

sri-suka uvaca

hemante prathame masi

nanda-vraja-kamarikah

cerur havishyam bhunjanah

katyayany-arcana-vratam

TRANSLATION

Sukadeva Gosvami said: During the first month of the winter season, the young unmarried girls of Gokula observed the vow of worshiping goddess Katyayani. For the entire month they ate only unspiced khichri.

In our previous sessions, we had once reached this part of the lila of the Bhagavatam. But this part was done in a very concise manner. Hence I wished to start from this part. Chapter 22 and 23 will be covered.

Recently in Vrndavan, the venu geet lila of Sarad season was described. After Sarad (Autumn) comes the hemant(winter) season, then sishir(cold), then vasant(spring) , grishma(summer) and prahir(rains). In this way in our land of Bharat Varsha, these 6 seasons prevail for 2 months each. Now I'm describing the hemantic lila.

Sripad Sanatan Goswami says – that – In this way, Sukadev Goswami described the lila of Rainy season and sharad season. So as per the order or cycle of the seasons, he is now describing the hemantic lila. Sripad Jiv Goswami and Srila Vishwanath Ch. Thakur says that in the earlier season , Sukadev Goswami has described the lila of the married gopis. Now in this season, he is describing the lila of the unmarried gopis. How they loved Krsna and wanted to achieve him as their husband. In this lila, Radharani is not there. It is the lila of the kumarikas.

In the autumn season, specially the first month, is called the Margasirsh month. Of all the 12 months, Krsna considers this month as Himself. Masanam margasirsah – Of the months, I am the Margashirsha – B.Gita.

The kumarikas of Vraj, has observed this vow. The kumarikas are never beyond the age of 7 years.

By mentioning ‘nand vraja kumarikah’ it means - the kumarikas of Nandbaba’s Vraja. One should pay attention to this – That – This means, those kumarikas who were directly related to Nandbaba in any ways are not counted in this lila. Like the kumarikas of Nandbaba’s brothers or sisters or Nandbaba’s paternal or maternal relatives....etc. , meaning the little girls born to Nandbaba’s brothers or sisters or children born to Nandbaba’s cousins (cousin brother or cousin sister)and such close family relatives....are not counted in this lila. Only those kumarikas who are far away relatives of Nandbaba are the ones mentioned of in this lila. For eg : the daughter of Nandbaba’s chacha (Uncle - father’s younger brother), or daughter of Nandbaba’s Taau (father’s elder brother), sister, such relatives are not there in this lila. Hence Nand-vraj-kumarika - those kumarika’s of Nandbaba’s vraj, who were qualified to have Sri Krsna as their husband, these are the kumarikas mentioned herein. The fathers of these kumarikas always desired that their daughters would marry Krsna, but they did not have the guts to tell Nandbaba about this. However, they would never discuss about their daughters’ wedding with any other family either.

Kumarika – also has the meaning – those whose beauty in comparison to which even Kamdev appears stale.

Havisyam bhunjanam – these girls used to go the bank of Yamuna, have bath , and perform pooja of Goddess Kartyayani, inorder to get Krsna as their husband. Havishyam bhunjanam – means they performed their worship by eating havishya. Those who are Vaishnavas should regulate their eating to only prasadam. The gopis ate only havishya. What is Havishya ? That which can be offered to the fire in the havan is called Havishya. Sripad Jiva Goswami says Havishya – means mainly ghee, milk, and the grains that are harvested in the hemant season, especially rice. This is a very pure bhojan, sattvik bhojan. This teaches us the lesson that to achieve Krsna , we have to regulate our eating habits. Not that you can eat any nonsense . Otherwise what was the reason to mention about their eating here in this sloka. They had done this only for one month.

Kartyayani, is the topmost Vaishnavi, wife of Lord Shiva.

Sripad Vishwanath CH.pad says – Although these girls are the nitya priyas of Krsna, still as per worldly rituals to get Krsna as their husband, they are doing this Devi puja. Harivamsh Puran, Vishnu Puran and Brahma-vaivarta Puran mentions these gopis – who are so much in love with Krsna that they are performing such austere vrata to achieve Krsna. Having bath in the cold waters of Yamuna in the most coldest season...eating only havishya....etc.

Sri Harisuriji says – One may worship anyone – demigods or anyone – but the fruit of it should be only one – that Krsna be pleased with that worship.

Why they worshiped Goddess and not the devatas like Shiva and others ? Harisuriji says – In this world it is being seen that there are many relations, but no one is like a mother. No one loves like a mother. So the kumarikas thought that we should worship ‘mother’ rather than other Demigods , so they chose to worship Goddess Durga who is the mother of this world.

We should always pay note to this fact that their motto in worship – is to get Krsna.

How was the worship ?

aplutyambhasi kalindya

jalante codite 'rune

kritva pratikritim devim

anarcur nripa saikatim

gandhair malyaih surabhibhir

balibhir dhupa-dipakaih

uccavacais copaharaih

pravala-phala-tandulaih

TRANSLATION

My dear King, after they had bathed in the water of the Yamuna just as the sun was rising, the gopis made an earthen deity of goddess Durga on the riverbank. Then they worshiped her with such aromatic substances as sandalwood pulp, along with other items both opulent and simple, including lamps, fruits, betel nuts, newly grown leaves, and fragrant garlands and incense.

Sripad Sanatan Goswami says that if anyone wants to perform this worship, for them this kind of worship is detailed out here. Arun is the Sarathi of Lord Sun, who has no legs, he is driving the chariot of Sun God, and he faces the Sun while driving the Chariot.

At dawn, before sunrise, the gopis would make the deity of Goddess with the earth, on the banks of the river. They would worship with fragrant incence, garlands, flowers, bhog offerings which were not only tasty but also fragrant, fruits, grains, newly sprouted leaves...etc. They would be so immersed singing about Krsna, that they would just throw away their clothes on the river bank, not keep the clothes, but throw away their clothes while singing about Krsna.

Why did they make the deity ? So that their desires be fulfilled immediately. This proves that deity worship is powerfull. These gopis are themselves worshipable by the Goddess, being the preyasis of Krsna ; still they are worshiping Goddess Durga to get Krsna.

There is a rule in the worship that the items has to be offered in an order. But here the order is broken. This is because, since the mind was absorbed in Krsna, the order of the items being offered is broken. It also could be that Sukadev Goswami was so engrossed in his mind while telling this lila, that while speaking he has broken the order.

katyayani maha-maye

maha-yoginy adhisvari

nanda-gopa-sutam devi

patim me kuru te namah

iti mantram japatyas tah

pujam cakruh kamarikah

TRANSLATION

Each of the young unmarried girls performed her worship while chanting the following mantra. "O goddess Katyayani, O great potency of the Lord, O possessor of great mystic power and mighty controller of all, please make the son of Nanda Maharaja my husband. I offer my obeisances unto you."

As they were offering they chanted this mantra, all the girls together. Everything they offered was offered with this mantra. They could not think of any other arpan-mantras. In half the sloka they are describing Goddess Katyayani, and other half sloka is describing their hearts desire – please make the son of Nanda, as my husband.

Maha-maye – O great potency, please make us all potent to have Krsna as our husband. To this , Mahamaya would say – this would be difficult. Hence, they are using the word – maha yogin – You are the great mystic power, you can make Krsna's mind accept us as his wife. So Goddess says – I can do, but I;m scared of Lakshmi Devi. To this they are saying – You are adhisvari – the mighty controller of all, so why should you be scared ? Goddess says – why don't you directly, yourself ask KRsna for this ? The girls are saying – we have heard that You are the shakti of Vishnu. We have heard that worship of Vishnu's devotees is more greater than worship of Vishnu. So, worshipping You - his own shakti, is higher than worshipping him directly.

Nanda gopa – He is a gopa, and we are gopi, so we have the right to marry him as per the social standards.

Srila Vishwanath ch.pad says - If Goddess replies – “why are you demanding this from me ? I can do this much to enthuse your parents to talk about your marriage”. For this , they are saying – “no mother, You just do this without any further delay. We cannot tolerate any further delay, don't leave it to our parents to do, You only do it for us”. Goddess says – “Krsna's upanayan is not yet done, he is not eligible for marriage yet”. The girls are saying – “mukya vivaha or main marriage is not needed, gandharv marriage is enough for us. Somehow or the other, please get us married. There is nothing impossible for You O Mother, You can do everything”. Goddess says – “But Your parents are not aware of this feeling of yours towards Krsna, so how can I do this without involving them”? Girls are saying – O Mother, You are Mahamaya, you please bewilder our parents in such a way that they should never talk about our marriage to anyone else. O Mother, if by chance externally, we get married to any gopa, this should never create any hindrance to us. But YOU make us Krsna's wife, whether the world knows it or not, YOU do it for us. Externally we may appear to the world as another man's , but we and YOU should know that only Krsna is our husband”.

evam masam vratam ceruh

kumaryah krishna-cetasah

bhadrakalim samanarcur

bhuyan nanda-sutah patih

TRANSLATION

Thus for an entire month the girls carried out their vow and properly worshiped the goddess Bhadrakali, fully absorbing their minds in Krishna and meditating upon the following thought: "May the son of King Nanda become my husband."

We should not think that they were going to do it for only one month. No, they were going to do it on and on, but by Krsna's mercy, He fulfilled their desire within one month itself. Dhruva Maharaj had to do austerity for 6 months, but the gopa kumarikas had to do only for one month.

To perform austerity, the necessities are time – Margashirsha month, place – banks of Yamuna, why is Goddess called – Bhadrakali – one who gives the highest of happiness is called Bhadrakali, this is what Sukadeva Goswami is saying here. Samanarcur – they followed the niyam properly. They were worshipping the Goddess, but mind was where ? Mind was fully absorbed in Krsna. So, the Goddess worship has become Krsna worship. Hence, Krsna personally came to give the blessing. He personally blessed them by saying that- “ very soon your desires will be fulfilled.”

ushasy utthaya gotraih svair

anyonyabaddha-bahavah

krishnam uccair jagur yantyah

kalindyam snatum anvaham

TRANSLATION

Each day they rose at dawn. Calling out to one another by name, they all held hands and loudly sang the glories of Krishna while going to the Kalindi to take their bath.

Sripad Sridhar Swami is saying that – Sukadev Goswami is now saying the previous/ i.e.earlier part of their worship. Out of his bhav illas, he said the latter part first and then he is saying the previous part of their worship. The main part was their Krsna Kirtanam.

The girls used to wake up each other by calling out their names, and they used to hold hands together and walk in the night (early morning night) towards the Yamuna, and as they were going ,they would sing the glories of Krsna. They had so much love , and they would sing loudly. Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. In this way they worshipped the whole month.

nadyah kadacid agatya

tire nikshipya purva-vat

vasamsi krishnam gayantyo

vijahruh salile muda

TRANSLATION

One day they came to the riverbank and, putting aside their clothing as they had done before, happily played in the water while singing the glories of Krishna.

On the day when the vrat was completing – this should be dvadashi or purnima day. They put their clothes aside on the river banks. Now here the description is not of their bath, but the description is of their vihar – play. They were so happy on this day, that they were having their bath with tremendous happiness.

Sripad Vallabhacarya says – On the last day they performed their usual worship, and when they completed the worship, they were so much happy that, there was no obstacles of any sort in their worship. So they re-entered Yamuna to play in the water, out of their extreme happiness of having successfully completed their vrat. And they were singing and playing. They had forgotten everything about themselves and their whereabouts. Their minds were so much engrossed in Krsna that they were feeling as though Krsna is there in the water with them. Generally, during bath, one should keep moun, silent and one should be covered. But here the girls were committing both the offense. And also, in the holy rivers one should not play. But here, they were so engrossed in Krsna and happy, they have forgotten about their own bodies , and they have broken all the rules.

At this time , Krsna arrived there with his very small gopa friends. These were the extremely small, 3 year 4 year old boys who could not remain without Krsna. Krsna told these small boys to pick up the girls' clothes..

This we will continue in our next session.