted that even the *sādhana-siddha* gopis who enjoyed pastimes with Krishna had material bodies. Thus the summary is offered as a rational explanation meant to satisfy those whose internal vision was not awakened.

The gopis responded thus: Dear Lord, whose navel is just like a lotus flower, Your lotus feet are the only shelter for those who have fallen into the deep well of material existence. Your feet are worshiped and meditated upon by great mystic *yogīs* and highly learned philosophers. We wish that



these lotus feet may also be awakened within our hearts, although we are only ordinary persons engaged in household affairs.

— Adapted from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* » Canto 10 » Chapter 82 : Krishna and Balarama Meet the Inhabitants of Vrindavan.

### 'PLEASE COME BACK TO VRINDAVAN'

*Srila Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakura*

*āhuś ca te nalina-nābha padāravindam  
yogeśvarair hṛdi vicinityam agādha-bodhaiḥ  
samsāra-kūpa-patitottaraṇāvalambam  
geham juñām api manasy udiyāt sadā naḥ*

The gopis spoke thus: "Dear Lord, whose navel is just like a lotus flower, Your lotus feet are the only shelter for those who have fallen into the deep well of material existence. Your feet are worshiped and meditated upon by great mystic *yogīs* and highly learned philosophers. We wish that these lotus feet may also be awakened within our hearts, although we are only ordinary persons engaged in household affairs."

— *Bhāg 10: 82:48*

Here the indignant gopis speak with sarcasm and feigned reverence to their lover Krishna; "O Supreme Lord, O directly manifest Supersoul, O crest jewel of instructors in definitive knowledge, You were aware of our excessive

Bhāgavata Mahāvidyālaya

attachment to home, property and family. Therefore You previously had Uddhava instruct us in the knowledge that dispels ignorance, and now You have done so Yourself. In this way You have purified our hearts of contamination, and as a result we understand Your pure love for us, free from any motivation other than assuring our liberation. But we are only unintelligent cowherd women; how can this knowledge remain fixed in our hearts? We cannot even meditate steadily on Your feet, the focus of realization for great souls like Lord Brahma. Please be merciful to us and somehow make it possible for us to concentrate on You, even a little.

We gopis are still suffering the reactions of our own fruitive work, so how can we meditate on You, the goal of great *yogīs*? Such *yogīs* are immeasurably wise, but we are mere feeble-minded women. Please do something to get us out of this deep well of material life."

Within themselves the gopis surmised "He who taught us about *dharma* at the beginning of the *rāsa* dance, even though we had not inquired about it, and who instructed us in the principle of theoretical knowledge through Uddhava, is now again teaching us philosophical knowledge."

The words the gopis speak in this verse may be interpreted as follows: "O sun who directly destroys the darkness of ignorance, we are scorched by the sunrays of this philosophical knowledge. We are

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cakora birds who can subsist only on the moonlight radiating from Your beautiful face. Please come back to Vrindavan, and in this way bring us back to life with your pastimes like *rāsa-līlā* etcetera."

And if He says, "Then come to Dwaraka; there we will enjoy each other's company there," they reply that Sri Vrindavan is their home, and they are too attached to it for them to take up residence anywhere else. Only there, the gopis imply, can Krishna attract them by wearing peacock feathers in His turban and playing enchanting music with His flute. Only by His appearing again in Vrindavan can we gopis be saved from the torment of separation from Krishna, not by any other kind of meditation on Him or theoretical knowledge of the spiritual self.

— Adapted from Sarartha Darsini commentary of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura.



### **KURUKSHETRA IS LESS IMPORTANT FOR THE GOPIS THAN VRINDAVAN**

*His Divine Grace*

*A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada*

*'pāiluṅ vṛndāvana-nātha,  
punah hārāiluṅ  
ke mora nileka Krishna?  
kāhāṅ mui āinu'?*

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu said, "I had found Krishna, the Lord of Vrindavan, but I have lost Him again. Who has taken My Krishna? Where have I come?"

These are the feelings of Srimati Radharani. First Lord Chaitanya felt that He had been taken to Vrindavan, where He saw Krishna's *rāsa* dance with the gopis. Then He was brought to Kurukshetra to see Lord Jagannatha, His sister Subhadra and Lord Balarama. After that Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu lost Vrindavan and Krishna, the master of Vrindavan. At this time, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu experienced



*divyonmāda*, transcendental madness in separation from Krishna. At Kurukshetra, Krishna displays His opulence, whereas in Vrindavan He is in His original position of rustic 'sweetness'. Krishna never goes even a step away from Vrindavan; therefore Kurukshetra is less important for the gopis and their followers than Vrindavan.

There are some devotees who worship Krishna in His Vaikuntha aspect of opulence, and they may prefer to see Lord Krishna at Kurukshetra along with Subhadra and Balarama. However, the gopis want to see Krishna in Vrindavan, performing the *rāsa* dance with Srimati Radharani and other such pastimes. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu showed by practical example how one can cultivate the mood of Radharani and the other gopis in separation from Krishna. Devotees absorbed in this mood do not like to see Krishna anywhere else but Vrindavan. Therefore Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu lamented, "I found Krishna in Vrindavan, and now I have again lost Him and come to Kurukshetra." Unless one is a highly advanced devotee, he cannot understand

these intricate feelings. The author of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, however, has tried to explain this *divyonmāda* as far as possible, and it is our duty simply to appreciate it as far as we are able. Therefore the author has made the following request in verse 11:

*tāte viśvāsa kari'  
śuna bhāvera varṇana  
ha-ibe bhāvera jñāna,  
pāibā prema-dhana*

"My dear readers, simply try to hear this description with faith and love. That will help you understand the true nature of transcendental ecstasy, and thus, at last, you will achieve love of Godhead without doubt."

— Adapted from *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* » *Antya-līlā* » *Antya 14: Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's Feelings of Separation from Kṛṣṇa* » Verse : 37, Purport.



### UNDERSTANDING THE RATHA YATRA

*Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura*

The ecstasy of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu as follows. After giving up the company of the gopis in Vrindavan, Sri Krishna, the son of Maharaja Nanda, engaged in His pastimes at Dwaraka. When Krishna went to Kurukshetra with His brother and sister and others from Dwaraka, He again met the inhabitants of Vrindavan. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is *rādhā-bhāva-dyuti-suvalīta*, that is, Krishna Himself assuming the part of Srimati Radharani in order to understand Krishna. Lord Jagannatha-deva is Krishna, and Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is Srimati Radharani. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu leading Lord Jagannatha toward the Gundica temple corresponded to Srimati Radharani's leading Krishna toward Vrindavan. Sri Kshetra, Jagannatha Puri, was taken as the kingdom of Dwaraka, the place where Krishna enjoys supreme opulence. But He was being led by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to Vrindavan, the simple

village where all the inhabitants are filled with ecstatic love for Krishna. Sri Kshetra is a place of *aiśvarya-līlā* (pastimes in opulence), just as Vrindavan is the place of *mādhurya-līlā* (pastimes of sweetness). Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu following at the rear of the ratha indicated that Lord Jagannatha, Krishna, was forgful of the inhabitants of Vrindavan. Although Krishna apparently neglected the inhabitants of Vrindavan, He could not actually forget them. Thus in His opulent *Ratha-yātrā*, He was returning to Vrindavan. In the role of Srimati Radharani, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was examining whether the Lord still remembered the inhabitants of Vrindavan. When Chaitanya Mahaprabhu fell behind the Ratha car, Jagannatha-deva, Krishna Himself, understood the mind of Srimati Radharani. Therefore, Jagannatha sometimes fell behind the dancing Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to indicate to Srimati Radharani that He had not forgotten. Thus Lord Jagannatha would stop the forward march of the ratha and wait, standing completely still. In this way Lord Jagannatha agreed that without



the ecstasy of Srimati Radharani He could not feel satisfied. While Jagannatha was thus waiting, Gaurasundara, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, in His ecstasy of Srimati Radharani, immediately came forward to Krishna. At such times, Lord Jagannatha would proceed ahead very slowly. These reciprocal exchanges were all part of the loving affairs between Krishna and Srimati Radharani. In that competition between Lord Chaitanya's ecstasy for Jagannatha and Jagannatha's ecstasy for Srimati Radharani, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu emerged successful.

—An excerpt from the Anubhāñya Commentary of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, Śrī Caitanya Caritamṛta, Madhya-līlā, Chapter 13, text 119.

### WHEN KRISHNA RETURNED VRINDAVAN

Śrīla Narahari Chakravartī Ṭhākura

After seeing off the *Vraja-vāsīs* from Kurukshetra, Krishna felt great eagerness to return to Vrindavan. He went to Dwaraka to kill Shishupala and then went to Mathura on the pretext of killing Dantavakra. After those duties were completed, Krishna crossed the Yamuna River and quickly went to meet Nanda Maharaja and the others. On seeing Krishna, the cowherds ran forward shouting, 'Welcome! Welcome!' Krishna returned to His family house in Vraja and enjoyed association with the gopis and gopas as He always had before. Because the villagers shouted, 'Ayore! Ayore!' [Welcome!, Welcome!], the village is now known as Ayore."

There is another village called Gauravai and Sri Raghava also told the story of that village. He explained:

"There was a large village called Shana wherein lived a distinguished Zamindara [landowner] who had a good friendship with Sri Nanda Maharaja. When Nanda returned from Kurukshetra, the Zamindara welcomed him in great joy. There was no limit to the honour, or gaurav, given by that landowner to Nanda as he arranged his stay. Therefore this village was named Gauravai, but presently it is known as Gaurai. It is nearby the villages of Shana and Ayore."

In *Gopāla-campu* the story is told in this way: "Coming from Syamanta-pancaka in Kurukshetra, Vrajeshvara Sri Nanda and the cowherd men were returning to their houses in Gokula. When they arrived in Mathurā, they felt no desire to return to their homes. They crossed the Yamuna and came to this famous place named Gaurai some distance from Gokula. That place, called 'Gokulapati' in Sanskrit, is traditionally known as Gaurava, however the local people called it Gaurai. Just as the abode of Purushottama has become famous by the name Purushottama, so also the place of Gokulapati was named Gokulapati."

"All these villages where Krishna performed His transcendental pastimes are seen in ecstatic trance by those people who are most fortunate."

— Bhakti-ratnākara -Śrīla Narahari Cakravartī Ṭhākura  
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