The Meeting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Disguised as Abhimanyu

By Visvanath Cakravati Thakur

Once, Śrī Rādhā, the young daughter of Vṛṣabhānū Mahārāja, took a vow to regularly bathe in the Yamunā River early in the morning. This filled the less intelligent Kuṭilā with suspicion because it was the month of Māgha, which is the coldest part of the winter. One morning, when Śrī Rādhā had left for the river, Kuṭilā became curious to know what She was really doing. Kuṭilā made an excuse to go to the house of Nanda Mahārāja, the king of Vraja, as she was eager to find out if Śrī Rādhā had actually taken the path that led to the Yamunā, and to know whether Śrī Kṛṣṇa was at home or not. She was also eager at heart to see Kṛṣṇa. Thus Kuṭilā set out for the residence of Vraja’s king. (1)

Kuṭilā learned from some servants there that Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mother, Yaṣodā, had sent Him to bathe in the river. Her suspicion redoubled and she set off, tracking His unique footprints to the riverside. Kuṭilā wanted to go to the place where Śrī Kṛṣṇa was enjoying beautiful pastimes with Śrī Rādhā. (2)

Tulasī, one of Śrī Rādhā’s dear maidservants, noticed Kuṭilā approaching the kuṇja. Tulasī entered that kuṇja to find Śrī Rādhā surrounded by Lalitā and the other sakhīs. All were deeply immersed in enchanting laughter and play with their beloved. Brimming with boundless happiness, Tulasī said: (3)

“O gopīs, please listen. Your celebration of this charming festival here today has made the birth of Kāmadeva, the god of love, unlimitedly successful. Nonetheless, there is something you need to know. Kuṭilā is coming here from Vraja, just to catch a glimpse of your wonderful festival. She is almost here.” (4)

When the sakhīs heard this, they looked here and there with eyes full of fear, and cried, “Oh, no! Where is she, Tulasī? Tell us!” “I just saw her in front of the Chaṭṭīkārā (Śakaṭīkārā) forest,” answered Tulasī. “She must be almost here.” (5)
“Sakhis,” said Śrī Krṣṇa, “you just stay here in the kuṇja. I am going to disguise Myself as Abhimanyu. With My brilliant intelligence I shall cheat Kuṭilā, and thus further increase our mischievous merrymaking. You will see the end of this affair, as surely as you will see the rising of the sun.” (6)

Śrī Krṣṇa went into another kuṇja, where Vṛndā-devī, the goddess of the forest, gave Him clothes and ornaments that exactly resembled Abhimanyu’s. He dressed Himself in them, and attentively covered all of His distinguishing characteristics. Adopting Abhimanyu’s voice, He set off down the path on which Kuṭilā was approaching. Aah! Can a person who is fully adept in all varieties of arts ever fail to accomplish His desired goal? Certainly not. (7)

A little way along the path, Śrī Krṣṇa, disguised as Abhimanyu, met Kuṭilā. In Abhimanyu’s voice He asked, “O Kuṭilā, why are you wandering around this part of Vṛaja at this time of day?”

“To search for Your wife,” replied Kuṭilā. “Why would She come here?” He asked. “To bathe in the river Yamunā – or so She says,” replied Kuṭilā. “But it is just a pretext. She is somewhere close by.” “And where is that thief of women?” asked Śrī Krṣṇa disguised as Abhimanyu. “He also came here to bathe, and He is somewhere nearby too. When our mother heard about this she sent me here to investigate. Tell me, brother, what shall I do?” (8)

“Sister,” replied Śrī Krṣṇa, “I came here to look for My new bull. He broke loose and ran away when I was yoking him to plough the field. My heart has been troubled because he has probably been stolen, but that pain does not compare to the anguish I am experiencing on account of that rake stealing My wife. That, no man can tolerate. I shall go straight to King Kamsa in Mathurā. He will punish that thief in a way that He deserves. (9)

“Please hear My plan. I will hide in this kuṇja while you quickly search for Rādhikā. If you find Her alone, bring Her here on some pretext, but if you find Her with Krṣṇa, observe Them from a distance and then take Me there secretly.” (10)

When Kuṭilā, whose nature is exceedingly crooked (kuṭila), heard these instructions, she began to search all the kuṇjas from
Kāliyā-hrada to Keśī-ghāta. There, near Keśī-ghāta, she came to a flower garden where she found Śrī Rādhā, who is endowed with pure fragrance, and who is the flower vine of Her mother Kirtīdā’s fame. She was surrounded by Her sakhi, who were serving Her attentively. (11)

Lalitā saw Kutilā coming, and asked, “Ah, Kutilā, have you come to take bath?” “No,” replied Kutilā. “Then why have you come?” asked Lalitā. “I have come to learn about your moral character,” answered Kutilā. “Very good,” said Lalitā. “Then you should learn.” “I have already understood everything, Lalitā.” “Understood? What have you understood? Please tell me.” “The fragrance of Hari tells all. What more can I say?” (12)

Lalitā took the word hari to mean “lion” and replied, “Kutilā, if you can smell a lion here, it must be hiding somewhere. We are simple, tender young girls, and therefore we are afraid. We will run home! You have shown us such pure affection by coming here to warn us.” (13)

Filled with anger, Kutilā exclaimed sarcastically, “O you chaste girls! And will you proclaim the good name of your families from forest to forest as you go? Open the door to that kadamba-kuija and let me look inside!” (14)

Lalitā said, “A forest-god has closed the entrance of his bowerhouse with a door of reeds. He has gone elsewhere, and it is not appropriate to open the door to his kadamba grove. What woman would dare commit the sin of trying to open the door to another’s house?” (15)

Kutilā said to Lalitā, “What you say is true. You are just a pure and simple girl, and you have never walked into anyone else’s house in your life. However, you know very well how to invite a paramour into your house. You have come to this world to teach from the scripture that explains how to facilitate a paramour’s entrance into the house of a young lady from a respectable family.” Then, her eyes red with anger, Kutilā stormed up to the flowerdoor of the kunja, which had been locked with reeds, and kicked it open. There on a bed of flowers she saw a flower garland left by Śrī Hari, and a broken pearl-necklace belonging to Śrī Rādhā. Snatching
them up, she returned outside. (16–17)

Holding them up before Lalitā, Kutilā said, “Your vow of bathing in the holy river Yamunā during the cold of winter will result in so much religious merit. Such austerities will enable you to purify the families of both your father and your father-in-law. I see that here on the riverbank you are also worshipping the Sun-god properly. Tell me, do you want to return to your homes, or would you rather stay here day and night earning pious merit? My ears are most eager to hear your answer.” (18)

When the spotless, moon-faced Śrī Rādhā heard Kutilā’s taunt, She said, “Kutilā, why are you becoming angry unnecessarily? I swear by your brother that this necklace is not Mine. Please calm down.” Then Śrī Rādhā frowned angrily, shook Her head, and loudly scolded Kutilā. (19)

“If You do not want to go home, then don’t,” said Kutilā. “Stay in this forest, and rule Your kingdom. But I am going home to show this necklace and garland to my mother and Bhāgavati Paurnamāsi. I will see to it that You are properly punished.” (20)

“You are free to go, Kutilā,” said Śrī Rādhā, “but what good are your harsh words? You can go from house to house showing everyone this necklace. I am not in the least afraid because it is not Mine. Do not make false accusations against Me.” (21)

Kutilā pretended to storm back to her home, but actually she hurried to where Śrī Hari, disguised as Abhimanyu, was waiting. “My dear brother,” she whispered, “look what I have found! This garland belongs to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the enemy of Agha, and this broken pearl-necklace belongs to Your wife. I found these on Their bed of amorous pleasure. Rādhikā and the others were there in that secret place, but I did not see that thief of women anywhere.” (22)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, “Dear sister, you have done very well. Now I will hurry to Mathurā. Hand Me the garland and the broken necklace. I will show them to the king and petition him. He will certainly believe Me. I shall have to use some clever trickery so that our infamy is not disclosed before the assembly of the Yadus. (23)
“Actually, I will not approach the king Myself. Instead, I will request My dear friend Govardhana Malla to go. I will say, 'My dear friend, the son of Nanda called your wife, Candrāvalī, to a bower and polluted her. Look, this is her broken necklace and His flower garland. (24)

‘Listen, My friend, Kṛṣṇa has performed this licentious act with your wife today, and tomorrow He will perform it with all of our wives! I urge you to go petition King Kamsa to send one hundred foot soldiers and ten cavalrymen to Nandagrāma to arrest Nanda and his son, and take them to Mathurā for punishment.’ (25)

“That is what I will say to Govardhana Malla. Then I shall return home before noon, because the royal forces should arrive in Vraja around midday. Now, you go home and stay with Mother.” Śrī Kṛṣṇa, disguised as Abhimanyu, left on the southward path heading towards Mathurā, while Kutilā went home. The gopīs also returned to their respective residences. (26)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa let an hour or so pass. Then, still in His disguise, He went to Jatilā's house and called out, “Mother! Kutilā! Where are you? Please come and hear what I have to say.” (27)

When Jatilā and Kutilā came, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, “King Kamsa has been told everything, and ten cavalrymen are on their way here. But that licentious cheater has disguised himself as Me, and right now he is on his way to this very house. I will hide inside. (28)

“My dear sister, you should lock the outside gate, and then quickly go up to the balcony with Mother. Keep a lookout for that young debauchee. When he comes, attack him with sharp and cutting words. Meanwhile, I will wait with your sister-in-law on the groundfloor of the house.” (29)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa went to the ground floor with Śrī Rādhikā. Some time later Abhimanyu arrived home. As soon as Kutilā saw him she began to shout, “O you who destroy the piety of the chaste girls of Vraja! How dare you try to enter my brother's house! Listen, O fickle one, if you come in here, I will break your head with this stone! This would be a just reward for you. (30)
“King Kamsa was infuriated to hear of your wicked behaviour, and he has sent his royal guards to make you and your father ‘happy’. They are coming any moment. They are going to take you to Mathurā City and throw you in jail for the rest of your life. That will curb your fickleness.” (31)

When Abhimanyu heard all these confusing words from his sister, he became quite perturbed, and thought, “Alas, my sister has become possessed by a fearsome ghost. I had better call an exorcist.” He therefore went to find the doctor skilled in chanting mantras who lived on the outskirts of the village. (32)

In this way, that amazing and astonishing jewel known as Śrī Hari engages in all sorts of pastimes with Jaṭilā’s daughter-in-law in Jaṭilā’s own house. He has no other occupation than to continually sport with the wives of others. His endeavours always bear fruit. (33)