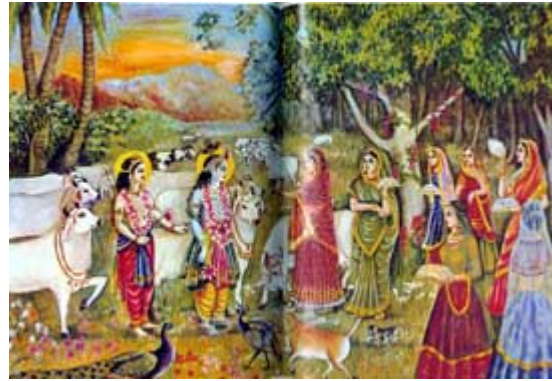
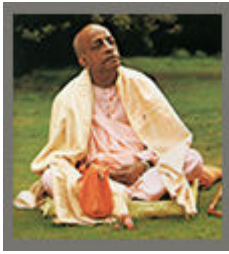


23: Delivering the Wives of the Brahmanas Who Performed Sacrifices



The morning passed, and the cowherd boys were very hungry because they had not eaten breakfast. They immediately approached Krsna and Balarama and said, "Dear Krsna and Balarama, You are both all-powerful; You can kill many, many demons, but today we are much afflicted with hunger, and this is disturbing us. Please arrange for something that will mitigate our hunger."

Requested in this way by Their friends, Lord Krsna and Balarama immediately showed compassion on certain wives of *brahmanas* who were performing sacrifices. These wives were great devotees of the Lord, and Krsna took this opportunity to bless them. He said, "My dear friends, please go to the house of the *brahmanas* nearby. They are now engaged in performing Vedic sacrifices known as *angirasa*, for they desire elevation to heavenly planets. All of you please go to them." Then Lord Krsna warned His friends, "These *brahmanas* are not Vaisnavas. They cannot even chant Our names, Krsna and Balarama. They are very busy in chanting the Vedic hymns, although the purpose of Vedic knowledge is to find Me. But because they are not attracted by the names of Krsna and Balarama, you had better not ask them for anything in My name. Better ask for some charity in the name of Balarama."

Charity is generally given to high class *brahmanas*, but Krsna and Balarama did not appear in a *brahmana* family. Balarama was known as the son of Vasudeva, a *ksatriya*, and Krsna was known in Vrndavana as the son of Nanda Maharaja, who was a *vaisya*. Neither belonged to the *brahmana* community. Therefore, Krsna considered that the *brahmanas* engaged in performing sacrifices might not be induced to give charity to a *ksatriya* and *vaisya*. "But at least if you utter the name of Balarama, they may prefer to give in

charity to a *ksatriya*, rather than to Me, because I am only a *vaisya*."

Being thus ordered by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, all the boys went to the *brahmanas* and began to ask for some charity. They approached them with folded hands and fell down on the ground to offer respect. "O earthly gods, kindly hear us who are ordered by Lord Krsna and Balarama. We hope you know Them both very well, and we wish you all good fortune. Krsna and Balarama are tending cows nearby, and we have accompanied Them. We have come to ask for some food from you. You are all *brahmanas* and knowers of religious principles, and if you think that you should give us charity, then give us some food and we shall all eat along with Krsna and Balarama. You are the most respectable *brahmanas* within the human society, and you are expected to know all the principles of religious procedure."

Although the boys were village boys and were not expected to be learned in all the Vedic principles of religious ritual, they hinted that because of their association with Krsna and Balarama, they knew all those principles. When the Supreme Personality of Godhead Krsna and Balarama asked for food, the boys would immediately deliver it without hesitation because it is stated in the *Bhagavad-gita* that one should perform *yajna* (sacrifices) only for the satisfaction of Visnu.

The boys continued, "Lord Visnu as Krsna and Balarama is standing waiting, and you should immediately deliver whatever food you have in your stock." They also explained to the *brahmanas* how foodstuffs are to be accepted. Generally, the Vaisnavas, or pure devotees of the Lord, do not take part in ordinary sacrificial performances. But they know very well the ceremonials called *diksa*, *pasusamstha sautramani*. One is permitted to take food after the procedure of *diksa* and before the animal sacrificial ceremony and the *sautramani*, or ceremony in which liquors are also offered. The boys said, "We can take your food at the present stage of your ceremony, for now it will not be prohibitory. So you can deliver us the foodstuff."

Although the companions of Lord Krsna and Balarama were simple cowherd boys, they were in a position to dictate even to the high class *brahmanas* engaged in

the Vedic rituals of sacrifices. But the *smarta brahmanas*, who were simply sacrificial-minded, could not understand the dictation of the transcendental devotees of the Lord. They could not even appreciate the begging of the Supreme Lord, Krsna and Balarama. Although they heard all the arguments on behalf of Krsna and Balarama, they did not care for them, and they refused to speak to the boys. Despite being highly elevated in the knowledge of Vedic sacrificial rites, all such nondevotee *brahmanas*, although they think of themselves as very highly elevated, are ignorant, foolish persons. All their activities are useless because they do not know the purpose of the *Vedas*, as it is explained in the *Bhagavad-gita*: to understand Krsna. In spite of their advancement in Vedic knowledge and rituals, they do not understand Krsna; therefore their knowledge of the *Vedas* is superficial. Lord Caitanya, therefore, gave His valuable opinion that a person does not have to be born in a *brahmana* family; if he knows Krsna or the science of Krsna consciousness, he is more than a *brahmana*, and he is quite fit to become spiritual master.

There are various details to be observed in the performance of sacrifices, they are known as collectively as *desa*. They are as follows: *kala* means the time, *prthak dravya*, the different detailed paraphernalia, *mantra*, hymns, *tantra*, scriptural evidences, *agni*, fire, *rtvij*, learned performers of sacrifices, *devata*, the demigods, *yajamana*, the performer of the sacrifices, *kratu*, the sacrifice itself, and *dharma*, the procedures. All these are for satisfying Krsna. It is confirmed that He is the actual enjoyer of all sacrifices because He is directly the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the Supreme Absolute Truth, beyond the conception or speculation of material senses. He is present just like an ordinary human boy. But for persons who identify themselves with this body, it is very difficult to understand Him. The *brahmanas* were very interested in the comforts of this material body and in elevation to the higher planetary residences called *svarga-vasa*. They were therefore completely unable to understand the position of Krsna.

When the boys saw that the *brahmanas* would not speak to them, they became very disappointed. They then returned to Lord Krsna and Balarama and explained everything that had happened. After hearing their statements, the Supreme Personality began to

smile. He told them that they should not be sorry for being refused by the *brahmanas* because that is the way of begging. He convinced them that while one is engaged in collecting or begging, one should not think that he will be successful everywhere. He may be unsuccessful in some places, but that should not be cause for disappointment. Lord Krsna then asked all the boys to go again, but this time to the wives of those *brahmanas* engaged in sacrifices. He also informed them that these wives were great devotees. "They are always absorbed in thinking of Us. Go there and ask for some food in My name and the name of Balarama, and I am sure that they will deliver you as much food as you desire."

Carrying out Krsna's order, the boys immediately went to the wives of the *brahmanas*. They found the wives sitting inside their house. They were very beautifully decorated with ornaments. After offering them all respectful obeisances, the boys said, "Dear mothers, please accept our humble obeisances and hear our statement. May we inform you that Lord Krsna and Balarama are nearby. They have come here with the cows, and you may know also that we have come here under Their instructions. All of us are very hungry; therefore, we have come to you for some food. Please give us something to eat for Krsna, Balarama and ourselves."

Immediately upon hearing this, the wives of the *brahmanas* became anxious for Krsna and Balarama. These reactions were spontaneous. They did not have to be convinced of the importance of Krsna and Balarama; immediately upon hearing Their names, they became very anxious to see Them. Being advanced by thinking of Krsna constantly, they were performing the greatest form of mystic meditation. All the wives then became very busily engaged in filling up different pots with nice foodstuff. Due to the performance of the sacrifice, the various food was all very palatable. After collecting a feast, they prepared to go to Krsna, their most lovable object, exactly in the way rivers flow to the sea.

For a long time the wives had been anxious to see Krsna. However, when they were preparing to leave home to go see Him, their husbands, fathers, sons and relatives asked them not to go. But the wives did not comply. When a devotee is called by the attraction of Krsna, he does not care for bodily ties. The women

entered the forest of Vrndavana on the bank of the Yamuna, which was verdant with vegetation and newly grown vines and flowers. Within that forest, they saw Krsna and Balarama engaged in tending the cows, along with Their very affectionate boy friends.

The *brahmanas'* wives saw Krsna putting on a garment glittering like gold. He wore a nice garland of forest flowers and a peacock feather on His head. He was also painted with the minerals found in Vrndavana, and He looked exactly like a dancing actor on a theatrical stage. They saw Him keeping one hand on the shoulder of His friend, and in His other hand, He was holding a lotus flower. His ears were decorated with lilies, He wore marks of *tilaka*, and He was smiling charmingly. With their very eyes, the wives of the *brahmanas* saw the Supreme Personality of Godhead, of whom they had heard so much, who was so dear to them, and in whom their minds were always absorbed. Now they saw Him eye to eye and face to face, and Krsna entered within their hearts through their eyes.

They began to embrace Krsna to their hearts' content, and the distress of separation was mitigated immediately. They were just like great sages who, by their advancement of knowledge, merge into the existence of the Supreme. As the Supersoul living in everyone's heart, Lord Krsna could understand their minds; they had come to Him despite all the protests of their relatives, fathers, husbands, brothers, and all the duties of household affairs. They came just to see Him who was their life and soul. They were actually following Krsna's instruction in the *Bhagavad-gita*: one should surrender to Him, giving up all varieties of occupational and religious duties. The wives of the *brahmanas* actually carried out the instruction of the *Bhagavad-gita* in total. He therefore began to speak to them, smiling very magnificently. It should be noted in this connection that when Krsna entered into the wives' hearts and when they embraced Him and felt the transcendental bliss of being merged with Him, the Supreme Lord Krsna did not lose His identity, nor did the individual wives lose theirs. The individuality of both the Lord and the wives remained, yet they felt oneness in existence. When a lover submits to his lover without any pinch of personal consideration, that is called oneness. Lord Caitanya has taught us this feeling of oneness in His *Siksastaka*: Krsna may act freely, doing whatever He likes, but the devotee should always be in oneness or in agreement with His desires.

That oneness was exhibited by the wives of the *brahmanas* in their love for Krsna.

Krsna welcomed them with the following words: "My dear wives of the *brahmanas*, you are all very fortunate and welcomed here. Please let Me know what can I do for you. Your coming here, neglecting all the restrictions and hindrances of relatives, fathers, brothers and husbands, in order to see Me, is completely befitting. One who does this actually knows his self interest, because rendering transcendental loving service unto Me, without motive or restriction, is actually auspicious for the living entities."

Lord Krsna here confirms that the highest perfectional stage of the conditioned soul is surrender to Him. One must give up all other responsibilities. This complete surrender unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the most auspicious path for the conditioned soul because the Supreme Lord is the supreme objective of love. Everyone is loving Krsna ultimately, but realization is according to the advancement of his knowledge. One comes to understand that his self is the spirit soul, and the spirit soul is nothing but a part and parcel of the Supreme Lord; therefore the Supreme Lord is the ultimate goal of love, and thus one should surrender unto Him. This surrender is considered auspicious for the conditioned soul. Our life, property, home, wife, children, house, country, society and all paraphernalia which are very dear to us are expansions of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He is the central object of love because He gives us all bliss, expanding Himself in so many ways according to our different situations, namely bodily, mental or spiritual.

"My dear wives of the *brahmanas*," Krsna said. "You can now return to your homes. Engage yourselves in sacrificial activities and be engaged in the service of your husbands and household affairs so that your husbands will be pleased with you, and the sacrifice which they have begun will be properly executed. After all, your husbands are householders, and without your help how can they execute their prescribed duties?"

The wives of the *brahmanas* replied, "Dear Lord, this sort of instruction does not benefit You. Your eternal promise is that You will always protect Your devotees, and now You must fulfill this promise. Anyone who comes and surrenders unto You never goes back to the

conditioned life of material existence. We expect that You will now fulfill Your promise. We have surrendered unto Your lotus feet, which are covered by the *tulasi* leaves, so we have no more desire to return to the company of our so-called relatives, friends, and society and give up the shelter of Your lotus feet. And what shall we do, returning home? Our husbands, brothers, fathers, sons, mothers and our friends do not expect to see us because we have already left them all. Therefore we have no shelter to return to. Please, therefore, do not ask us to return home, but arrange for our stay under Your lotus feet so that we can eternally live under Your protection."

The Supreme Personality of Godhead replied, "My dear wives, rest assured that your husbands will not neglect you on your return, nor will your brothers, sons, or fathers refuse to accept you. Because you are My pure devotees, not only your relatives but also people in general, as well as the demigods, will be satisfied with you." Krsna is situated as the Supersoul in everyone's heart. So if someone becomes a pure devotee of Lord Krsna, he immediately becomes pleasing to everyone. The pure devotee of Lord Krsna is never inimical to anyone. A sane person cannot be an enemy of a pure devotee. "Transcendental love for Me does not depend upon bodily connection," Krsna said further, "but anyone whose mind is always absorbed in Me will surely, very soon, come to Me for My eternal association."

After being instructed by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, all the wives again returned home to their respective husbands. Pleased to see their wives back home, the *brahmanas* executed the performances of sacrifices by sitting together, as it is enjoined in the *sastras*. According to Vedic principle, religious rituals must be executed by the husband and wife together. When the *brahmanas'* wives returned, the sacrifice was duly and nicely executed. One of the *brahmanas'* wives, however, who was forcibly checked from going to see Krsna, began to remember Him as she heard of His bodily features. Being completely absorbed in His thought, she gave up her material body conditioned by the laws of nature.

Sri Govinda, the ever-joyful Personality of Godhead, revealed His transcendental pastimes, appearing just like an ordinary human being, and enjoyed the food offered by the wives of the *brahmanas*. In this way, He

attracted common persons to Krsna consciousness. He attracted to His words and beauty all the cows, cowherd boys and damsels in Vrndavana.

After the return of their wives from Krsna, the *brahmanas* engaged in the performance of sacrifices began to regret their sinful activities in refusing food to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They could finally understand their mistake; engaged in the performance of Vedic rituals, they had neglected the Supreme Personality of Godhead who had appeared just like an ordinary human being and asked for some food. They began to condemn themselves after seeing the faith and devotion of their wives. They regretted very much that, although their wives were elevated to the platform of pure devotional service, they themselves could not understand even a little bit of how to love and offer transcendental loving service to the Supreme Soul. They began to talk among themselves. "To hell with our being born *brahmanas*! To hell with our learning all Vedic literatures! To hell with our performing great sacrifices and observing all the rules and regulations! To hell with our family! To hell with our expert service in performing the rituals exactly to the description of scriptures! To hell with it all, for we have not developed transcendental loving service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is beyond the speculation of the mind, body and senses."

The learned *brahmanas*, expert in Vedic ritualistic performances, were properly regretful, because without developing Krsna consciousness, all discharge of religious duties is simply a waste of time and energy. They continued to talk among themselves; "The external energy of Krsna is so strong that it can create illusion to overcome even the greatest mystic *yogi*. Although we expert *brahmanas* are considered to be the teachers of all other sections of human society, we also have been illusioned by the external energy. Just see how fortunate these women are who have so devotedly dedicated their lives to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krsna. They could easily give up their family connection, which is so difficult to do. Family life is just like a dark well for the continuation of material miseries."

Women in general, being very simple in heart, can very easily take to Krsna consciousness, and when they develop love of Krsna they can easily get liberation from the clutches of *maya*, which is very difficult for

even so-called intelligent and learned men to surpass. According to Vedic injunction, women are not allowed to undergo the purificatory process of initiation by the sacred thread, nor are they allowed to live as *brahmacarini* in the *asrama* of the spiritual master; nor are they advised to undergo the strict disciplinary procedures; nor are they very much expert in discussing philosophy or self-realization. And by nature they are not very pure; nor are they very much attached to auspicious activities. "But how wonderful it is that they have developed transcendental love for Krsna, the Lord of all mystic *yogis*!" the *brahmanas* exclaimed. "They have surpassed all of us in firm faith and devotion unto Krsna. Being too attached to the materialistic way of life, although we are considered to be masters in all purificatory processes, we did not actually know what the goal is. Even though we were reminded of Krsna and Balarama by the cowherd boys, we disregarded Them. We think now that it was simply a trick of mercy upon us by the Supreme Personality of Godhead that He sent His friends to beg foodstuff from us. Otherwise, He had no need to send them. He could have satisfied their hunger then and there just by willing to do so."

If someone denies Krsna's self-sufficiency on hearing that He was tending the cows for livelihood, or if someone doubts His not being in need of the foodstuff, thinking that He was actually hungry, then one should understand that the goddess of fortune is always engaged in His service. In this way the goddess can break her faulty habit of restlessness. In Vedic literatures like *Brahma-samhita* it is stated that Krsna is served in His abode with great respect by not only one goddess of fortune but many thousands. Therefore it is simply illusion for one to think that Krsna begged food from the *brahmanas*. It was actually a trick to show them the mercy of accepting Him in pure devotional service. The Vedic ceremonial paraphernalia, the suitable place, suitable time, different grades of articles for performing ritualistic ceremonies, the Vedic hymns, the priest who is able to perform such sacrifice, the fire and the demigods, the performer of the sacrifice and the religious principles are all meant for understanding Krsna, for Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He is the Supreme Lord Visnu, and the Lord of all mystic *yogis*.

"Because He has appeared as a child in the dynasty of

the Yadus, we were so foolish that we could not understand that He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead," the *brahmanas* said. "But on the other hand, we are very proud because we have such exalted wives who have developed pure transcendental service of the Lord without being shackled by our rigid position. Let us therefore offer our respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of Lord Krsna, under whose illusory energy, called *maya*, we are absorbed in fruitive activities. We therefore pray to the Lord to be kind enough to excuse us because we are simply captivated by His external energy. We transgressed His order without knowing His transcendental glories."

The *brahmanas* repented for their sinful activities. They wanted to go personally to offer their obeisances unto Him, but being afraid of Kamsa, they could not go. In other words, it is very difficult for one to surrender fully unto the Personality of Godhead without being purified by devotional service. The example of the learned *brahmanas* and their wives is vivid. The wives of the *brahmanas*, because they were infused by pure devotional service, did not care for any kind of opposition. They immediately went to Krsna. But although the *brahmanas* had come to know the supremacy of the Lord and were repenting, they were still afraid of King Kamsa because they were too addicted to fruitive activities.

Thus ends the Bhaktivedanta purport of the Twenty-third Chapter of Krsna, "Delivering the Wives of the Brahmanas Who Performed Sacrifices."



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