

CHAPTER THIRTYSIX

*The Festival of the Lord's Retiring to Sleep***Jaimini said:*

1-2. Henceforth I shall describe the excellent festival of (the Deity's) going to bed.¹ With Āṣāḍhī as the starting point, Hari's sleep covers the four months of the rainy season from Āṣāḍhī (eleventh day in the bright half of Āṣāḍha) when the sun goes to the Zodiac of Cancer to Kārttikī (eleventh day in the bright half of Kārttika). This is the most meritorious period for the propitiation of Hari.

3-5. If a person stays in the holy place Śrī Puruṣottama even for a single day during the period of these four months in the presence of Hari, know that his merit is what has been mentioned for the stay in Kāśī for many Yugas performing pious observance and holy rites. If a person passes all the days of those rainy months in the meritorious holy spot in the presence of the Lord of the universe devoid of impurities within, he will directly obtain the merit of a thousand horse-sacrifices.

6. A person who bathes in the holy waters of the ocean, sees Śrī Puruṣottama and devoutly performs holy rites during the four months (of the rainy season), never has any grief from anywhere.

7. Stay in the holy place Śrī Puruṣottama during the four months, and direct view of the Lord—these two are the means of salvation.

8. Hence a man should give up all the rites ordained in the Śrutis or Smṛtis and make efforts to stay in the meritorious holy spot Śrī Puruṣottama.

9. The Lord remains asleep on the couch of the serpent's (Śeṣa's) body during these four months. The Sire of the universe is not present then in any of the other sacred places.

10. But he stays here visibly as though in his abode of Vaikuṇṭha.

* Anthropomorphism and anthropopathism are a special characteristic of *Saguṇa Bhakti*. The Lord is treated as a human being and he wants sleep, turns his side during sleep, suffers from colds and requires medicine—all this is sincerely done in the spirit of *Saguṇa Bhakti* to the Lord. This is amply illustrated in our Text.

1. This festival of Lord's going to sleep is one of the twelve Yātrās of Jagannātha. The eleventh day in the bright half of Āṣāḍha is called Śayanī Ekādaśī. The Lord is supposed to go to sleep on this day to be awakened on the eleventh day in the bright half of Kārttika which is called 'Prabodhini' (the awakener). And the period of four months between these Ekādaśī days is called 'Cāturmāsya'.

During all the twelve months the Lord is in his embodied form here. If he is seen with one's eye especially during these four months, he is the bestower of salvation.

11. By seeing the Lord on a single day during these four months (*Cāturmāsya*) one obtains that merit which is acquired by seeing Viṣṇu everyday while staying here all through the other eight months.

12-17. By staying in the holy spot of Śrī Puruṣottama for the whole period of four months one acquired the merit of staying in all holy places on everyone of those days. The Lord grants (befitting) benefit for staying in the holy place for a whole year.

A man may be engaged in all kinds of evil actions. He may be fallen from all kinds of decent conduct and behaviour. He may be excluded from all pious and devout rites. But if that sinful man stays in Puruṣottama during one set of (these) four months, he dispels all the sins. He becomes free from impurities both within and without. By the favour of Narasimha he shall go to the abode of Vaikuṇṭha.

Hence with all his devout feelings a man should stay in Puruṣottama during those four rainy months sanctified by Viṣṇu's sleep. He may or may not do anything else, notwithstanding that his life becomes fruitful.

18. The devotee should celebrate the great festival of (the Lord's) sleep on the eleventh day in the bright half of the month of Āṣāḍha. A pavilion should be made and an excellent bedchamber should be built there.

19-26. In front of the Lord, the bed must be spread over a gem-set couch along with a pillow and a bedsheet of soft China silk. Camphor-powder should be scattered over the bed and splendid awning should be made. The enclosure all around should have no holes. It shall be sprinkled with sandal-paste. There must be a good doorway. The bed should be even. It should be decorated with various pictures and printings.

There should be only one bedchamber. The devotee must have ready with him three images (of the three deities). They should be made of gold, silver, brass or stone according to one's faith. The succeeding is better than the preceding one. During midnight the images (specially made ones) should be placed at the foot of the respective deity. They should then be worshipped. The remnants (of worship) must be deposited on them. At the end of the worship the devotee should meditate on the identity of those images with Kṛṣṇa and others.

“Come, come, O Lord, the sole life of all the worlds, for sleep

during these four months for the increase of prosperity of everyone.”

After praying thus to the deities the devotee should take the three garlands from the deities and place them on the special movable images of the three deities. To the accompaniment of auspicious prayers and songs, they should be taken to the door of the bedchamber and kept there for three Ghaṭikās.

27-33. The images should be bathed with Pañcāmṛta separately, weighing more than 100 Palas for each. They should be smeared with fragrant sandal-paste and adorned with robes, ornaments etc. After duly worshipping them, the devotee should repeat this Mantra with palms joined in reverence:

“O Lord of the universe, worthy of being saluted by all the worlds, engaged in protecting the universe! O Lord, sleep during these four months of the advent of clouds, for the sake of the welfare of the worlds. Worshipped along with Śakra, suppress all evils and calamities. Come, come to the bedchamber. O Lord sleep here comfortably.”

After praying thus to the Lord of Devas, the devotee should make Puruṣottama go to sleep. He should firmly close the door of the bedchamber of Viṣṇu. After making the Lord of the worlds sleep one obtains excellent happiness.

When Janārdana is asleep during the four rainy months, the devotee should pass those four months in performing many holy rites and pious observances. The man with devotion shall dwell in the world of Viṣṇu for the period of a Kalpa.

Even as I recount the holy rites and vows to be observed during *Cāturmāsya*, listen to them, O sages.

34-37. The man of devotion should give up resting on bedsteads and couches. Except in the stipulated period after the monthly menstrual discharge (of his wife) he should not carnally approach even his wife. He should give up meat, liquor, food of another person, *Paṭolas* (a kind cucumber)*, *Mūlaka* (radish) and brinjal. He should keep away from all forbidden foodstuffs. He should avoid *Masūra* (a kind of pulse), white mustard, *Rājamāṣa*, *Kulattha* and *Āśudhānya*. In the beginning of the month of Śrāvaṇa he should gradually avoid greens, curds, milk and pulses. No one other than a king, ascetics and cowherds should put on leather footwear. If it happens that one could not perform holy rites during the four rainy months, he should perform the holy rites in the

month of Kārttika for overcoming that sin.

38-44. He should repeat this prayer in the morning, midday, evening and at the conclusion of holy rites:

“Obeisance to Kṛṣṇa, to Hari. Repeated obeisance to Keśava. Salutation to Narasimha, to Viṣṇu, to the conqueror of sins.”

He will burn all his terrible sins acquired in the course of many births like fire burning a heap of cotton.

If a person observes restriction in his diet, takes food only once a day, or takes in only the remnants of the offering unto Viṣṇu, or takes in food only during the night throughout the period between Āṣādhī and Kārttikī, heaven is the least gain unto him.

The devotee should avoid oil-bath, midday nap and slander-mongering.

The man should undertake the Vrata (vow) on the eleventh day in the bright half of the month of Āṣāḍha, on the day of the transit of the Sun to the Zodiac Cancer or on the new-moon day in the month of Āṣāḍha.

After worshipping Lord Madhusūdana, the destroyer of all sins, and after taking the *Sankalpa* in front of him in regard to the Vrata, worship, Japa etc. the man of holy rites should pray to the Lord, the supreme Bliss, with palms joined in reverence:

45. “O Lord, the vow of the four months has been taken up (by me) by your favour. O Keśava, let it be accomplished without obstacles through your grace.

46. If I were to die when this vow is yet incomplete, O Adhokṣaja, even then let it be complete by your favour.”

47. After praying thus to the Lord of Devas the man who is observing the vow should strictly adhere to the rites mentioned before and pass the four months with his mind dedicated to Viṣṇu.

48-53. At the end of every month he should perform Pāraṇa (formal conclusion of the austerities) for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa. The devotee should feed Brāhmaṇas with sweet sumptuous food after worshipping the Lord of the universe.

If one is incapable (of doing it every month), he should conclude the excellent holy rite of Kārttikī day. On that day he should worship the Lord of the universe, abiding in the holy fire. Thereafter, he should propitiate prominent Brāhmaṇas with sweet milk-puddings and honour them with devotion as unto Viṣṇu. In accordance with his capacity he should give gold and garments.

A man not capable of the full (-timed) austerities should perform

the austerities in the month of Kārttika as mentioned before.

There are various Vratas¹ (austerities) of Viṣṇu such as *Kṛcchra*, *Cāndrāyaṇa* etc. One who passes (the month) subsisting on milk only or vegetables (greens) only shall enjoy extensive worldly pleasures and then attain salvation.

54. If the vratī (vower) is incapable of even this austerity, he should observe the excellent vow of Bhīṣma-Pañcaka to propitiate the Lord of Devas. He shall sustain himself with forest products (take fruits, roots etc. naturally produced not cultivated, but no cooked food).

55. This *Vrata* is said to be conducive to the delight of the Lord. It suppresses all sins. It yields the attainment of the world of Viṣṇu as its fruit. It is conducive to longevity, reputation and wealth. It accomplishes all desired things.

56-58. O sages, this secret has been disclosed to you. Listen to another. Know that these and many other Vratas are fruitless in the case of those devoid of devotion to the Lord.

One attains all the benefits by devotion to Viṣṇu alone—the benefit of great sacrifices, the excellent benefit of (pilgrimage to) Tīrthas, charitable gifts and all penances of the Sāttvika type.

59-60. Those noble souls who witness the excellent festival of retirement to bed (of the Lord) do not rest in the womb of any mother.

Those who sponsor the great festival, should make a promise of taking up this *Vrata* in front of the Lord at the conclusion of the festival. After performing the rite of Pāraṇa sufficiently well they are honoured in the world of Brahmā.

1. Observances such as *Kṛcchra*, *Cāndrāyaṇa* and others. *Kṛcchra* is of different types (for details vide HD IV 132-133). In *Cāndrāyaṇa* morsels of food are to be increased and decreased as per waxing and waning of the moon. (Hence the name *Cāndrāyaṇa*.) In this observance one morsel of food is to be eaten on first day of the bright half, two morsels on the second day and so on till fifteen morsels are to be consumed on the full-moon day. On the first day of the dark half fourteen morsels are to be eaten reducing the quantity by one morsel everyday and ending in complete fast on the new-moon day. (For details see HD IV 135-136.)