

## Binding Kṛṣṇa, from *Gopāla-campū*

Once at the end of Kārtika month, joyful Yaśodā saw that Kṛṣṇa was sleeping. Caressing Him gently with her hands as He lay on the bed, she let Him sleep. Slowly leaving the bed and going outside the room, she quickly tied up her cloth to engage in early morning household chores. She began churning yogurt.

When the servant women were arriving for their service, Yaśodā was carefully engaged in churning the yogurt and singing about her son's pastimes while gazing at His face, through the open door.

She wore a belt shining with jewels on her blue, swaying cloth which was decorated with attractive, jingling bells. She churned the yogurt with her two hands repeatedly while looking at the face of her son who was just beginning to open His eyes.

Then that ocean of beauty woke up, and immediately began crying. Getting up, He went to His mother. Breathing heavily, bending His limbs and rubbing His eyes He cried, **“Mother, Mother!”** Hearing the sound of her churning, He walked on faltering feet to His mother.

When Kṛṣṇa stopped the movement of the churning rod with His soft words filled with affection, Yaśodā fed the infant milk. When the milk flowed from Yaśodā like monsoon rains, Kṛṣṇa was like a *cātaka* bird drinking those showers.

When Kṛṣṇa had only half finished drinking, Yaśodā, thinking that the milk in the next room may be boiling over, put Kṛṣṇa down and went to check it.

When she went to take the milk off the fire she spoke in joy to her son: **“I worship You with *āratika*, but for a moment please protect the churning pot. After taking care of the milk I will come as quickly as I can.”**

But because His desire was obstructed, Kṛṣṇa became very upset. His lips red with anger and tears flowing from His eyes, He began to cry. He broke the pot with some stones but did not touch a particle of the butter.

Kṛṣṇa then created another festival. He carefully took the ghee from a hanging pot and began eating it. He then took the ghee pot away through a side door.

Carefully He struck the door panel to loosen the bolt and then entered the store room, bolting the door after entering. Using a wooden bed to climb, He stole more ghee and then fled while no one was looking.

Yaśodā, seeing the milk had thickened on the stove, removed the pot and quickly returned to her son. Knowing the type of actions of Her son, she felt both anger and joy and then smiled.

Seeing His footprints of buttermilk which indicated the path of His theft, by her own means she was able to unbolt the door.

When Yaśodā left the room and saw that her son had made mischief, she followed Him, and then saw Him as He was looking around with fearful eyes.

**“I have stolen the ghee and mother will see Me. How will I meet her gaze?”** Fearing her, His eyes moved from ear to ear.

He overturned a mortar and sat on it while feeding monkeys, as His eyes moved here and there. The proud monkeys became full from eating the butter. Yaśodā took a stick and covering it with cloth, approached. Seeing her, He quickly climbed a tree. Seeing Him do all this, Yaśodā smiled slightly and became filled with astonishment.

She silently approached in order to catch her thieving son, but seeing her, He began to flee. It is well known that the thief has a hundred eyes whereas the owner of wealth has only two.

She ran after her fleeing son, and the flowers fell from her bound hair, **“King of thieves! Where are You going?”** His beauty increased by His indistinct smiling and crying.

She pursued Him to catch Him but she could not catch Him, just as a group of clouds going west by the wind cannot catch a small cloud going to the east.

He ran where He thought His mother could not follow Him. But she followed Him. When He ran without looking back, she could not catch Him. When He looked back in fear, she was able to catch Him with her hand.

He used His eyes to try to find some way of escaping and began weeping to remove His mother’s anger. He made His body falsely tremble out of fear, but He could not wipe out His bad behavior.

When she came face to face with Him, He tried to cover His *ghee* soaked limbs by smearing Himself with dust.

Seeing this Yaśodā said, **“If You want to steal in this house, then just look at this stick in my hand.”** But when her lotus-eyed son was overcome with fear on hearing this, she threw down her stick.

**“Mother! Do not beat Me!”** With a hidden smile she said, **“But You are a thief.”** In this way a quarrel began.

**“Ah! You are the king of thieves!”** **“Your father’s lineage is all thieves.”** In this way the mother argued with the infant who had stolen the *ghee*.

**“How did the yogurt pot break?”** **“It was the Supreme Lord’s stick.”** **“Who gave *ghee* to the monkeys?”** **“He who created monkeys gave it to them.”**

**“I think that You always taste and eat the fresh *ghee* meant for sacrifices.”** After Yaśodā scolded the infant as a thief, her heart softened.

Smiling, but with anger she said, **“You should tell the truth and give up your pride.”** When His mother said this, her son began weeping.

**“When You ran quickly, the pot broke because of it being struck by your anklets. What is my fault in this?”**

**Inspired by the Lord, the monkeys entered the house to steal. When they pulled at the *ghee*, I caught it. What is My fault?**

**Seeing you holding a stick I ran away like a thief. Seeing that I was frightened you tried to mercilessly beat Me without justice.**

Yaśodā spoke with repentance, **“O best of thieves with clever words! Though You are the son of the king of Vraja, You are fond of monkeys and have the nature of a monkey.”**

Fearful, and to give fear to his mother, He said, **“If I am a monkey, then I will go to the forest and stay there.”**

His mother began to worry with anxiety. She thought: **“Who can understand Him? A proud child will do this. I must tie Him up to prevent this, since I am alone and cannot continue to pay attention to both the house and this child.”**

But she spoke aloud: **“O thief who bewilders everyone with Your restless eyes! Do not think of avoiding me. After binding You up I will go into the house. If You want to show Your strength, then now try to steal something else.”**

When she began tying Him up, He became so angry that He breathed with a hissing sound. He said, **“Rohiṇi! Where have you gone with Balarāma? Because you are not here, she is binding Me up. Please come quickly.”**

Because Rohiṇī was far away she could not hear Him, but other women who were neighbors, and who had previously scolded Him, heard His cries and came. They laughed and said, **“Has He done mischief in your house?”**

Ignoring their words, she took an old string from her hair and began binding Him around the waist to the mortar near the outer door, just as Rudra’s followers bound up Dakṣa to teach Him a lesson. But the string was two fingers too short.

She took another silk string from her hair and tied the two together, but still the string was two fingers short. Even when the other women gave the churning rope, she could not tie Him up.

The other women laughed and said, **“O Yaśodā! We told you previously that He makes the original thief Kaphallaka tremble because of His great power of bewilderment. He’s proven Himself to be the best thief.**

Yaśodā said, **“He was born at the wrong time. Thus He does not know good from bad. But I think you have been put under a spell since internally you are prejudiced against Him, but externally you show yourselves differently.”**

Laughingly they said, **“Falling at your feet, we swear that we are not under some amazing spell.”**

She then began to think, **“According to Garga’s words, the Lord’s powers are covering this boy, and He does not know what is happening.”**

She repeatedly brought churning ropes from the women’s houses to see the limits of astonishment and tried to bind Him up, but found no way to do so.

Attempting to bind her son, she found no end in this endless task. Perspiration flowed over her limbs and her hair became loose.

As much as Kṛṣṇa made efforts to show His stubbornness, Yaśodā’s attempts became useless, as if under the influence of bad planets. It is understood that only when His mind became moved by her fatigue, He became bound up by the first two ropes alone. All the other ropes became unnecessary.

Yogamāyā, acting according to His desires, created this incident for His mother, which appeared like some illusion. And Yogamāyā performed such acts daily. Having tied up Kṛṣṇa, Yaśodā then lengthened the rope with other ropes and tied Kṛṣṇa to the mortar. Having tied Him up and showing harshness to Him to teach Him, His mother went to do her household chores with the other women who were laughing. She placed other boys around Him to protect Him.

When the women left, Kṛṣṇa pretended to cry for a while. Then He became joyful at the prospect of moving the mortar around to many places. Though He was tied up, with great faith, increased by being surrounded by the boys, He played with them while smiling, and moved the mortar bit by bit while they also laughed. He then had them go to the houses of the women and steal the butter hanging in pots. But He did not desire to free Himself from the mortar by using His hands or any instrument, because He wanted to enjoy by pulling the mortar.

He then saw the two *Yamala-arjuna* trees situated near the town gate, their leaves were dancing in the wind. Gradually, He made His way towards those trees.

Then He went along the path between the two trees, but the path was too narrow and sloped down and the mortar became stuck between the trees. Desiring to pull down the two trees, Kṛṣṇa started pulling with all His strength.

A terrible sound arose from the trees, as He pulled the two trees down. All the inhabitants of Vraja other than the deaf could not maintain their composure on hearing that sound.

What was most astonishing however was that Kṛṣṇa had broken the two trees which were hard as thunderbolts, but He could not break the bondage of affection He had for His mother.

Hearing the fearful sound of the falling trees the inhabitants remained in an unconscious condition for a *muhūrta*. Only the boys around Kṛṣṇa did not faint. Experiencing the extreme sweetness of His pastimes, they did not become frightened and just remained immobile like painted pictures.

Hearing that sound from far-off, the villagers speculated on its origin and went towards the place. Arriving all at the same time and full of anxiety, they conversed with each other:

**How have these trees fallen without wind, without rain, without thunderbolts, without an attack by elephants?**

**How is it possible for someone to uproot the trees when there is no one here? Everyone fainted on hearing that loud sound.**

They noticed that Kṛṣṇa was near the trees and that He was smiling. Pulling the mortar, He was experiencing bliss in His actions. They surrounded Him saying, **“How did this happen?”**

Seeing His father coming from behind, Kṛṣṇa began crying. His frightened father smiled in order to comfort the child and untied Him.

Kissing the child's face, he repeatedly asked what had happened though he knew the cause of His being tied up, **“Where is the rascal who has tied You to the mortar?”**

Attached to His father, He approached him after some time and whispered in his ear, **“O father! Mother did this.”**

Yaśodā, after recovering from fainting and repenting for what she had done, told Nanda everything. Thus he already knew. But he did not want to say anything suddenly to Kṛṣṇa while alone with Him. Not with disrespect, but out of ignorance of the details, he asked the other boys, **“How did this happen?”**

The boys spoke: **Kṛṣṇa went between the two trees in order to go to a wider space for playing and pulled the immovable mortar by its base in a crooked manner. He produced a cracking sound in the trees and then suddenly made them fall to the earth.**

**Then two people like fire, decorated with bracelets, crowns and earrings, emerged from the broken trees and offered respects in all directions. They then praised Kṛṣṇa. The two then departed for the north.**

Hearing this, all the people with parental feelings including Nanda dismissed it as children's talk. Others however could not remove the doubt in their hearts.

Gradually, one by one, others came and joined Nanda. Holding Kṛṣṇa to his chest, he went to the Yamunā River to perform his daily rites. Taking a bath with his son, he had *brāhmaṇas* chant auspicious prayers and after dismissing them with great gifts, returned to his house to take his morning meal.

Being unhappy because of separation from Kṛṣṇa and ashamed of having tied Him up, Yaśodā did not come out of the house and did not talk to the other women in the house. When the other women left, Rohiṇī, who solves all problems, surrounded her along with the respectable kitchen assistants.

Nanda brought Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma and ate his meal with them while engaging in affectionate, soft talk. He relaxed with the two who were supreme bliss incarnate, for two *muhūrtas*. His heart was very satisfied. He went to the cow shed at the time that the cows came and supervised their milking.

Bringing white sugar from the house, he had the two boys, along with his friends, drink the most beneficial milk fresh from the cows as a substitute for Yaśodā's breast milk.

Entering the house, he met with others to have his evening meal. Desiring unbroken happiness for his son, the head women, including Rohiṇī, the jewel of their families, came and made a request.

**“O King! Yaśodā has not eaten all day and she does not speak to anyone. Seeing that, all have also followed her example.”**

Nanda spoke with sadness and a smile, **“What can we do? After showing such anger, one should regret one’s fault.”**

They said with tears in their eyes, **“Ah! She is very soft both internally and externally. She will be devastated by your words.”**

Slightly smiling, Nanda then asked his son, **“Will You go to Your mother now?”**

Kṛṣṇa said, **“No, no! I will spend My time with you.”**

Then the wives of Nanda’s elder brothers said, **“Whose milk will You drink?”**

Kṛṣṇa said, **“I will drink fresh milk from the cows mixed with sugar.”**

They all said, **“Who will You play with?”**

Kṛṣṇa said, **“I will play with My father. I will bring My brother also.”**

Nanda said, **“Will You not go to Your brother’s mother?”**

Angrily Kṛṣṇa said with tears in His eyes, **“She left Me and went away.”**

Hearing this, Rohiṇī, with tears in her eyes said softly, **“O son! Why are You so harsh? Your mother is suffering so much.”**

Not listening to her words, Kṛṣṇa with tearful eyes glanced at His father’s face. To attract Kṛṣṇa, Rohiṇī gave a signal to Balarāma. Balarāma went to Kṛṣṇa and held His hand. Kṛṣṇa rejected His hand and went to the lap of His father and held His arms around his neck. Looking into Nanda’s tear-filled eyes, He brought him under His control.

Understanding Kṛṣṇa’s internal affection for His mother, Nanda raised his hand as if to beat Yaśodā, in order to reveal Kṛṣṇa’s affection for her: **“O son! If You agree I will beat her.”** Kṛṣṇa could not tolerate this and blocked Nanda’s hand.

Smiling again, Nanda, showing great compassion because of his parental affection and, understanding the heart of Kṛṣṇa’s mother, said, **“O son! If Your mother is in this deathly condition, what will You do?”** He spoke while smiling, indicating she might die.

Because of His childish nature, Kṛṣṇa immediately became anxious for His mother. With tears in His eyes He said, **“Where is mother? I must go to her.”** In anxiety, He went to Rohiṇī’s lap.

While all were noisily laughing, Rohiṇī, who bestows the greatest happiness, took Him and entered the house. He hugged His mother’s neck while crying in joy.

She kissed the child’s head and with a melted heart, she sobbed, making all others there sob also.

Yaśodā pacified the women with comforting words and a slight glow appeared on her face. Her beautiful face appeared healthy, and she satisfied her child with breast milk. With the other helpful women, she fed both Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma.

For three days after the incident, being reserved, Yaśodā did not show herself to Nanda. But on another day, Kṛṣṇa, on the order of His father, brought her to him, holding the edge of her *sārī* and from the day that He was bound, the women of Vraja jokingly called that beautiful dark child “Dāmodara”.