

Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa - Chapter Eighteen

Vipra-patnī-mokṣaṇa

Delivering the Wives of the *Brāhmaṇas*

Śrī Śaunaka said: “O Sūta, how wonderful are these beautiful and secret pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa we have heard! These pastimes bring both happiness and liberation. After hearing of the building of Vṛndāvana City, what did Devarṣi Nārada then ask Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi about the auspicious pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa?”

Śrī Sūta said: “After hearing of the building of Vṛndāvana City, the great sage Nārada asked about Lord Kṛṣṇa’s beautiful transcendental pastimes.”

Śrī Nārada said: “O great sage, O ocean of wisdom, please narrate Lord Kṛṣṇa’s nectar pastimes to me, your surrendered disciple.”

Hearing Nārada’s words, Śrī Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi recounted Lord Kṛṣṇa’s wonderful transcendental pastimes.

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi said: “One day, accompanied by Balarāma and the boys, Kṛṣṇa went to a place in Madhuvana forest by the Yamunā’s shore. The cows grazed and the boys played. After a while the boys became tired and hungry. The *gopa* boys said to Kṛṣṇa: ‘O Śrī Kṛṣṇa, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, we have become very hungry. What should we do? Please tell us, who are Your servants.’ Hearing the boys’ words, Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is an ocean of mercy, spoke truthful and auspicious words, His face and eyes filled with happiness.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa said: ‘O boys, please go to the pleasant place where *Brāhmaṇas* are performing a *yajña*. Beg some food from the *brāhmaṇas* intent on performing a *yajña* there. These *brāhmaṇas*, learned in the *Śruti* and *Smṛti*, and followers of Aṅgirā Muni, are performing a *yajña* in their *āśrama* near the forest. They are all great devotees free of material desires and yearning for liberation, and they worship Me by performing *yajñas*. Still, bewildered by My illusory potency, they do not know that I am here, pretending to be an ordinary human being. If the *brāhmaṇas* intent on performing *yajñas* will not give you any food, then ask their wives, who are naturally kind to children.’

Hearing Lord Kṛṣṇa’s words, the exalted boys approached the *brāhmaṇas* and stood before them with humbly bowed heads.

The boys said, “O best of the *brāhmaṇas*, please give us some food.” Some *brāhmaṇas* pretended not to hear. Others heard, but simply stood and smiled. Then the boys went to the kitchen, where the *brāhmaṇas*’ wives were cooking. The boys bowed their heads before the *brāhmaṇas*’ wives.

Bowing down, the boys said, “O *brāhmaṇas*’ wives devoted to your husbands! O mothers! Please give some food to us boys. We are hungry.”

Looking at the beautiful boys and hearing their words, the saintly women, their lotus faces smiling, asked them a question.

“The *brāhmaṇas*’ wives said: ‘Who are you? Who sent you? What are your names? Tell us and we will give you many kinds of delicious, beautifully spiced foods.’

“Hearing the *brāhmaṇas*’ wives’ words, the happy boys smiled.

“The boys said: ‘Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma sent us. We are very hungry. O mothers, please give us some food and we will at once take it to Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma are far from here. They are at the roots of a banyan tree in Madhuvana forest. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma are also tired and hungry. They are also asking for some food. O mothers, please tell us now. Will you give us some food, or not?’

“Hearing the *gopa* boys’ words, the *brāhmaṇas*’ wives became eager to see the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Balarāma. The hairs of their bodies stood erect and their eyes become filled with tears of happiness.

“Taking many kinds of perfectly spiced foods, beautiful rice, sweet-rice, *piṣṭaka* cakes, sweet yogurt, milk, *ghee*, and honey, and placing them in shining silver and brass jars, all the *brāhmaṇas*’ wives went to see Lord Kṛṣṇa. Their hearts filled with many desires, the fortunate *brāhmaṇas*’ wives went, eager to see Lord Kṛṣṇa.

“Coming to that place, the wives saw Lord Kṛṣṇa, who was staying with Balarāma and the boys at the base of a banyan tree, who was like a moon surrounded by many stars, who was dark, youthful, handsome, charming, smiling, and peaceful, who was dressed in yellow silk, who was Śrī Rādhā’s beloved, whose face was an autumn moon, who was decorated with jewel bracelets, armlets, anklets, and other ornaments, who wore a splendid jewel necklace reaching to His knees, whose neck and chest were splendid with a jasmine garland, who was anointed with sandal, *aguru*, musk, and *kuṅkuma*, and whose nose and cheeks were graceful and handsome. The *brāhmaṇas*’ wives then offered prayers to Lord Kṛṣṇa, whose beautiful teeth were splendid as pomegranate seeds, who wore a peacock feather in His hair, who was greater than the greatest, who wore a splendid *kadamba* flower on each ear, whom the *yogīs* cannot find in their meditations, who is overcome with kindness for His devotees, and to whom Brahmā, Śiva, Yama, Śeṣa, Indra, and the kings of the sages offer many prayers. The *brāhmaṇas*’ wives gazed at Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and bowed down before Him with devotion. Then, as far as their knowledge of Him allowed, they offered prayers to Him.

“The *brāhmaṇas*’ wives said: ‘You are the Supreme Brahman, the supreme transcendental abode. Your activities are not material. You are free from the false ego of identifying with matter. You have no material qualities and no material form, for Your qualities and forms are all spiritual. You are the Supersoul, whose form is not material, who is not touched by matter, and who is the all-pervading witness of all. You are Lord Viṣṇu, the Puruṣa-avatāra, and You are the material energy. You are the cause of both Lord Viṣṇu and the world of matter, and You are above Them both. Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, who control creation, maintenance, and destruction, and who are the seeds of everything, are Your partial incarnations. O almighty Lord, You are the father of Lord Viṣṇu, who is the entire universe, and from the pores of whose body all the universes have come. You are power and the powerful. You are knowledge and the knower. You are above everything. Even the *Vedas* cannot properly describe You. Who in this world is qualified to offer prayers to You? You are the *mahat-tattva* and the other causes of material creation. You are the five *tan-mātras*. You are the seed from which all potencies have come. You are the possessor of all potencies. You are the master of all potencies. You are the shelter of all potencies. You are

everything. You are inconceivable, self-effulgent, eternal, and full of bliss. You have no material forms. Your forms are spiritual. You have the power to manifest any form You wish. You have no material senses, but still You are aware of everything experienced by the material senses of all. Trying to praise You, Goddess Sarasvatī becomes speechless. Śiva, Śeṣa, Brahmā, and Yamarāja also become speechless. Pārvatī, Lakṣmī, Rādhā, Savitrī, the mother of the Vedas, and the Vedas themselves are all speechless. Who is wise and learned enough to glorify You? We are very unqualified. How can we glorify You properly? O king of the kings of the wise, please be pleased with us. O Lord, O friend of the fallen, please be merciful to us.’

“After speaking these words, the *brāhmaṇas*’ wives fell at Lord Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet. His face and eyes smiling, Lord Kṛṣṇa made them fearless.

“A person who, when he worships the Lord, recites these prayers spoken by the *brāhmaṇas*’ wives, will attain a destination like what they attained. Of this there is no doubt.

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi said: “Seeing them fallen at His lotus feet, Lord Kṛṣṇa said to them, “Auspiciousness to you! You may ask a boon.”

“Hearing Lord Kṛṣṇa’s words, the *brāhmaṇas*’ wives became happy. Their heads humbly bowed, they spoke to Him words of devotion.

“The *brāhmaṇas*’ wives said: ‘O child, we do not wish any ordinary boon. We desire only Your lotus feet. Please give us service to You. Give us sincere devotion to You, devotion that is very difficult to attain. We wish to gaze always on Your lotus face. O Kṛṣṇa, O Almighty Lord, please be merciful to us. Do not make us return again to our homes.’

“Hearing the *brāhmaṇas*’ wives’ words, Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the master of the three worlds and an ocean of mercy, and who was surrounded by the *gopa* boys, said, “Yes. So be it.”

“Then Lord Kṛṣṇa accepted the *brāhmaṇas*’ wives offering of delicious foods sweet like nectar. He ate it and He had the boys also eat.

“When Lord Kṛṣṇa and the boys had finished eating, the *brāhmaṇas*’ wives saw descending from the sky a beautiful golden chariot splendid with jewel domes splendid with jewel mirrors, jewel furniture, jewel pillars, jewel domes, white *cāmaras*, curtains pure like fire, and many *pārijāta* flowers, glorious like a hundred moons, beautiful, traveling as fast as the mind, filled with splendid liberated associates of the Lord, associates decorated with forest garlands, wearing yellow garments and jewel ornaments, dark, handsome, in the full bloom of youth, having two arms, holding flutes in their hands, dressed as *gopa* boys, and their hair decorated with peacock feathers and *guñjā*. Descending from the chariot, they at once bowed down before Lord Kṛṣṇa’s feet. Then they told the *brāhmaṇas*’ wives to enter the chariot. The *brāhmaṇas*’ wives at once left their human forms and became liberated *gopīs*. They bowed down before Lord Kṛṣṇa and went to Goloka, where they yearned to go.

“Then, employing His *yogamāyā* potency, Lord Kṛṣṇa created shadow forms of the wives and placed them in the *brāhmaṇas*’ homes.

“The *brāhmaṇas*, who in their hearts dearly loved them, were searching for their wives when they suddenly saw them on the path. Seeing their wives, the humbled *brāhmaṇas* — the hairs of their bodies erect and their faces and eyes filled with smiles, spoke.

“The *brāhmaṇas* said: ‘You are fortunate! You have seen the Supreme Personality of Godhead! Our lives are useless and our Vedic studies are a waste of time. Lord Kṛṣṇa’s glories are proclaimed in the *Vedas* and *Purāṇas*. Lord Kṛṣṇa is everyone’s father. It is Lord Kṛṣṇa who gives to everyone the results of austerities, *mantras*, vows, charity, Vedic study, worship, bathing in holy places, and fasting. For one who serves Lord Kṛṣṇa, what is the use of austerities? For one who has attained a *kalpa-vṛkṣa* tree that fulfills all desires, what is the use of other trees? For one who in his heart has Lord Kṛṣṇa, what is the use of pious deeds? Why should a person powerful enough to jump over the ocean make a display of jumping over a well?

“After speaking these words, the *brāhmaṇas* returned home with their elevated wives and enjoyed with them.

“The wives were even more affectionate, playful, and expert in household duties than before. Still, bewildered by the Lord’s illusory potency, the *brāhmaṇas* did not suspect that anything was amiss.

“Then, accompanied by Balarāma and the boys, Lord Kṛṣṇa, the eternal Supreme Personality of Godhead, returned to His home.

“Thus I have told you all I heard from Dharma Muni’s mouth about Lord Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental glories. What more do you wish to hear?

“Śrī Nārada said: ‘O king of sages, what pious deeds did the *brāhmaṇas*’ wives perform that they attained a destination even great *munis* and *siddhas* cannot attain? Who were these pious women in their previous birth. Because of what fault did they come to the earth? O breaker of doubts! Please tell.’

“Śrī Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi said: ‘In their previous birth they were the wives of the seven sages. They were incomparably beautiful, virtuous, noble-hearted, religious, devoted to their husbands, youthful, buxom, broad-hipped, clothed in splendid garments, decorated with jewel ornaments, fair like molten gold, beautiful with smiling lotus faces, and able with a crooked glance to bewilder the minds of the greatest sages. Seeing their beautiful faces, breasts, and hips, the fire-god Agni desired them. He was tormented by the fires of desire. As the wives cooked over a fire, Agni, his mind destroyed by lust, from far away touched their limbs through the flames. The chaste wives, their hearts and minds placed at their husbands’ lotus feet, did not understand what was happening. Bewildered with lust, Agni stared at them and touched them again and again through the flames.’

“Understanding Agni’s mind, powerful Aṅgirā Muni cursed him.

“Coming to his senses, Agni begged the sage for mercy. His head bowed with shame, Agni trembled to think of the *brāhmaṇa*’s power.

“The angry sage then cursed the wives that had been touched by an outsider. He said, ‘Sinful women, go and take birth as human beings! Take birth in *brāhmaṇas*’ homes. Respectable *brāhmaṇas* born in our family will marry you.’

“Hearing the sage’s words, the loving wives wept. Folding their hands, they all spoke to him, the best of the wise.

“The sage’s wives said: ‘O best of sages, please don’t abandon us. We are sinless and chaste. We did not know we were being touched by an outsider. You should not abandon us. You should not punish us, your devoted servants. When will we see your lotus feet again? O sage, for a chaste wife separation from her dear husband is an unbearable suffering, more terrible than being cut by swords, struck by lightning, or tortured in every way. How can we leave such saintly and virtuous husbands and go to the earth to accept other sages as our husbands? O king of sages, if we go, then when will we return here? One who knows what is right will not blame us for being touched without our knowledge. Even though Indra raped her, Ahalyā became pure and regained her husband. Why reject us simply because we were touched? O follower of religious principles, O sage who has crossed to the farther shore of the *Vedas* and *Vedāṅgas*, please think about this. You are the son of the demigod Brahmā, the *Vedas*’ author. You are the best of all knowers of the *Vedas*. Afraid of outsiders, wives take shelter of their husbands, but if the wives become afraid of their own husbands, of whom can they take shelter? O follower of religious principles, who is so weak that he cannot punish a frightened son, disciple, or wife? Strong or weak, a man has power over his own property. He can sell his own property, and no one can stop him.’

“Hearing the wives’ words, the great sage became compassionate. Lovingly gazing at their lotus faces, he wept. Even though he was the best of the *yogīs* and philosophers, and even though he had traveled to the farther shore of the *Vedas* and *Vedāṅgas*, he was bewildered at the prospect of separation from his wives. Everyone became unhappy, their hearts agitated by the impending separation. Gazing at his wives’ faces, the sage stood like a wooden doll. After long grieving, the sage, who was the best of all knowers of the *Vedas*, consulted with his brothers, and spoke to the wives.

“Śrī Aṅgirā said: ‘Please listen, and I will speak the truth. The *Vedas* say that one must experience what one’s *karma* ordains. Now your destined association with me is ended. The *Vedas* say that when the fruits of *karma* are exhausted they cannot be regained. O beloveds, the results of good and bad *karma* in this world must be experienced. If they are not experienced, they do not perish even after a billion births. He who again enjoys with a wife that has been enjoyed by another is the lowest of men. He burns in hell for as long as the sun and moon shine in the sky. A woman enjoyed by another is not worthy to assist in *yajñas* for the demigods and *pitās*. Such a sinful woman is worthy only to burn in hell. If her husband embraces her, his power, glory, and wealth are at once destroyed. Lord Brahmā says that the demigods and *pitās* are not pleased with the *yajñas* offered by such a husband. For this reason an intelligent man carefully protects his wife. Otherwise he becomes a sinner and goes to hell. A wise man protects his wife at every step. A wife trusted by her husband is a box of faults. One should always protect a cooking pot and a wife. If others touch them, they become impure. If only the owner touches them, they remain pure. She who cheats her husband and goes to another is the lowest of woman. She goes to hell for as long as the sun and moon shine in the sky. The Yamadūtas take her to hell. If she tries to flee their tortures, they beat her with sticks. Big as snakes, fearsome sharp-fanged worms bite an unchaste woman day and night, again and again. Again and again she screams terribly, but she does not die because she has only a subtle body of mind and intelligence. After enjoying a few moments of pleasure she becomes infamous in this world, and after death she attains a life of torture.

“Lord Brahmā says that a woman who desires another man or who is touched by another man is a sinner and should be rejected. Therefore the pious carefully keep their wives from the gaze of

others. Not seen even by the sun, their wives remain pure, chaste, and devoted to their husbands. An independent woman that goes where she likes, is seen by all, and chases after men, is like a pig. A wife who, afraid to break the religious principle of chastity, is faithful to her husband, goes with him to Vaikuṅṭha. Now please go to a human birth on the earth. You will see Lord Kṛṣṇa and simply by seeing Him, you will go to Goloka. Employing His *yogamāyā* potency, Lord Kṛṣṇa will create shadow duplicates of your forms. These shadows will go to your homes. They will stay in the *brāhmaṇas*' homes. Then, by your partial expansions, you will again become our wives. Of this there is no doubt. In this way our curse has become the best of blessings.

“After speaking these words, the grief-stricken sage became silent. By his curse, the women went to the earth and became the wives of *brāhmaṇas*.”

“With devotion they offered food to Lord Kṛṣṇa and then they went to Lord Kṛṣṇa's abode. In this way the curse became better than a blessing. A great soul's curse is better than a sinner's blessing. Even the anger of great devotees brings a great good fortune. Without calamity first, how can there be glory in this world? Even though rejected by their husbands, the *brāhmaṇas*' wives attained liberation.

“Thus I have described Lord Kṛṣṇa's transcendental pastimes and the beautiful story of how some saintly women attained liberation. O king of *brāhmaṇas*, the history of Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes is new and fresh at every step. They who hear it never become jaded and tired. How can one tire of what is the very best?”