

Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa - Chapter Nineteen

Kāliya-damana-dāvāgni-mokṣaṇa

Subduing Kāliya and Extinguishing the Forest Fire

One day, with the boys and without Balarāma, Lord Kṛṣṇa went to the Yamunā's shore, to the place where Kāliya had his home. He ate some fruit from the forest by the Yamunā's shore and He drank the clear water. As He watched over the cows, He played with the boys in the forest.

O sages, as Kṛṣṇa, His heart plunged deep in the thought of His pastimes, played with the happy boys, the cows ate new grass and then drank poisoned water.

Drinking the water burning with poison, the cows at once gave up their lives. Seeing the cows dead, the frightened and anxious boys told Lord Kṛṣṇa. Aware of everything, Lord Kṛṣṇa brought the cows to life. Standing up, the cows gazed at Lord Kṛṣṇa's face.

Climbing a *kadamba* tree by the Yamunā's shore, Lord Kṛṣṇa, who appeared to be an ordinary human being, dove into the water where Kāliya had his home.

O Nārada, by diving into the water Lord Kṛṣṇa created a great wave a hundred hands high. When the boys saw all this they became both happy and sad.

Seeing humanlike Lord Kṛṣṇa, the snake Kāliya at once swallowed Him. Then Lord Kṛṣṇa made Himself hot like molten iron. His throat and stomach burned by the Lord's spiritual power, and so the snake, now on the verge of death, vomited up Lord Kṛṣṇa. When it tried to bite the Lord, the snake broke its fangs and its mouth. Its mouth became red with its own blood. Then the Lord jumped on the snake's head.

O sage, defeated by the Lord who maintains all the universes, the snake was on the verge of death. Vomiting blood, the snake fell unconscious.

Seeing Kāliya had fallen unconscious, the other snakes, who dearly loved him, wept. Some fled in fear, and some entered their holes. Seeing their husband on the verge of death, chaste Subalā, accompanied by Kāliya's other wives, approached Lord Kṛṣṇa and wept, overcome with love. Frightened, and her hands respectfully folded, she touched Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet and spoke.

Śrī Subalā said: “*O most dear person in the universe, please return my husband. O most honorable one, please honor my request. For a woman her husband is more dear than life. No one is a greater friend than he. O master of the great demigods, please don't kill the master of my life. O limitless one, O friend, O ocean of love, O friend of all the worlds, O ocean of love for Śrī Rādhā, O creator of the creator, please give me the gift of my husband's return. Śiva, Brahmā, Śeṣa, Kārttikeya, and their associates become speechless when they try to glorify You. Sarasvatī has not the power to glorify You. All the Vedas have not the power to glorify You. How can others, saintly though they may be, have the power to glorify You properly? Who am I? I am a fool, the lowest of women. Who are You? You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the resting place of the worlds. You are beyond the perception of material eyes. You are glorified by Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Yamarāja, the Manus, the sons of Manu, and the kings of the sages.*”

Pārvatī and Lakṣmī are afraid to offer prayers to You. Sarasvatī, the mother of the Vedas, does not know how to offer prayers to You. How can I, plunged in the sins of Kali-yuga and bewildered by the explanations of the Vedas and Vedāṅgas, offer prayers to You? I offer my respectful obeisances to Your lotus feet, which are worshiped by Brahmā, Śiva, and Śeṣa. You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who recline on a jewel couch, who are decorated with jewel ornaments, who are Yourself the ornament that decorates Your jewel ornaments, Who rest on Rādhā's breast, whose limbs are anointed with sandal paste, whose lotus face is smiling, who always happily swims in a rising nectar ocean of love, whose crown is decorated with mallikā and mālatī flowers, whose chest is fragrant with a pārijāta garland, whose hairs stand erect with joy when you hear the humming of bees or the singing of cuckoos, and who enjoy the betelnuts offered by Your beloved.

How can I, the wife of a snake, properly glorify You, the indescribable Supreme Personality of Godhead, whom the Vedas have not the power to glorify, before whom the great philosophers become speechless, and who are served by Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Pārvatī, Gaṅgā, Savitrī, the siddhas, and the sages? I offer my respectful obeisances to You, who are not caused by anything, but are the cause of all, who are the master of all, greater than the greatest, self-manifest, present everywhere, and the master of the great and small.

O Kṛṣṇa! O Kṛṣṇa! O master of the demigods and demons! O master of Brahmā! O master of Śeṣa! O master of Prajāpati! O master of the sages! O master of the manus! O master of the moving and unmoving beings! O master of mystic powers! O master of the perfect beings! O master of the modes of nature! Please protect my husband!

O master of religion! O master of the pious! O master of the auspicious and inauspicious! O master of the Vedas! O master not described in the Vedas! O master of all! O Supersoul present everywhere! O friend of all! O master of all living beings! O master of life! Please protect my husband!"

After speaking these prayers, the snake-queen humbly bowed her head. With awe and reverence, she touched the Lord's lotus feet.

One who at sunrise, noon, and sunset recites these prayers of the snake-queen becomes free of all sins and attains the feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa. In this world he attains devotion for Lord Kṛṣṇa. When this life is ended he attains the four kinds of liberation, beginning with sālōkya. He becomes a personal associate of the Lord. He serves the Lord directly.

Śrī Nārada said: “When He heard the snake-queen's words, what did Lord Kṛṣṇa say in reply? O very fortunate one, please tell me His confidential and very wonderful words.”

Śrī Sūta said: “Hearing Nārada's words, Śrī Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi, the son of Dharma Ṛṣi, spoke transcendental words that were sweet and pleasing at every step.”

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi said: “Hearing the words of the snake-queen, who with folded hands had fallen, frightened, at His feet, Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke.”

Lord Kṛṣṇa said: “Rise! Rise, O snake-queen! Please ask for a boon. Give up your fears. Take your husband. By My blessing he is now free of old-age and death. Child, take your husband and family, leave this lake in the Yamunā, and go to your own home. Go wherever you wish.

From today on you are My daughter and your husband, more dear to you than life, is My son-in-law. Of this there is no doubt. O beautiful one, because your husband bears the mark of My foot, Garuḍa will glorify him with many prayers and devotedly bow down before the footprint he carries. O beautiful one, give up your fear of Garuḍa. At once leave this lake and go to Ramaṇaka-dvīpa. As for a boon, whatever you wish.”

Hearing Lord Kṛṣṇa's words, the snake-goddess became happy. Her face and eyes were filled with smiles and her eyes with tears of happiness. She humbly bowed her head and spoke.

Śrī Subalā said: “O father, O king of they who give boons, if You would give me a boon, then please give me firm and unwavering devotion for Your lotus feet. May my mind become like a bumblebee always flying among the lotus flowers of Your feet. May I always remember You. May I never forget You. May my husband become fortunate. May he become the wisest of philosophers. O Lord, please fulfill this request.”

After speaking these words, the snake-queen stood before Lord Kṛṣṇa and gazed at His autumn-moon face. As she drank with unblinking eyes the sight of Lord Kṛṣṇa's face, the hairs of her body stood up and her eyes became flooded with tears. As she gazed at the handsome young Kṛṣṇa, she fell in love with Him. Flooded with feelings of love, she spoke again.

She said: “I will not go to Ramaṇaka-dvīpa. There is no need for me to go. The Kāliya snake may stay in the material world. Please make me Your maidservant. O Kṛṣṇa, I do not wish the four kinds of liberation that begin with *sālokya*. Liberation is not equal to one sixteenth the value of service to Your lotus feet. One who, after taking birth in this world desires a boon other than service to Your lotus feet is cheated.”

Hearing the snake-queen's words, glorious Lord Kṛṣṇa became happy and His lotus face began to smile.

O sage, a splendid jewel chariot suddenly arrived at that place, a beautiful chariot with a hundred wheels, fast like the wind or the mind, decorated with curtains and flowers, and filled with the liberated associates of the Lord. Descending from the chariot, the dark servants of the Lord bowed down before Lord Kṛṣṇa. Taking the snake-queen with them, they went to Goloka, the highest place in the spiritual world.

Then Lord Kṛṣṇa created a shadow form of the snake-queen and gave it to the Kāliya snake. Bewildered by the Lord's *māyā* potency, the snake did not understand anything of that.

Descending from the snake's head, Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is an ocean of kindness, kindly touched it with His hand.

Regaining consciousness, the snake saw before him Lord Kṛṣṇa and saintly Subalā, her hands folded and her eyes filled with tears.

Overwhelmed with feelings of love, his eyes filled with tears and the hairs of his body erect, the snake bowed down before Lord Kṛṣṇa with great devotion.

Seeing the snake unwilling to speak, Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is an ocean of mercy, spoke to him. The Supreme Lord is equally kind to both the qualified and the unqualified.

Lord Kṛṣṇa said: “O Kāliya, you may ask for a boon, whatever you wish in your heart. Child, to Me you are more dear than life. Don't be afraid. Be happy.

“I am always kind to My devotee. I treat him like a son. Sometimes I may discipline him a little, but then I am very kind. One who kills any of your descendants will become the lowest of men. His sin will equal the sin of killing a *brāhmaṇa*. One who with a stick hits the place where you bear My footprint commits a sin twice that of killing a *brāhmaṇa*. He commits a great sin. Goddess Lakṣmī will leave his home. His lifespan, fame, and descendants will all be destroyed. For a hundred years he will stay in a terrible hell where worms as big as you will bite him always. When his time in hell is ended, he will take birth again. He will die of a snake's bite. His descendants will fear snakes. They who bow down with devotion when they My footprint on your descendants, will become free from all sins. Please go at once to Ramaṇaka-dvīpa. Don't fear Garuḍa. He will bow down with devotion when he sees My footprint on your head. By My blessing not one of your descendants will fear Garuḍa. Child, ask for a boon. Give up your fears and ask a boon from Me, the person who has broken your fears to pieces.”

Hearing Lord Kṛṣṇa's words, Kāliya trembled with fear. Folding his hands, he spoke.

Śrī Kāliya said: “O Lord, O giver of boons, please give to me the boon that I will always remember and always be devoted to Your lotus feet birth after birth. I do not wish any other boon. Whether I take birth in a *brāhmaṇa*'s family or in an animal's womb, my life will be a great success if I remember Your lotus feet. If I live in Svargaloka but cannot remember You, then my life is a great failure. The place where I can remember Your feet is the best of places. Lasting for either a moment or ten million *kalpas*, a life spent in Your service is a great success. Otherwise it is a failure. They who serve Your lotus feet never die. For them there is no birth, death, old-age, lamentation, pain, and fear. Your devotees do not wish to become a demigod, an Indra, or a Brahmā if by doing so they cannot serve Your lotus feet. Your devotees see the four kinds of liberation, what to speak of other things, as equal to a torn piece of cloth. O Lord, I attained Your *mantra* from Lord Śeṣa. Since then I have always meditated on You. Now, by Your mercy, I have become part of Your family. Aware that I was immature in devotional service, the advanced devotee Garuḍa was able to insult me and force me to go far from my home.

“O giver of boons, please give me advanced devotion. In that way Garuḍa will be an advanced devotee and I will be an equally advanced devotee. Then Garuḍa will not be able to eat me. When he sees Your lotus footprint on my head he will leave me in peace, not considering whether I have virtues or faults. O Lord, now the snake-kings are under my control, and I am free of their control. Whom, except for my master, Lord Śeṣa, need I fear?”

“The Supreme Personality of Godhead, whom the demigods, the kings of the demigods, the sages, the *manus*, and the humans cannot see, even in meditation or in dream, has now come before my eyes. O almighty Lord, out of kindness to Your devotees You show them Your transcendental form. You have a transcendental form and transcendental qualities, and then again, in Your impersonal aspect, You have neither form nor qualities. You are supremely independent. Your desires are all fulfilled. You are the resting-place of all and the seed from which all has come. You are eternal. You are the master of all. You are the witness of all. You are the Supersoul in everyone's heart. You have the power to appear in any form You wish.

“Brahmā, Śiva, Śeṣa, Yamarāja, Indra, and the philosophers who have traveled to the farther shore of the *Vedas* and *Vedāṅgas* become speechless when they try to praise the Supreme Personality of Godhead. How can I, a snake, praise Him properly? O master, O ocean of mercy, O friend of the poor, please forgive me. I am very fallen and wretched. Because I am a fool and a demon, I chewed and swallowed You.

“As the sky cannot be touched with weapons, seen, disobeyed, attained, or excelled, so You, the supremely powerful Lord, cannot be touched with weapons, seen, disobeyed, attained, or excelled.”

After speaking these words, the snake-king fell at the Lord's feet. Pleased, Lord Kṛṣṇa said, "Yes. So be it.", and blessed him.

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi said: After giving the snake-king His blessings, Lord Kṛṣṇa, the master of the universes, spoke sweet and pleasing words.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa said: “Child, please travel on the path of the Yamunā and with your family go to Ramaṇaka-dvīpa, which is glorious like the city of Indra.”

Hearing Lord Kṛṣṇa's order, the snake wept. Filled with love, he said, "O Lord, when will I see Your lotus feet again?"

Bowing before Lord Kṛṣṇa a hundred times, Kāliya, overcome with unhappiness in separation from the Lord, with his wife and family traveled on the water path and went to Ramaṇaka-dvīpa.

O Nārada, the water of that lake in the Yamunā then became sweet like nectar, and all living beings there became happy. When Kāliya came to his home, he saw that it was now as opulent as the palace of Indra. By the order of the Supreme Lord, who is an ocean of mercy, Viśvakarmā had made it that way.

Fearless, happy, and always rapt in meditation on Lord Kṛṣṇa, the snake-king Kāliya lived there with his wife, children, and associates.

O child, thus I have repeated Lord Kṛṣṇa's wonderful, delightful, transcendental pastimes, which bring liberation. What more do you wish to hear?

Śrī Sūta said: “Hearing the sage's words, Nārada became happy. Then he expressed a doubt to the sage famous for breaking all doubts.”

Śrī Nārada said: “Why did Kāliya leave his previous home and go to the Yamunā's shore? O guru of the universes, please tell me that.”

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi said: “O Nārada, please listen and I will tell you the ancient account of this, which I heard from Dharma Muni's mouth in the Malaya Hills during the Sūrya-parva festival.

“As they were discussing Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes on the western shore of the Suprabhā river in the assembly of sages, Pulaha Muni asked Dharma Muni to tell this story.

“Then Dharma Muni, who is an ocean of mercy, repeated that wonderful story. It was there that I heard it. O *brāhmaṇa*, please listen, and I will tell it to you.

“By Lord Śeṣa's order, every year, at Puṣkara-tīrtha, on the full-moon day of the month of Kārttika, the snakes carefully bathe and with devotion and awe, fearfully worship Garuḍa with flowers, incense, lamps, foods, and many offerings.

“Very proud, Kāliya would not participate in the worship. Indeed, he wanted to forcibly devour the offering.

“The snakes appealed to Kāliya. Then they tried to stop him by force. They could not stop him. Then Garuḍa came. Seeing Garuḍa, the snakes fought with him to protect Kāliya. O sage, they fought until sunrise. Defeated by Garuḍa's great power, the snakes fled to Lord Śeṣa, their protector, who can remove their fears. Seeing the snakes flee, fearless Kāliya stood his ground and stared at Garuḍa. In truth Kāliya was a sincere devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is an ocean of mercy. His thoughts fixed on Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, Kāliya fought Garuḍa. For forty-five minutes they fought a terrible duel.

“Finally defeated by Garuḍa's superior strength, Kāliya fled to a lake in the Yamunā. Because of Saubhari Muni's curse, Garuḍa could not come there. All frightened snakes went there.”

Śrī Nārada said: “O sage, why did Saubhari Muni curse Garuḍa? Why was Garuḍa, the carrier of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, not able to go to that lake?”

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi said: For a hundred thousand celestial years the perfect *yogī* Saubhari stayed there performing austerities and meditating on Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. Near the meditating sage a *śakula* fish fearlessly and happily swam back and forth with its associates in the Yamunā water. Accompanied by its friends, the fish would raise its tail and earnestly swim around the sage, happily coming and going again and again. Looking again and again at the big and fat *śakula* fish, Garuḍa quickly grabbed it in his beak in the sage's presence.

With angry eyes the sage saw the fish being abducted. Seeing the sage's anger, Garuḍa dropped the fish and it fell back into the water. Frightened of Garuḍa, the fish stayed in front of the sage. The sage spoke to Garuḍa, who wanted to retake the fish.

Śrī Saubhari said: ‘O king of birds, get away from me! Go far away from me! What right have you to grab this big fish in my presence? You think that because you carry Lord Kṛṣṇa you are so very important. Lord Kṛṣṇa can create many millions of carriers like you. By moving my eyebrow I can burn you to ashes in a moment. You may carry Lord Kṛṣṇa, but that does not mean that we are all the servants of you. If from this moment on you dare come to my lake, by my curse you will be at once burned to ashes.’

Hearing the great sage's words, Garuḍa trembled. Again and again remembering Lord Kṛṣṇa's feet, and bowing before the sage, Garuḍa left.

O king of *brāhmaṇas*, from that time on whenever he even heard the name of that lake, Garuḍa trembled. In this way I have repeated what I heard from the mouth of Dharma Muni. Now please hear something confidential, auspicious, and pleasing to the ears.

“When after a long time Lord Kṛṣṇa still did not emerge from the water, the boys on the Yamunā's shore became bewildered and wept in grief. Some boys beat their chests in grief. Some fell unconscious to the ground now that they had lost Kṛṣṇa. Some gopa boys, overcome by the thought of life without Kṛṣṇa, wanted to drown themselves in the lake, but other boys stopped them. Some lamented and tried to commit suicide. Other wise boys took care to stop them.

“Some cried out, "Alas! Alas!", and some cried out, "Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!" Some went to tell Nanda what had happened. Some, overcome with grief, bewilderment, and fear, said among themselves, "What shall we do? Where has our Kṛṣṇa gone? O Kṛṣṇa! O son of Nanda! O friend more dear than life! Please appear before us. We are on the verge of death." Agitated, frightened, and weeping, some boys went and told Nanda, Yaśodā, and Balarāma all that had happened.

“Hearing the news, all the griefstricken, red-lotus-eyed *gopas* and *gopīs* left at once. Overcome with grief, they arrived at the Yamunā's shore and wept with the boys.

“Some *gopas* and *gopīs* tried to enter the lake. Others stopped them. Some beat their chests in despair. Some wailed. Some fainted. Rādhā tried to enter the lake. The others stopped Her. She fainted in grief and became like a corpse by the lakeside.

“Seeing Nanda grieving, Yaśodā fallen unconscious, and the boys and girls wailing in grief, Lord Balarāma, the wisest of philosophers, enlightened them all.

Lord Balarāma said: ‘O *gopas*! O *gopīs*! O boys! Everyone! Please hear My words! O Nanda, best of the wise, please remember Garga Muni's words. How can any calamity fall on the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who creates all the universes, as Lord Śeṣa holds them up, and as Lord Śiva destroys them at the end? How can there be a fearful situation for Lord Kṛṣṇa, who as Mahā-Viṣṇu manifests hosts of universes from the pores of His transcendental body? How can there be defeat for Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the end of time, the killer that kills death, and the creator of the creator? He is smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest. Who, unseen, stays in the hearts of all, even the great *yogīs*. The *Vedas* say that as the directions cannot be confined to a single place and as the sky cannot even be seen, so Lord Kṛṣṇa, the master of Rādhā, cannot be brought under anyone's control. Spirit is not visible to material eyes. It cannot be cut by any weapon, bound, killed, burned, hurt, or distressed. This the wise know. Revealing His effulgent spiritual form, which has neither beginning, middle, nor end, Lord Kṛṣṇa appears in the meditations of the devotees. Lord Kṛṣṇa floats on the water that fills half the universe. From His lotus navel the demigod Brahmā is born. How can Kṛṣṇa be in trouble in the middle of a small lake?

“O father Nanda, a mosquito will swallow the entire universe before some snake can swallow My master, Kṛṣṇa. I have spoken to you the highest, most secret transcendental knowledge, knowledge hidden even from the *yogīs*, knowledge that cuts the bonds of repeated birth and death.

“Hearing Lord Balarāma's words and remembering Garga Muni's words, the men and women of Vraja ended their lamentation. They all became enlightened. Only Yaśodā and Rādhā remained unhappy. Separated from Lord Kṛṣṇa, they could not be peaceful at heart.

“O sage, the next moment the happy men and women of Vraja saw emerging from the waters Lord Kṛṣṇa, who was handsome and smiling, whose face was an autumn moon, whose limbs and garments were not wet, whose sandal-paste ointment was not broken, who was decorated with a

peacock-feather crown and all ornaments, who shone with spiritual splendor, who was playing His flute, and who was not aware that anything was amiss.

“Seeing her boy, smiling Yaśodā embraced Him to her breast. Her face and eyes effulgent with happiness, she kissed His lotus face. Nanda, Balarāma, and Rohiṇī, happily held Kṛṣṇa in their laps. With unblinking eyes everyone happily gazed at Lord Kṛṣṇa. Blinded with love, all the boys embraced Kṛṣṇa. With the *cakora* birds of their eyes, the *gopīs* drank the moon of Kṛṣṇa's face.

“In a moment a forest-fire suddenly flared up and surrounded the people and their cows. Seeing the fire big like a mountain, everyone panicked. With bowed heads and folded hands, the frightened men, boys, and *gopīs* all offered prayers to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Everyone said: ‘O Lord Kṛṣṇa, as in the past You protected us from all dangers again and again, now please protect us from this forest fire. You are our worshipable Lord. You are the Deity worshiped in our family. Agni, Varuṇa, Candra, Sūrya, the demigods headed by Brahmā, Śiva, Śeṣa, Dharma, Yama, Kuvera, Pavana, and Iśāna, the kings of the sages, the *manus*, the human beings, demons, *yakṣas*, *rākṣasas*, and *kinnaras*, and every one of the moving or unmoving living entities are all Your potencies.’

“O master of all, You are the creator, maintainer, and destroyer of the universes. Everything is manifest and unmanifest according to Your wish. O Kṛṣṇa, please make us fearless. Please extinguish this fire. We take shelter of You. Please rescue us, Your surrendered devotees.

“After speaking these words, they all meditated on Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. With His nectar glance, Lord Kṛṣṇa then extinguished the forest fire.

“A person who recites this prayer becomes free from forest-fires, calamities, and dangers that threaten his life. Of this there is no doubt. His enemy's army is destroyed. He is victorious everywhere. In this life He attains sincere devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa. At the end of this life he attains direct service to Lord Kṛṣṇa.”

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi said: “O Nārada, after extinguishing the forest fire, Lord Kṛṣṇa went with everyone to His home, which was opulent like Kuvera's palace. Then Nanda gave great charity to the *brāhmaṇas*. He gave a great feast for them and for his relatives and friends also. Happy Nanda had the *brāhmaṇas* recite the *Vedas*, chant the holy names of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and perform many auspicious rituals. In every home of Vṛndāvana everyone was happy. Everyone was rapt in meditation on Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet.

“Thus I have related Lord Kṛṣṇa's auspicious pastimes, which are like a great fire that burns all the sins and calamities of Kali-yuga.”